



Symbolic Significance Of Ibrahim Traore To Pan-Africanism And Fight Against Neo- Colonialism

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Introduction –

Ibrahim Traore of Burkina Faso with his thought provoking speeches has given a new life to the spirit of Pan- Africanism. He has pointed at the façade of independence and autonomy of the African states. He has been referring to the process of continuous exploitation of natural wealth at a very cheap prices with the collusion of African local corrupt local elites. He also raise the question mark on the exploitative policies of global financial institutions controlled by the West. There is a long history and tradition of scholars pointing at this process of neo-colonialism and how African is being robbed of its natural riches.

Theoretical Perspective of African Backwardness given by Walter Rodney -

Argues that European colonialism deliberately underdeveloped Africa to benefit European economies. European colonial powers prioritized extracting Africa's natural resources for their own industrial growth and neglected the sustainable development of Africa. They suppressed African industries and reduced Africans to the states of passive markets for their manufactured goods. These are lines from his most famous work, **"That European capitalism should have failed to create African capitalists is perhaps not so striking as its inability to create a working class and to diffuse industrial skills throughout Africa. By its very nature, colonialism was prejudiced against the establishment of industries in Africa, outside of agriculture and the extractive spheres of mining and timber felling. Whenever internal forces seemed to push in the direction of African industrialization, they were deliberately blocked by the colonial governments acting on behalf of the metropolitan industrialists."**¹ Colonial powers redraw borders without respecting the existing ethnic and cultural groups which has sown the seeds of internal conflicts and destabilized the newly- liberated countries. Post-colonial trade relationships were tilted in favor of developed countries which further perpetuated a cycle of unequal exchange. African countries were reduced to the status of raw material providers and importers of finished goods. Colonialism undermined the traditional African political institutions and established shallow imported political institutions in Africa. These governments were weak and corrupt in their functioning.

¹ Walter Rodney , How Europe Underdeveloped Africa , Verso 2018, P 250

Ibrahim Traore of Burkina Faso

Francophone Africa was never fully liberated from the economic and financial clutches of France. France has kept its troops on these newly liberated countries and all the former French colonies were forced to adopt a joint currency, the CFA franc, which has been fixed to the French franc. This has provided France indirect opportunities to keep meddling into the politics of their former colonies. France imposed fixed exchange rates on these countries and monetary policy of these countries was guided by the central bank of France. France has not given up this policy even after France's induction into the European Union. Fate of Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso who wanted to evict French troops out of the country but he was killed in a coup instigated with the covert support of French. Captain Ibrahim Traore of Burkina has emerged as a new leader of the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration (PMSR) which was formed in 2022. He ended the CFA franc arrangement and formed the AES (The Association of Sahel States) along with Mali and Niger. They are challenging the neocolonial apparatus of exploitation in this natural resources rich region. Burkina Faso is among the largest gold producers in Africa but this country is still poor and the majority of profit of this resource is made by the foreign companies. The PMSR government nationalized this gold reserve by setting up SOPAMIB in 2024 and the revenue generated out of it was used for spreading education, healthcare and industrialization of the country. Fortunately the increase in the gold prices has sheltered Burkina Faso's economy from the economic sanctions imposed by the Western powers. This new government is also trying to reach self-sufficiency in agricultural production. Now the West, especially America, has started publishing different articles on the issues of violation of human rights in Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso faces the threat of Islamic terrorism which is presently impacting its 40 % of the country's land.²**The Trump administration has already drawn its plan** to control the mineral resources of Congo with the help of the compliant government of the Congo. The US is trying to broker a peace deal with Russia and Ukraine in which lies the US interest to find access to the mineral resources of these countries.

ECOWAS was created out of the post-colonial states which were former French, British and Portuguese colonies in the 1960s and 1970s. The ECOWAS was founded to create a regional approach for economic, political and military cooperation in 1975. ECOWAS commitment of democratic values and human rights has opposed the military takeovers in the Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This led to the creation of the Sahel alliance after their withdrawal from the ECOWAS. This new alliance has challenged the dominance of French and Western powers backed institutions of this region. They have expelled French military forces and started reducing the impact of French influence on their economies.³

Real Face of Official Development Aids-

Official Development Aids and other kinds of donations of the western countries usually helps in legitimizing their net and hidden exploitation of Sub-Saharan Africa through tax evasion, climate change mitigation and profits earned by the multinational companies. A UK and Africa based NGOs suggested that approximately 134 \$ bn each year comes to Africa for loans, foreign investment and development aid while 192\$ bn leaves the region. This means approximately 60\$ bn annually leave Africa. This report asserts that foreign multinational companies siphon 46\$bn out of sub-Saharan Africa each year and 35 \$bn is moved out from Africa into the tax havens of the world. The African governments have to spend annually 21\$bn a year on debt repayment. The Aid sent in the form of loans are contributing to the spiraling of the debt crisis in Africa and therefore now demands are rising that donors should adopt the transparent method of contracts so that the recipient country should properly scrutinize the nature of any aid which comes in the form of loans. This is the opinion

² Prabhat Patnaik , Politics International , 10 may 2025

³ Ibid

of Martin Drewry of the Health Poverty Action which is one of the NGOs behind the report. Research by Global Financial Integrity shows Africa's illicit outflows nearly 50% higher than the average for the global south from 2002-2011. The UK-based NGO ActionAid issued a report last year that claimed that half of large corporate investment in the global south transited through a tax haven. There is a need to promote regulatory reforms under the UN that would empower African governments to investigate the functioning of the foreign companies for the possible violation of human rights and tax evasion.⁴ For example Ghana is losing 30 per cent of its government revenue to debt repayments. There is an estimate in 2014 that African Elites have at least \$500bn in tax havens. The present model of development in Africa allows a tiny minority of elites of Africa to connive with the global production process to rob their own community and nation of their wealth. The majority of countries with mineral wealth experience poor democracy, weaker economic growth and worse development. There is a need to prevent tax dodging and governments must take action on tax heavens. Companies with subsidiaries based in so-called tax havens operating in their country.⁵

Western aid till now to Africa in the long run has been a story of failure. During 1960- 1997 more than & 500 billion in foreign aid which is equivalent to four Marshall Aid Plans. This rather than increasing independence of Africa it has created a process of dependence. The budgets of Ghana and Uganda are made of 50 percent aid. Now many leaders of the African nations are realizing that countries like Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Singapore became prosperous not by the aid but by the adopting free markets institutions.⁶ Very large chunk of the aid to Africa is syphoned off by the corrupt officials and rulers. This wealth is stocked outside Africa by the ruling classes. The Western Scholars and administrators are blaming corrupt ruling elite for this corruption. But Howard Nichlous gives a much deeper and radical perspective on the corrupt aid system by asserting that the very purpose of Aid to Africa is to keep the corrupt ruling elites in power and ensure legitimacy of passive elites which cooperates in the stealing of African natural resources. Constant aid and financial support erodes the quality of self –governance from these post-colonial states. This also save the ruling elites from the fear of public rebellion and possibility of creating new radical-democratic governments. Present ruling elites of Africa be they elected or not don't have the capacity

⁴ The report was authored by 13 UK and Africa-based NGOs, including: [Health Poverty Action](#), [Jubilee Debt Campaign](#), [World Development Movement](#), [African Forum and Network on Debt and Development](#), [Friends of the Earth Africa](#), [Tax Justice Network](#), [People's Health Movement Kenya](#), [Zimbabwe and UK](#), [War on Want](#), [Community Working Group on Health Zimbabwe](#), [Medact](#), [Healthworkers4All](#), [Friends of the Earth South Africa](#), [JA!Justiça Ambiental/Friends of the Earth Mozambique](#) .

⁵ Nick Dearden, Africa is not poor, we are stealing its wealth, www.globaljustice.org.uk , 24 may 2017

⁶ Norimitsu Onishi, "Senegalese Loner Works to Build Africa, His Way," New York Times, April 10, 2002, p. A3.

and courage to determine the future of their own country without taking into consideration the interests of the Western multinationals and mining lobbies operating there. This façade of independence of African states could not be exposed due to the constant supply of aid and welfare oriented propaganda of institutions like World Bank and IMF. The IMF and World Bank plan their project from the Western perspective and do not have understanding of the local conditions. Patricia Adams of Probe International which is a Toronto-based environmental group asserted that World Bank has pointed out that in most of the cases the Western governments knew that substantial portions of their loans –up to 30 percent went directly into the pockets of corrupt officials.⁷

Support to the Authoritarian Regimes and Head of States-

For the last 50 years of the 20th century, authoritarian nationalism within a bipolar world order characterized most African countries' politics. At the time, the global superpowers were willing to support and aid authoritarian leaders. Demands for accountability were few to nonexistent. The continent's "big men" were able to amass colossal personal riches. Mobutu Sese Seko who deposed the nation's democratically elected government of Patrice Lumumba with the support of the U.S. and Belgium. Former colonial power Belgium and USA were fearful of nationalist and independent approach of Lumumba. Mobutu Sese Seko enjoyed the power from 1967 to 1997 and collaborated in the loot of natural resources of Congo with his Western allies. Mobutu build his image as an anti-communist leader of Africa during the cold war which ensured the US support to him. His regime received grants and loans more than \$ 8.5 billion from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. President Paul Biya of Cameroon is presently one of the longest serving head of the state of Africa and world. His rule was strengthen due to his closeness to France the former colonial power and subsequently USA has become one of the oil importer from Cameroon. Paul Biya of Cameroon along with, President Teodoro Obiang of Equatorial Guinea or President Ali Bongo of Gabon have amassed vast personal fortunes. Sustenance of their long, corrupt and non-democratic regimes was ensured by the Western powers during the cold war.⁸

Rule of Jerry John Rawlings who was the longest-serving leader in Ghana's history, presiding over the country for 19 years. Initially Jerry toyed with the ideas of socialism but soon realized that the Soviets have serious limitation in their capacities to help Ghana in its economic progress. Therefore Jerry Rawlings started courting the West and especially America. The USA was willing to create a new supporter out of Ghana and to induct Ghana into the global financial institutions. "Rawlings established the Economic Recovery Fund (ERP) suggested by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1982 due to

⁷Patricia Adams, "The Debts of Corruption," *Financial Post (Canada)* May 10, 1999.

⁸ Teresa Nogueira Pinto, The systems that support corruption in Africa, 7 Oct, 2020. www.gisreportsonline.com.

the poor state of the economy. He was provided funding for the implementation of deregulation, privatization and opening up of the market.⁹

Prof .Howard Nicholas views on Underdevelopment in Africa-

According to Howard Nicholas African and Sub- Saharan Africa has been fundamental to the prosperity of the world especially to the advanced countries. African states are raw material providers within the global trade therefore these countries were kept poor deliberately. Howard asserts that if African countries are able to seek profitable prices for these natural resources or start to develop their own manufacturing then this will have a direct impact upon the living standard of those living in Europe, North America and Asia. The West is not going to allow Africans to develop this autonomy because it will challenge their industrial and financial powers. Colonization has played a historical role in this and subsequently global financial institutions have continued this process after the political liberation of African countries. Their share in the global trade in terms of value is continuously witnessing decline. Howard like dependency theorists asserts that raw materials exports cannot make a country rich without developing a manufacturing base, which has been proved historically by the study of transformation of various countries. Currencies of these raw material producing countries witness decline whenever there is a shortfall in the prices of raw materials.¹⁰ He points out that historically 1960s and 1970s East Asian miracle had pushed the rise of raw materials and which subsequently declined. Recently rise of China and India pushed the demand for raw materials but this surge is also witnessing decline as China is reaching the saturation point. Although trade in raw materials has left these countries where they were before while China has become richer by becoming the world's manufacturing superpower. Howard Nicholas also pointed out how international aid was used as a tool to keep the repressing regime in power and creation of basic infrastructure to keep the exploitation of raw material going on. They also provided weapons to the rulers.

Monopoly Buying Structures for raw materials –

Howard points out that while the West teaches the principles of free trade to the Africans. Western multinationals collude to keep the natural resources producers under their control. They artificially push the prices of natural resources down and WTO has never raised this issue. IMF and its Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) - has very often culminated in the destruction of self-sufficiency of the countries. They ended the food self-sufficiency of the different countries. The US congress passed a resolution that Latin America counties should not be allowed to develop their food sufficiency. **The Agreement on Agriculture** which was pushed by the WTO stressed that if a country do not have subsidies at the time of signing the agreement, then they are not allowed to put any agricultural subsidies, the Western counties which already had huge income support mechanism and subsidies were given the green light.

Howard Nicholas assert that Africa needs nationalist government which will focus on the industrialization of their countries. Now academically the west and WTO is trying to revive the already discredited theory of comparative advantage. According to Howard which nothing but clever ruse to keep African counties poor and dependent on the exports of raw materials. Howard points out that the new school of New

⁹ *World Bank, Ghana Country Assistance Review: A Study in Development Effectiveness (Washington: World Bank, January 1996).*

¹⁰ Howard Nicholas "Underdevelopment" in Africa- What's the Real Story, International Institute of Social Studies , Hague (Recorded on 14Oct 2015).

Institutional Economics is another effort to prove to the African counties that you failed because you were corrupt and failed to develop democratic institutions and comparative advantage theory can still benefit you. While Doha Development Rounds are used as most lethal weapon to end any chance of new countries which will try to copy the East Asian or Chinese model to prosperity.¹¹ This will be done by further stopping the technology transfer and strengthening the intellectual property rights regime. Because East Asian counties were successful in coercing multinationals to not only employ and train their people but also transfer their technology to the host country. Howard Nicholas assert that TIIP & TISA agreement between the US and EU is presently the testing of their future effort to stop the industrialization of poor counties. These agreement which offer opportunism for multinational companies of western counties to invest and control education, health and other sectors of the developing counties with legally binding powers.

Conclusion- Africans has realized that they need governments which has strong ideological commitment to industrialize Africa rather than exporting the raw materials out of Africa. African states are demanding complete control upon their natural resources and determination of their prices. Now even the entire world will not accept the fate of Patrice Lumumba or Thomas Sankara being toppled by the West. France is the biggest loser in the wave of new awakening in the Francophone Africa due to its exploitative control of the former colonies by influencing their monetary and trade policies. The Presbisch-Singer thesis is becoming more prescient that without industrialization raw material will not empower any country and continent in the long run.



¹¹ Howard Nicholas, 'International Trade and the WTO – What's the real story' ISS The Hague 2016.