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The Dynamics of Underdevelopment in the African Novel: A Comparative Appraisal of Anglophone and Francophone Fiction

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Abstract

The post-independence era in sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by progressive underdevelopment. From the 1960s till date no meaningful development has occurred, and all known development strategies that have so far been adopted have defied all logic. Accordingly, some social scientists and scholars of development theories have come to the sad conclusion that with respect to Africa, all development theories have hit the rocks (Chambua, 1994, p. 37). The implication is that in all spheres of human endeavour, Africa south of the Sahara has failed. The leadership problem is one of the plagues that have bedevilled the West African sub region. And from the failure of leadership stems a truckload of woes: infrastructural deficit, corruption, neo-colonialist propensity, unemployment, ethnicity, educational backwardness, declining living standards, etc. This situation has left Africans disillusioned and disappointed. And African writers from the Anglophone and Francophone worlds have not relented in their condemnation of the post-independence malaise. Their oeuvre is a clear reflection of the battered landscape. Thus, in the works of Chinua Achebe, Wale Okediran, Ahmadou Kourouma and J.R. Essomba, the reader is led into the very soul of a continent in turmoil. These authors are selected from both sides of the linguistic divide. Whereas, Achebe and Okediran are Anglophones from Nigeria, Kourouma and Essomba are Francophones from Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon respectively. This paper therefore attempted a diachronic investigation of the works of these authors in order to uncover the pervasive indices of underdevelopment. In other words, between Achebe and Okediran on the one hand, and between Kourouma and Essomba on the other hand, one discovers that the ills which the earlier novelists condemned in the first decade of independence have only gone from bad to worse some five decades later. The methodological approach adopted for this research work is textual analysis/ intertextuality, while privileging a socio-historical framework.

Key Words: underdevelopment, West Africa, dynamics, Achebe, Okediran, Kourouma, Essomba

Introduction

The states that emerged from the hot embers of colonialism can best be described as ‘cold, impotent ash’, to borrow Chinua Achebe’s expression (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 1958) Today, almost sixty years after independence, African nations have remained pariah states. The state of affairs on the continent has provided fodder for African writers and critics of African literature as well. African writers of English and French expression have been very committed in their denunciation of the ills of postcolonial African societies. The disillusionment expressed by most of them draws from the fact that the nominal independence which African countries have achieved is in the words of Frantz Fanon ‘*an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been*’ (Gikandi, 1991, p. 205). Simon Gikandi summarized the disappointment of African writers in these words:

Against the rhetoric of freedom being promoted by the founding fathers, many African writers felt that the ideals of nationalism were being betrayed by new political elite which adopted the colonisers’ mantle. African writers as Achebe was to observe at the height of the Nigerian civil war (a true emblem of the failures of national consciousness in postcolonial Africa) found themselves with a terrifying problem – they found that the independence their country was supposed to have won was “totally without content” (Gikandi, 1991, p. 205).

It is evident that the catch-phrase “totally without content” implies the absence of any form of development. The leadership which the departing colonial masters foisted on hapless and unwary Africans was dead on arrival. Most of these countries witnessed unprecedented corruption as a result of an inept and rotten political class, coupled with the institutionalisation of a pro-western comprador bourgeoisie class. It is therefore not surprising that African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ahmadou Kourouma, Sembène Ousmane, Ngugu WaThion’go, Ayi Kwei Armah and a host of others from the four corners of the continent embarked on a critical appraisal of the state of affairs in their various countries. The reader of African literature discovers in the works of these writers that sub-Saharan Africa presents a uniformed state of pervasive underdevelopment.

This paper studied the works of selected Anglophone and Francophone writers between 1960 and 2010 to uncover the dynamics of underdevelopment thematised in these works. First, the paper discussed underdevelopment which is the crux of the matter. The term ‘underdevelopment’ is to be seen basically as the opposite of development. The prefix *under* which precedes development renders the word pejorative, and a negation of the very idea of progress. It is therefore in an attempt to understand what development is that one can appreciate what underdevelopment implies. Aloysius Ohaegbu considers development as ‘change for the better’ (2000, p. 170). For this critic,

This change implies the economic advancement of the state, the advancement of science and technology needed for the production of the modern amenities considered vital to the promotion of the living standards of the people, the equitable distribution of available resources among the citizenry (...) The education of the people so that they can be useful to themselves and the society in which they live, moral upliftment and the

abolition of certain traditional practices, which impede self-actualisation (Ohaegbu, 2000, pp.170-171)

Sadly, enough, if one considers all the factors inventoried by Ohaegbu as necessary for the development of a nation, it becomes evident that sub-Saharan African countries are underdeveloped. Samuel E. Chambua's assessment of post-colonial sub-Saharan African countries is appalling:

The first decades of independence have been a period of endless experimentation with various policies and strategies, aimed at bringing about rapid and sustainable socioeconomic development in less developed countries (...). Surprisingly, however, is the fact that irrespective of the particular paradigm or school of thought that has informed the particular policies, strategies by a specific sub-Saharan LDC, the end result has been the same, i.e. the failure to liquidate underdevelopment. Indeed, the development for the majority of sub-Saharan LDCs has changed radically (for the worse) from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1980s ... (Chambua 1994, p. 37)

Chambua's assessment covers the period between 1960 and the mid-1980s. A fair assessment I must say. But if one considers the period between the mid-1980s and the present day, then the scenario painted by Chambua is most desirable. The LDCs have fallen to an advanced stage of underdevelopment. I consider underdevelopment to be the absence of modern infrastructure/amenities that are necessary for the improvement of living standards; the absence of a viable and virile democratic political culture that ensures the equitable distribution of the commonwealth to the people; the continued dependence of African countries on external agencies; the prevalence of corruption and moral decay, ethnic and religious conflict/civil wars, general insecurity, and of course poor standards of education.

The Literary Corpus

The following novels form the corpus of this study. My study is in the main diachronic in the sense that I have carefully, and to the best of my ability, read the novels to uncover a sustained thematic constant. These novels condemn the post-independence malaise which has kept sub-Saharan African in a state of perpetual underdevelopment.

1. *A Man of the People* – Chinua Achebe
2. *Les Soleils des indépendances* – Ahmadou Kourouma
3. *Le Destin volé* – J.R. Essomba
4. *Tenants of the House* – Wale Okediran

The Dynamics of Underdevelopment in the African Novel

The novels mentioned above have all in various ways treated the subject of underdevelopment. I shall begin with an analysis of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* given the fact that it is the first to be published of the novels which form the corpus of the paper.

When *A Man of the People* appeared in 1966, many did not sense the prophetic undertone; for no sooner had the novel been published than a coup took place in Nigeria in the same year. The novel itself is a satire of the pervasive corruption of the political elite blinded by their new status. The reader of the novel is confronted with a catalogue of socio-political problems occasioned by the erosion of morality. In his book *Philosophical Perspectives on*

Chinua Achebe (2004), Christopher S. Nwodo dedicates a chapter to a study of *A Man of the People*. That chapter is titled “Declining Morality: A Man of the People.” This critic traced the origin of this ugly situation to colonialism which destroyed the traditional mytho-ethical structures of the pristine African world. Nwodo goes on to enumerate some of the colonial policies that “had far-reaching consequences on the people’s psyche even after independence and the subsequent departure of the white man” (p. 78) He avers that “It was the colonial policy to look down on the African and the African way of life, social norms and moral values even when the African moral values were far superior to those of the colonialist” (p. 78).

It is clear from Nwodo’s analysis that political independence is a mere smoke screen since the new political taskmasters inherited a warped system which thrives on the oppression of one class by another. Once again, Nwodo’s opinion should be very useful here:

Political independence itself was a new phenomenon, a recent event. It is clear from every indication that it had not been, at least for the ordinary people, the elixir it was supposed to be. The new African Political leader stepped into the shoes of the white man and began to show what he could do now that he was in power, that he too could operate with ruthlessness as his predecessor the white man. Besides, there was so much material gain and comfort attached to political power (p. 79)

Immunity breeds corruption as a result of the apparent lack of adequate control mechanism to curtail the abuse of power. The corruption of the political elite is responsible for the lack of infrastructure in the various countries of Africa even after independence. These critical amenities are necessary for the improvement in living standards. Unfortunately, monies meant for the provision of all these amenities are put in private pockets. According to Ayeleru (2010, p. 118): “when there is corruption, there can neither be sustainable development...corruption is literally the antithesis of development and progress.” And so, the main thematic thrust of Achebe’s novel is political corruption which is one of the manifestations of ‘declining morality.’

In *A Man of the People*, the new political class is eminently represented by Chief the Honourable M. A. Nanga, M.P. He is the ‘Man’ of the people. What an irony! It is the same Chief Nanga whose political activities have brought hardship on the people. A polygamist, he lives in comfortable luxurious mansions and indulges in corrupt practices that enable him to acquire properties all over the country. Chief Nanga is the very epitome of corruption and moral decay. Chief Nanga, a semi-literate politician and his ilk arrive the corridors of power through the ‘back door.’ Elections are rigged; people are killed or maimed because of the inordinate ambition of politicians who engage the services of thugs, hired killers and all kinds of diabolical means to achieve their aims. In this kind of charged political climate decent people shy away from politics, or are even intimidated or discouraged by the politicians themselves. Chief Nanga’s advice to Odili Samalu who is planning on getting involved in politics is appalling:

I have done my best and, God so good, your father is my living witness. Take your money and take your scholarship to go and learn more book; the country needs experts like you. And leave the dirty game of politics to us who know how to play it” (p. 119).

It is important to note that Chief Nanga says these things to Odili in the presence of the young man's father. The old man's complicit support of the corrupt chief leaves much to be desired. Same goes for Edna's father who sees nothing wrong in giving out his young daughter, Edna, to be one of the chief's wives. Although the plan fails, his intention is to make the most out of his would-be son in law. Money is thus at the root of corruption. The temptation to make quick money also pushes Josiah to try the unthinkable when he tries to "make juju with Azoge's stick" (p, 84) in order to succeed in his trade. Unfortunately, the same Josiah finds his way into politics and joins chief Nanga's camp.

The police are not spared the cankerworm of corruption. The Police Force till this day is about the most single corrupt public institution in Nigeria. Police men are used to rig elections, intimidate the opposition, escort corrupt politicians, and collect bribes in order to alter the course of justice. During Chief Nanga's "inaugural campaign meeting" (p, 136), OdiliSamalu braves all odds to attend the meeting where he summons courage to denounce chief Nanga as a liar. He escapes death by the hair of the teeth, and narrates his ordeal thus:

Immediately hands seized my arm (...) He slapped me again and again. Edna rushed forward crying and tried to get between us but he pushed her aside so violently that she landed on her buttocks on the wooden platform. The roar of the crowd was now like a thick forest all around. By this time blows were falling as fast as rain on my head and body until something heavier than the rest seemed to slit my skull. The last thing I remembered was seeing all the policemen turn round and walk quietly away (p. 140)

This moral degeneracy as exemplified by a blighted and rotten political class led to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic. In his coup speech (Obasanjo, 1987, pp. 97/99) Major Nzeogwu declared:

The aim of the Revolutionary council is to establish a strong, united, and prosperous nation, free from *corruption* (...) Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in the high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPs of waste, (...) those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have *corrupted* our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds (Emphasis mine).

It is this coup that takes place in the prophetic ending of Achebe's *A Man of the People* which according to Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2000) "reflects a creative purge of the rotten political system" (p. 109). Nzeogwu's speech captures the state of affairs in Nigeria in the years following political independence from Britain. Simon Gikandi (2009, p. 8) cannot be far from the truth when he insists that: "For students trying to understand the violent politics of postcolonial Nigeria, especially the period of corruption and military coups in the mid1960s, there is perhaps no better reference than *A Man of the People*."

AhmadouKourouma's first novel, *Les Soleils des indépendences* is a classic as far as Francophone, nay African literature is concerned. The novel was published in 1970. The book's title is apt and captures the very spirit of the times. From the time the novel appeared on the African literary scene, Africans have not had any respite under the 'suns' of independence. The imagery of the sun which the reader finds in the novel's title reflects AhmadouKourouma's rootedness in an African culture which is undoubtedly Malinké. The

suns represent each passing day since independence. The sun is usually very hot, and thus depicts the stifling political climate under corrupt and rotten politicians who have foisted a one-party state on the people. The heat which the sun of politics radiates is inimical to development and growth. By the way, in an interview granted Jean Claude Nicholas (1985, p, 105), AhmadouKourouma tells how the title of the novel was chosen:

C'est curieux de dire comment le titre m'est venu: quand il y a eu les événements à Abidjan, je suis allé dans mon village (...) Les vieux, on leur rapportait tout ce qui se passait à Abidjan. Un vieux, un jour, entre dans la case. Il me salue. Il me dit: - On m'apprend tout ce que vous avez commémalheurs. Vous qui êtes là-bas, à Abidjan, est-ce que vous pouvez nous dire quand est-ce que ça va finir les soleils des indépendances?

It is curious to say how the title came to me: during the crises in Abidjan, I went to my village (...). The elders were always informed of the happenings in Abidjan. One day, an old man enters my house and greets me. He says to me: - I have been informed about your predicaments. You who live there, in Abidjan, can you tell us when the suns of independence will be over? (Translation mine)

Les Soleils des indépendances is the story of the uneasy transition from the rustic but coherent African way of life to a confused and chaotic modernity which colonialism brings to Africa. Political independence is only a continuation of the steady erosion of Africa's past. AhmadouKourouma's novel exposes the failure of the new regime in a newly independent African state to rise above the challenges of development. This is evident in the predicament of the protagonist of Kourouma's text. Fama's disillusionment stems from the fact that the anticolonial struggle in which he was an active participant, has not yielded the desired results. He is excluded from the "spoils of war". The reader finds Fama at the crossroads of ideological confusion.

Fama discovers to his chagrin that the last vestiges of tradition have been wiped away by independence. He is pauperised and turns a beggar in the streets of Abidjan in order to survive. The former Horodugu kingdom of which Fama was a prince is now partitioned into two different countries; The Ebony Coast (capitalist) and the Peoples' Republic of Nikinai (socialist). The protagonist even requires an identity card, nay a passport to cross over to what used to be his ancestral domain. And later in the novel, he is arrested and incarcerated; upon his release, he decides to go back to his native Togobala, but he dies en route his village. The overbearing imagery of death which pervades the universe of the novel is also symptomatic of the gloom which independence casts over the African landscape.

But beyond the personal story of FamaDumbuya, is the problem of Africa's development. New African regimes, up till this day, have tinkered with different western-style ideologies and the blueprint for the continent's development; but this has scarcely yielded any result. In the early years of independence, we find leaders on the two sides of the ideological divide, caught between the American/British capitalist model and the Marxist-Leninist socialist doctrine. These ideologies are to say the least, at variance with the realities of the African continent, and cannot in any way pave the way for any meaningful development. It is worthy of note that these ideologies were introduced to Africa during the colonial period as tools for Africa's exploitation. In their well-researched work on these conflicting ideologies and their implication for Africa's development, Kodah and Traoré (2015) posited that:

The multiplicity of exogenous ideologies flooding the African sphere creates grounds for ideological misunderstanding and misinterpretation. This is eventually a source of confusion in policy formulation and orientation in African countries. The situation creates a vacuum for indigenous ideologies required for the articulation of the development realities of African countries and their people. It has turned African countries into testing ground for a plethora of alien ideologies which are hardly understood by African governments and intellectuals who only guess the meanings of these exogenous ideas without substance, since they are disconnected from the realities that serve as material base for their formulation. (<http://internationalpolicybrief.org/journals/edu-and-science-journal-vol5-no>)

From the above argument put forward by these scholars of development, it becomes clear that development strategies which do not take into account the indigenous African models of development are bound to fail. Thus, in AhmadouKourouma's *Les Soleils des independences*, the bid to apply the socialist model of development in the Peoples' Republic of Ninkai brings Diakité and his father in conflict with the regime in power. The use of communal forced labour to carry out developmental projects is at variance with the African way of life. In effect, Diakité refuses forced labour and is maltreated by the youth vanguard of the socialist party (*Les Soleils*, p, 84). In revenge, his father kills some key members of the party, including the Secretary-general.

No meaningful development can take place in such a chaotic and confused situation. Former friends and brothers are now divided along imported ideological lines which can only lead to counter productivity. This same situation is condemned in Jean Pliya's *Les Tresseurs de corde*. The Beninese writer recreates for his reader the ugly events in Benin Republic in the 1970s when the poor country tries to experiment with Marxism-Leninism. The resultant effect is the hounding and muscling of elements of the opposition considered enemies of the revolution. In the end, Trabi, a former member of the revolutionary vanguard teaches the people the way forward: solidarity. And as Jean Pliya himself puts it:

« C'est au bout de l'ancien corde qu'il faut tresser la nouvelle » (Pliya, p. 3)

“It is at the end of the old rope that we should weave the new one”

This simply implies that Africa's development should be hinged on true African solidarity backed by an African philosophy that takes into account the traditional structures which colonialism and western-backed regimes have tried to extirpate.

Clearly, western ideological models have not solved Africa's developmental problems. These models have all failed whether it is in Sekou Toure's Guinea, Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, Aghostino Neto's Angola or in Mobutu SeseSeko's Zaire. These regimes, just to mention a few, have applied these western-inspired ideologies to the detriment of the continent's development. The one-party states run by those early regimes did not leave room for personal freedom, justice, human capital development, cultural advancement which are some of the ingredients required to fire the engine of development.

The Cameroonian, J.R. Essomba's *Le Destin volé* is one of the recent post-independence novels that denounce political corruption as responsible for sub-Saharan Africa's underdevelopment. The novel's author, a francophone African like AhmadouKourouma paints a sordid world of institutionalised corruption. The character of Wincelas Ongala looms

larger than life. Much in the same way as Achebe depicts the character of Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People*; Essomba presents this character as corruption personified. Mr. Ongala is a very important personality in the government of the day. Through foreign agents, the ruling elite set up a comprador class that rides roughshod over the masses to achieve their inordinate ambition.

The protagonist of the novel is Jeff Effala, who like Odili Samalu in *A Man of the People*, tries to antagonise Mr. Ongala. He pays dearly; he is set up by his benefactor who slams drug charges against him. His family also suffers. So, through the eyes of Jeff Effala, the reader is led into the hideous world of politics, police corruption, and rot in the educational system, including institutions of higher learning. The narrator tells of how students pay money or give sexual gratification to lecturers to succeed.

In the opening pages of the novel, Jeff attributes these woes to the 'suns of independence.' When his grandfather announces to the family that he has been posted to a new place which will require that the family move away from their official quarters, his grandmother recalls what Mâlam, the seer says about Africa:

Je commence vraiment à croire que Mâlam avait raison quand il nous disait voir, dans ses cauries, l'Afrique s'obscurcir dans une nuit sans étoiles, et que l'homme noir qui prenait la place du colon blanc aurait tellement faim que les gargouillements de son ventre allaient couvrir toutes les voix de la raison. (Essomba, p, 29)

I am beginning to believe that Mâlam was right when he told us that he saw in his cowries, Africa sinking in a starless night, and that the black man who was taking the place of the white man would be so hungry that the sounds from his stomach would becloud every sense of reason (Translation mine)

How else can one explain the pervasive underdevelopment which plagues Africa? The politicians who took over from the colonialist have merely replaced the Whites without replacing the structures left behind. The black man has merely adjusted into the boots of the white man. He lives in opulence while his country men and women live in abject penury. Jeff and Richard are shocked at the apparent lack of concern for the masses. When they attend a party in Carole's house, Richard wonders why the roads in the country cannot be fixed (p. 50) He concludes by exclaiming:

« Il faut bien que l'argent du pétrole et de l'aide étrangère aille quelque part! » (p. 50).

« The money from crude oil and foreign aid must be going somewhere else! » (Translation, mine)

Across Africa, oil rich countries have not been able to account for the billions of dollars in oil earnings since independence. It is the case with Nigeria for example, where oil bearing communities are polluted. The activities Shell Petroleum have degraded the environment, and successive governments (civilian and military) have all failed to address the problem of pollution. Those communities have no portable water, no good roads, no health care facilities, etc. the resultant effect is the rise in militancy in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. Today, the whole of the Niger Delta is underdeveloped, the youths have been radicalized and whole families are living below poverty line.

Essomba's novel paints the picture of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. It is a historical document which captures the very essence of underdevelopment in the 'developing countries.' The title of the novel, *Le Destin volé* can best be translated as stolen destiny. When the oligarchic class in power has concentrated the means of livelihood in a few households, the masses are left to perish. The youth cannot afford to go to school; rural folks cannot access portable water and electricity, etc. In the prevailing circumstance one can say that the destiny of the masses has been stolen.

Tenants of the House, Wale Okediran's largely autobiographical novel, paints a gloomy picture of the political corruption that has come to characterise the Nigerian state during the first decade of the post- military era. The author himself was a member of the House of Representatives, the lower chamber in the country's bicameral legislature. The striking resemblance between the author and the protagonist, Sam is therefore not fortuitous. The scale of corruption depicted in Achebe's *A Man of the People* is dwarfed by the enthronement of systemic corruption by a new political class which comes to power on the heels of an ill-prepared military transition process.

The men and women who are elected into positions of responsibility are found to be self-seeking. This political corruption, up till this day, has beclouded the capacity for law makers to initiate bills aimed at addressing the menace of underdevelopment which has bedevilled the country since 1960. The reader is even shocked that roads are in a terrible state and the drains are blocked across a country which boasts of hundreds of oil wells that earn her billions of petrodollars annually. The nation's capital, Abuja is not spared the crisis of infrastructural deficit. The narrator tells the reader that:

It was a wet morning in June. I drove out of the legislators' quarters in Apo. The rain had started before dawn, making it difficult to leave the cosy warmth of my bed, now, the roads were flooded and the traffic had slowed to a crawl (Okediran, 2009, p. 12).

The situation painted above is the same across most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Roads are not tarred; when they are tarred, the job done is sub-standard. This has led to traffic congestion in most capital cities. In the course of the narrative, Honourable Sam comes to a better understanding of the inner workings of the nation's political machinery. He comes to a position of maturity and knowing just as in a bildungsroman; he discovers that politics is a dirty game of power and survival. He also discovers that politics in his country is not a game for the educated; that "education and political gangsterism do not go well together" (p. 57). He therefore solicits the reader's empathy when he takes an ideological position through his interior monologue: "And instead of my current alignment with political gangsterism, I should use my education and experience as a lawyer in a more positive way: promoting bills and policies which would move the nation forward" (p. 57).

The truth is that no bill has ever been passed in Nigeria to move the country forward. Political demagoguery is not enough to drive development. Corruption cannot drive it either. In a country where godfatherism and sycophancy are venerated, personalisation of power in the hands of a single individual will surely lead to stagnation. How can government ministries and agencies carry out developmental projects when, for example President Ambrose Oneya expects them to contribute towards the celebration of his mother's birthday? The President orders one of his aides: "Now, arrange a birthday gift for her. Every ministry, agency, parastatal, state, local

government and the wards of the Total Party must drop ‘something’. One million naira each” (p. 84).

The political elite are thus only interested in what goes into their pockets and into those of their relatives and cronies. Corruption is inimical to progress and development in all spheres of human endeavour. One of the most celebrated cases of corruption is the disappearance of NigComsat, a satellite project in Nigeria. According to the narrator:

The project, which was executed for National Space Research and Development Agency by the China Great Wall Industry Corporation, cost the Federal Government of Nigeria a whopping N40 billion. The satellite (...) was supposed to improve internet access to even the remotest rural villages and to enhance government’s economic reforms in the areas of e-learning, e-commerce, tele-medicine and tele-education among others (p. 221).

The circumstances surrounding the missing satellite are muddled up and tied to an ever-evolving game of corruption in high quarters. Unfortunately, whereas in saner climes the President should have resigned, Chief Ambrose Oneya seeks a third term in office. His bid fails because of members of the legislature, including Sam are vehemently opposed to what has come to remain in Nigerian parlance as the “Third Term Agenda”. The group opposed to the tenure prolongation gave these reasons among several others in a well-articulated document presented by the group’s leader, Hon. Kalkulus:

Corruption remains entrenched and endemic. The roads are impassable and with the spate of air crashes, air travel offers no alternative. The railway, which was only comatose before this new government came into power, is now certified dead. Education has been priced out of the reach of the masses. Public education institutions including the universities have never suffered a more terrible fate and neglect. Public health system has collapsed (p. 252).

With the above inventoried infrastructural deficit, it becomes evident that underdevelopment is sustained through corruption and the inability of government and its agencies to reverse the ugly trend. Wale Okediran’s *Tenants of the House* is therefore a satire of the Nigerian state between 1999 and 2007 when the first batch of politicians emerged from their cocoon after over fifteen years of military diktat.

Conclusion

Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* has been succinctly summarised by Simon Gikandi (2009, p, 9) as “*a serious questioning of the nature of power once it has been translated into a nationalist narrative that is unclear about its idiom and moral authority.*” This assertion is true of all the novels which we have analysed. The authors of these novels are Africans who have taken it upon themselves to document the historical evolution of Africa since independence in the mid-20th century.

It is quite worrisome that sixty years after independence, Africa south of the Sahara is still struggling to find its footing in the committee of nations. It is therefore recommended that for any meaningful development to take place in Africa, all hands must be on deck to do a critical reappraisal of where we have gone wrong. African countries must revive traditional structures which in synergy with modern modes of thought can address the problem of leadership. Electioneering processes must be transparent to bring responsible and responsive leaders to power. The resources of African countries must be harnessed to ensure an equitable

distribution of wealth. This will curb the menace of militancy and youth restiveness; it will also reduce the rate of prostitution among females, thereby curbing HIV/AIDS. If this is pursued with vigour, development can take place.

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