

**PHILOSOPHY AND THE AFRICAN SEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT: E.K OGUNDOWOLE'S SELF-RELIANCISM IN CONTEXT**

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**Abstract**

One of the major issues that have elicited response from scholars within and outside of Africa is the perennial question of why Africa have continually lagged behind when compared with other continents of the world as regards development. Indeed, while other nations of the world that hitherto belonged to the derogatory club of the “third world nations” have moved on, majority African nation-states are still battling with the basic issues of development. Several attempts have been made over the years to x-rayed the issues militating against development in Africa and different models have been developed with the intent of placing Africa on the pedestal of development that is both enduring and sustainable but these attempts have yielded little or no results. Critical study have also revealed that the failure of these efforts is not unconnected with the fact that they are either not genuinely developed to help Africa realise herself and to rescue Africa from the jigsaw of underdevelopment or that they are developed to keep Africa perpetually dependent on the West which for the most part are the benefactors of Africa and beneficiaries of her lack of industrialization and technological advancement. This paper engages the expository, descriptive and analytic methods of philosophical research in its bid to revisit E. K. Ogundowole’s Philosophy of Self-Reliancism in the African search for self-discovery and sustainable development. The paper argues and hence, concludes that for Africa to realise and discover herself, and to develop herself in a manner that is sustainable, the adoption of Ogundowole’s philosophy of self-Reliancism which stipulates that we look inwards and strive to be self-reliant rather than perpetually depending on the west at every point of need is both timely and imperative.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Self-Reliancism, African, Sustainable, Development.

## **Introduction**

Colonialism and imperialism at best can be said to have bequeathed Africa two experiences that have altered the trajectory of the existential life of the Africans: the first is the denial of African identity and second is the imposition of western culture on Africans. With respect to the denial of African identity, Ekwuru avers that “the early description of the continent as the habitat of animals, made it difficult to believe, thus negating the fact, that human beings ever lived there. Thus, when eventually human beings were said to have been “discovered,” their humanity was first of all negated and denied... hence, the Africans were historically saddled with the burden of his proof of human identity”.<sup>1</sup> The second experience is the imposition of thought patterns that are wholly western on the African person. Africans have seemingly accepted aside the above, her history that is told by the Europeans, Africans have largely accepted the most part of her description and perception by the west and this is crystal clear in the behaviors and carriage of the African person who places little or no value to anything that is African. In this thinking goods and services produced in Africa are considered inferior.

To this end, Africa “seems to have been cast into a capitalist mode of inferiority and backwardness and consequently, caged (perhaps, by herself as it stands) with the lasting structures to keep her at such level and mode of being”<sup>2</sup> hence, the imperativeness of self-discovery. This atmosphere, as Chukwuokolo captures it “made it conducive for Europeans to subtly manipulate Africans to view the world from European perspectives in all spheres of as social, political, developmental, technological, scientific etc.”<sup>3</sup>

The concomitant effect of the above is that since her independence from the shackles of colonialism, Africa has continued to grapple with the problem of development and hence, the continual search for models of development and sustainable development. This search is historical and stems from the fact that, upon the fall of colonialism and the independence of the most part of the African states between the 1950s through the 1960s, Africa realised what can at best be described as quasi independence in view of continual presence and dominance of neo-colonial institutions and structures.

The African condition reveals that the continent of Africa, despite its endowment with huge natural and human resources still have her citizens caught between the jigsaw of underdevelopment and a kind of poverty that is debilitating. African in this age still grapples with such problems as the lack of basic infrastructural facilities, insecurity of lives and properties amongst others. More worrisome is the fact that African seems not to know herself. In response to the above, several models and strategies of development have been articulated and tested in Africa, the most part of which as history intimates have failed. The question that accordingly comes to mind is that as regards why these attempts have failed.

The answer to the above is not far-fetched. These attempts, local or foreign were either make-believe (that is, they were never meant to develop Africa) or were not amenable to, or are insensitive to the social needs and the existential configuration of the African people. While the above is arguable, it returns true in view of the fact that we have not been able to answer the question of what is it that we must do to develop and to create a new Africa. It is in response to the above and in line with the thinking of Kwame

Nkurumah who intimated that “our philosophy must find its weapon in the environment and living conditions of the African people. It is from these conditions that the intellectual content of our philosophy must be created”<sup>4</sup> that Ogundowole refused to play the ostrich and take a flight in the face of the unpleasant realities of African. And this formed the basis as well as the background to his articulation of the philosophy of Selfreliancism.

This paper concerns itself with the African search for sustainable development. In this concern, the major question ramifies that of what constitutes the role as well as the contribution of philosophy and philosophers to the above task. Hence, this paper seeks to give the oxygen of publicity to Ogundowole’s philosophy of Self-reliancism and consequently, elevate the same as a pathway to getting it right and getting Africa out of the derogatory club of the third world and the woods of underdevelopment. In order to address the concern of this work, this paper explicates on the meaning of sustainable development. It further proceeds from a discourse on the African condition within the context of its search for sustainable development to a discourse on the gamut of Ogundowole’s philosophy of selfreliancism. In the final third, the paper discusses the relevance of Ogundowole’s philosophy of selfreliancism to the African search for sustainable development.

### **Making Sense of Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is derived from the appendage of the word ‘sustainable’ to development. Hence, it behooves on the paper to account for the concept of development before accounting for when development becomes sustainable. The concept of development has been conceived differently at different times by different scholars. For some scholars, development is synonymous to industrialisation, westernisation and modernity which plays out in such products and amenities like Information and Communication Technology (ICT), good roads, electricity, pipe borne water etc. for others, it connotes the eradication of poverty, hunger amongst others. From these conceptualisations, it is apparent that that development is multi-dimensional, that is, it can be economic, political, social, cultural just to mention but a few. Lending his voice to discourse on what constitute development, Agbakoba conceives development as self-realisation within the context of society.<sup>5</sup> In the opening line of his political treatise entitled *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney sees the ultimate aim of development within the context of the human person and averred that at the level of the individual, development entails increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, responsibility and material wellbeing.<sup>6</sup> He further showed that development is a social process which involves the increase in the capacity of individuals to master the laws of nature and to harness and apply the same laws in the production of tools with which they can conquer their environment and use all the available resources to meet their needs.

For Thandika Mkandawire, there are three senses of looking at development: (i) as a vision, description or measure of the state of being of a desirable society; (ii) as an historical process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods; (iii) as consisting of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various

agencies, including governments, all kinds of organisations and social movements. These are obviously related. Visions that are totally unrealistic are likely to lead to quixotic deployment of efforts, while efforts without vision are likely to lead to confusion and waste.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN) alludes the people centered nature of development when it avers that “development is growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic, and qualitative as well as quantitative...the key concept must be improved quality of people’s life.”<sup>8</sup> This paper finds the above definitions quite plausible and hence, adopts them. However, at what point does development assume the status of being sustainable? For Brundtland:

Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the need of the future generations to meet their own needs, and that sustainable development contains within it two key concepts which are, (i) the concepts of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and (ii) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environments ability to meet present and future needs”<sup>9</sup>

Put differently, Sustainable development is a planned cultural, economic, social, environmental and political change for the better, which needs cooperation at all the levels by all the stakeholders, geared towards the well-being of the masses, for the masses and by the masses. It is a societal good and every social actor must get involved and stay engaged in its pursuit. It is long termed, fosters inter and intragenerational equity and does not foul the air, poison the water, disequilibrate forest ecosystems or pollute and degrade lands.<sup>10</sup> Deducible from the above is the fact that sustainable development transcends the present. It takes care of the present and the future generational needs without accumulating unnecessary debt burdens as well as other indices that will constitute a challenge for future generation to pay or bear respectively.

### **The African Condition and the Search for Sustainable Development**

The African condition as it were is still the same. One does not need to strain oneself too far to come to terms with these realities. African nation states, as it stands, are the only remaining states in the derogatory club of the third world. That African have not got it right and have not developed in a manner that is sustainable are statement of fact that coheres to the actual state of affairs.

Commenting on the African condition, Ali Mazrui intimated that “things are not working in Africa. From Dakar to Dar es Salaam, from Marrakesh to Maputo, institutions are decaying, structures are rusting away”.<sup>11</sup> Mazrui further conceives of the African condition in terms of paradoxes. In his analysis, the fact that Africa is one of the best endowed continent of the world in terms of resources (oil-wealth and dollar reserves), while being at the same time one of the least developed; is the situation he termed “the pathology of technical backwardness”. This for him is the first paradox. The second paradox according to him is that, per head of each group’s population, the richest inhabitants of Africa are non-Africans. The poorest per capital terms are indigenous

Africans themselves... we find out that there are more white millionaires per head of the white population of the continent than there are black millionaires in relation to numbers of black around. The above, that is, the pathology of maldistribution is the second paradox. The third interrelated paradox is that "while the continent as a whole is, as indicated rich in resources, it is so fragmented that it includes the majority of the poorest nations of the world. The paradox here is of a rich continent which contains many poverty stricken societies. This is the pathology of a fragmented economy"<sup>12</sup>. Corroborating Mazrui, Ome intimated that in Africa,

Underdevelopment is a real fact of life. It is a state of mind as much as a state of real poverty. The prevalent emotion of underdevelopment is a sense of personal and societal impotence in the face of disease and death, of servility toward men whose wealth and decisions govern the cause of the events, of hopelessness before hunger and natural catastrophe. It is to be precise, a state of alienation and deprivation which is neither human nor inevitable"<sup>13</sup>.

Deducible from the above is the fact that development, if defined in terms of its simplest and common sense construct as meaning the availability of potable water supply, efficient schools and hospitals, electricity, enhanced agriculture and industrialisation and a better quality of life is at lowest ebb in Africa.

To the above end, scholars of diverse persuasions have attempted to decipher, articulate and situate where the problem of African underdevelopment lies. For Claude Ake "many factors have been offered to explain the apparent failure of the development enterprise in Africa: the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, the corruption of leaders, poor labour discipline, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning and incompetent management, inappropriate policies, the stifling of market mechanisms, low level of savings and investment. These factors are not irrelevant to the problem. Alone or in combination, they could be serious impediments to development"<sup>14</sup>. Chief among the other findings and submission of scholars in corroboration of the above position are economic and leadership crisis.

While it remains true that the foundation of leadership (in this sense, political) is built on greed and the elevation of private personal interest over and against the public interest and hence, contributes to undermining African development, this paper argues that more specifically and closely related to the above, the lack of a workable ideology and developmental strategies accounts for the present realities of Africa. It is in consonance with the above that it has been said that the "absence of objectivity and intellectual rigor in the critical moments of a nation's formation is more than an academic matter. It inclines the fledging state to disorderly growth and mental deficiency"<sup>15</sup>. The above position serves to give more credence to the fact that the poverty of workable developmental ideologies that are African and amenable to the African spatio-temporal realities can be said to be the problem as it stands.

There have been a search for developmental strategies and programs for Africa in history. However, it seems sometimes as though Africa, as can be seen in the workings of modern nation states within her enclaves is caught in the crossroad and dilemma of the choice of the path of development. While some think of forging a new course in her task of

attaining development, others feel very strongly and argue for the fact that a continuous courtship and romance with their erstwhile colonial dictators, their policies and developmental strategies is the only viable path to surmounting Africa's developmental challenges. It is in response to the latter that it has been argued that Africa has a way not to search for progress and development, and that is through her total dependence on the West and her policies as well as the scramble for foreign aids.

The foreign policies so tested for the most part have largely failed to as much as advance a pathway to Africans development and progress. This is because, as it were, development is about the people and the transfer of programmes and policies which are not appropriate and amenable to the social needs of Africa would without doubt amount to some form of intellectual joggling and jamborees. To this end, Agundu intimated that the "wholesome adoption of western designed policies have not offered Africa the prospect of sustainable development because of the lack of local content and an appreciation of the socio-cultural context of its implementation".<sup>16</sup> These policies have also not been mindful of the social needs of the African people. It is in the above context that such policies as the Import Substitutory Industrialisation (ISI) – largely copied from the old Soviet Union, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was shrouded in secrecy and further plunged African into underdevelopment have failed. The Millennium Development Goal's (MDGs) and its newly rebranded brother policy, the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) which in line with the above, is most likely as history has shown will record a few gains, keep African perpetually under the control of the west through its aid policy which will not actually lead Africa out of the derogatory club of the third world. The question that is important at this point in history is how do we get out of our present position and transcend our developmental challenges? In response to the above, it must be stated that:

We should not continue to deceive ourselves. Africa should take their destiny into her own hands and develop her own policies based on the need of its people. Africa's future lies in her own ability to take bold developmental initiatives. Africa future does not lie in spurious and neo-colonial partnerships.<sup>17</sup>

What can be deciphered from the above quotation is that granted that the problems of Africa which are in themselves, systemic cannot be divorced from the effect of colonialism, the solutions to these problems lies in the hands of Africans themselves. This thinking is harped on the fact that the present problem that we have cannot be solved by the same thinking that caused it. It is at this point that the thought of the philosopher qua philosopher having certain competence which can make him proffer solutions to our developmental problems in Africa is brought under the screen of truth. To this end,

The African philosopher, therefore, owe it as a duty to examine every facet of our lives with the view of bringing about what will advance the common-wealth. The philosophers are unique and strange because they find nothing strange. To this extent they present possibilities which seem obscured or even apparently unthinkable... for this reason they increase awareness and make people more appreciative of the complexities of nature. This position makes it possible not to

develop any unreasonable aversion towards any theory or hypothesis which in turn makes it possible to tackle a problem from different angles”<sup>18</sup>.

It is the above philosophical temper that has triggered the philosophical nozzle of E.K Ogundowole to advance the philosophy of Self-reliancism.

### **E.K Ogundowole’s Philosophy of Self-Reliancism: An Exposé**

Ezekiel Kolawole Ogundowole is a contemporary Nigerian philosopher who had his studies in Leningrad State University and the Saint Petersburg University in Russian amongst others. He is a retired professor of philosophy and had a successful career spanning over 44 years at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He has also taught philosophy in other universities in Nigeria and abroad. He has published extensively and some of his works includes *Self-Reliancism: A Philosophy of a New Order, Alternative Development Strategy for New States* (1988), *Colonial Almalga: Federalism and the National Question, A Philosophical Examination* (1994), *Echoes of Social Change* (1992), *Philosophy and Society* (2004), *Inexhaustibility of Self-Reliance* (2007), *Nigeria in Transition: Kakistocracy to institution of Democray* (2014), amongst others. E. K Ogundowole is the progenitor of the philosophy of self-reliancism.

The philosophy of self-reliancism is a derivative of the self- reliance and the concept is of African origin. E.K Ogundowole articulated his philosophising in the above regards in his work entitled *Self- Reliancism: Philosophy of a New Order* (1988)<sup>19</sup> and further defended it in *Philosophy and the Society* (2004). According to him, Selfreliancism as a socio-political ideology “is the realisation of the principle of self reliance. It is the ideology or orientation based on the principle. It demands for organising the entire activities of a people into a definite set of preference and priorities”.<sup>20</sup> Put differently:

it is the natural product of the passion for self-defence in the face of unfathomable forces which tends to suppress, oppress with the intent of keeping one in a perpetual subjugation...the circumstances which exuberate the people of the new state (Africa in this context) with the spirit of self-reliance impel upon them to attempt, in fact to do everything themselves, using all available resources and skills. These circumstances have a direct link with the imposed long association, first with colonialism and now, with neocolonialism.<sup>21</sup>

It is drawing from the above that one can argue that Selfreliancism is “used to represent the philosophical and ideological ideas ensuing from the principles that underlay the concept of self-reliance. Selfreliancism is the realisation of the principle of self reliance, the orientation based on this principle”.<sup>22</sup>

Be that as it may, selfreliancism does not mean and should not be mistaken to mean self-sufficiency. It should rather be taken to mean “autonomy of decision making and full mobilisation of a society’s resources under its own initiative and direction. It does means self confidence, reliance primarily on one’s resources, human and natural, and the capacity of autonomous goal-setting and decision making. It excludes dependence on outside influence that can be converted into political pressure”.<sup>23</sup> It is based on the principle of doing thing by oneself and for oneself.

The philosophy of self-reliance as Ogundowole argues, provides nations with the criteria by which they will judge the value of the possible actions and objectives, and consequently is the direction of choice. It is within this context that he argued that “an essential attribute to selfreliancism is a conscious purposive activity”.<sup>24</sup>Selfreliancism hence, demands of all citizens competence, and confidence, dedication, originality and creativity as well as a national awareness and acceptability.<sup>25</sup> It is the quality of self-confidence that is needed to trigger creativity and originality and it is national awareness and acceptability that will sustain the drive towards self-realisation and self-reliance.

Within the context of a nation, self-reliance is not self-sufficiency; self-reliance is not the ability of a nation to stand on its own, not needing anything external of itself and being able to provide everything for itself. Rather, it means “to an optimal level that a nation and a nation alone must create and provide all its people’s needs and requirements entirely and absolutely from within it naturally limited resource flow”.<sup>26</sup> However, because of the peculiarities of nations and following from the fact that nations of the world are not uniformly endowed and no nation can boast of having everything, selfreliancism or put differently, national self-reliance recognizes and accepts “the interplay of activities and needs amongst nations, but to the extent that such interplay does not breed exploitation and injustice”.<sup>27</sup> Ideologically, selfreliancism connotes autonomy in goal setting, decision making and the ability of a society to fully mobilise its resources under its exclusive initiative and direction.<sup>28</sup>

The philosophy of selfreliancism as exposed by E.K Ogundowole is both a strategy and an ideological orientation which stems from the need to safeguard not only nation independence by “cutting the suffocating imperialist neocolonialist world trade and economic relations, but also to protect the overall activities of a people at international or national plane. The ability of a people to control their resources and consequently, their economic and socio-cultural destiny is a necessary condition for bringing about a self-reliancist society”.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, drawing from the above that, selfreliancism presupposes and precludes a total reliance on one’s own resources primarily and the capacity to independently set out goals and decide which line of action to take without interference or a total dependence on foreign support that could undermine the nation’s freedom. A self-reliancist society, properly situated is at the outset,

A society of all for all, a society where everyone is his fellow’s keeper. A society of equal opportunities for the entire people working for the benefit of a harmonious society and for themselves individually and collectively, at the same time... holding onto these principle of the society there would be no reason why the envisage harmonious development of the self-reliancist society would not be accomplished.<sup>30</sup>

It is following from the above that Ogundowole argues that “holding onto these principles of the society, there would be no reason why the envisaged harmonious development of the self-reliancist society would not be accomplished. Everyone is made to see oneself as an important and inseparable part of the society. Selfreliancism is an embodiment of communalistic, gregorian, and individualistic elements of human

nature”.<sup>31</sup> Hence, he further grounded and summarized the characteristic of the self-reliancist orientation in the concept of “harmonic determinism” and argues that the driving force behind the self-reliancist transformation is inherent in the individual and the collective or more accurately, in their togetherness and complementarity.<sup>32</sup> What the above position can be interpreted to mean is that, selfreliancism does not elevate or axiomatise one group or class over and above the other as one finds in capitalism, socialism and other orientations. Rather, there is mutual complementarity and not a class struggle.

Putting forward his argument for the fact that it is only through selfreliancism that a nation can liberate itself from external servitude and the fact that it is in selfreliancism that the riddle of development is solved, Ogun dowole worded in the following manner:

To liberate itself from the condemnation into eternal servitude, oppression and incessant exploitation of criminal magnitude, the wretched partner, the new states (Africa) has no other weapon, no other ideal or ideological option, but selfreliancism. Selfreliancism breed dynamism, it re-enforces hope, optimism and boldness required to change the world according to its clear vision of a more perfect future. It is the only reasonable path leading into that perfect future. In this sense, selfreliancism and not capitalism (the greatest evil of our age), nor its half-brother, communism, is the riddle of development solved. Selfreliancism cognizes itself to be the solution, and such it is, in truth. In effect, selfreliancism is the position as the negation of the negation, and is hence, the actual phase for the next stage of societal development in the process of self-realisation and recovery.<sup>33</sup>

In his discourse on selfreliancism and development, Ogun dowole averred that development is the desire and ability to use what is available to continuously improve the quality of life, liberate the people from the hazardous power and influence of natural geophysical and world historical environment.<sup>34</sup> This ability, like ambition as he further argued “cannot be received from outside in a ready-made form. It has to be encouraged, nurtured and strengthened in oneself... development, therefore, is not and cannot be a state in which one has access to finished product of neocolonialist or of any advanced foreign country... development must begin with the desire to improve our lot through our own efforts”.<sup>35</sup> When received from a people, development becomes a personal undoing and is self-destructive.

On the essential quality of those (nations) upholding selfreliancism, as well as the attributes of the philosophy of selfreliancism; Ogun dowole prescribed self-observation on the first front and rational thinking and competence on the second front. Regarding the essential quality of selfreliancism, he averred that:

Self-observation is an essential quality of those people upholding selfreliancism. Their knowledge of their own activities and their results, thus, is derived not from narcissistic self-inspection. Rather, it is a product of their constant pre-occupation with the impression they make, with the actual result of their activities. Hence, selfreliancism as an ideological orientation inculcates in the individual members of the society, the striving for self-realisation.<sup>36</sup>

While arguing that the striving for the realisation of the principle of selfreliance demands that individual members of the society do not leave the success or failure of the society to fate and providence, Ogun dowole stressed that “rational thinking and competence are the attributes of the philosophy of selfreliance. For the people striving for selfreliance always are on the lookout for mistakes in their activities, never let their mind evade their external and internal realities and are open to corrections always”.<sup>37</sup> It is this temper of self-falsification, self-correction and desire for perfection with the intent of attaining progress, “when embraced by all the activities of, and by the people themselves would result in everyday life in dispersing step by step, the mental darkness in which the people otherwise live”.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Relevance of the Philosophy of Selfreliance to the African Search for Sustainable Development**

In the preceding paragraphs, we have accounted for the African condition and the thoughts of E.K. Ogun dowole on selfreliance. It is crystal clear that African’s intercourse with, and a total reliance on the West and other foreign advanced nations of the world, have culminated into the importation and transfer of developmental models that are not sustainable and workable. It remains to argue that moving forward, we are called to embrace selfreliance;

We must begin with a social task that must be done. We must learn and with no delay of any kind, commence to do away with all the habits, behaviours, practices and thoughts that conflicts with the proclaimed principle of selfreliance, all such activities that runs counter to its possible realization no matter how much deep they must have established or entrenched themselves with us. No matter how much they have almost become part of ourselves. If and since they run counter to the process of the realization of selfreliance, it means in principle that such habits, thoughts and activities are in effect, the negation of our existence. To repudiate them, therefore is imperative.<sup>39</sup>

A continual hold unto these habits, principles, thoughts and practices accounts for the oscillatory and self-cancelling motion towards progress; which in itself, is devoid of an established and workable trajectory. Conversely, fidelity to the ideals of the philosophy of selfreliance and the adoption of the selfreliant posture and temper by modern African states, the likelihood of sustainable development being attained in Africa is quite high.

To agree and appreciate the fact that the Caucasian and the Mongolian races have always moved far ahead of the black race and that Africa have lagged behind in the scheme of things among the league of nations, the black people requires a revolution. Consequently, the poser is this; what kind of revolution? For Oyebola, “it is the revolution of the mind. It is a conquest of the right to think and admit that in all the crisis of man’s history, our race has always been the underdog, ours is the only race that has never made it anywhere in the world. We have for too long remained poor imitators of the other races”.<sup>40</sup> The mental revolution here advocated will allow Africans the latitude

to change their behaviour and is intended at institutionalising the culture of self-belief and self-reliance.

While it returns true that Africa stands in dire need of development and progress, African does not need a technology-driven development in the sense of an absolute and complete technological transfer. What African needs at this moment is an “appropriate development” in terms of looking inwards and finding ways around her problems. This is because “the transfer and imposition of alien technology on the activities of a people at a different level of socio-cultural development and societal needs could be disastrous to the people”.<sup>41</sup> Ogundowole further intimated that “such transfer could halt, switch the attention of the people from a genuine indigenous search for technological solutions of problems posed by and corresponding to the level of the practical tasks that confront them in their daily life”.<sup>42</sup> To this end, “progress-enhancing development, technologically or otherwise, (contrary to popular belief, implied in the notion of the so-called technology transfer which does not take cognisance of the social needs of the African states in this context is self-realisation”<sup>43</sup> should be jettisoned. Rather, the kind of technological development that we need in Africa is the technology that is homegrown and is amenable to the prevailing social and cultural realities of Africa.

In this thinking, the operational principle should be that of what we can do with what we have and how well we can do it rather than so much of what we have. The development that we should seek in Africa is not and cannot be that as has to do with “access to the finished products of neocolonialist or any foreign country...it must begin with the desire to improve our lot through our own efforts”.<sup>44</sup> The above without doubt is a product of the philosophy of self-reliance. In the African search for a kind of development that is sustainable,

The existence of a distinctly formulated goal, self-reliance, and a well-defined path leading to its realisation, brings a certain continuity into the life of new (African) states to which its people can always cling and towards which they can always turn. Even when the occasional inevitable failure occurs, and some of their concrete plans miscarry, so that disintegration and despair. The people (nations) upholding self-reliance would rapidly recover their equilibrium and determination not to be beaten.<sup>45</sup>

Ogundowole further avers that “thrown back at their own resources, they will always search for some ways of resorting to the failed plan and with continually renewed energy, radically reorganise their activities stage by stage, towards the desired- national development and social progress via self-reliance”.<sup>46</sup> Put differently, if the development strategies that are employed and deployed in Africa are based on the philosophy of self-reliance and the thinking of wanting to “do it yourself for yourself”, the likelihood of failure as has characterised developmental strategies past and present will be slim while at the same time, the guaranteed assurance of bouncing back through the same thinking should brick walls be met in the process.

Consequently, if African must develop in a manner that is both sustainable and enduring, it must be wary of her relation with the West. This thinking is hinged on the fact that, as colonial and neocolonial experience in history have shown, the most part of relations at

the international stage is based on greed while at the same time is shrouded with secrecy and hypocrisy. In this regards, “if we seek selfreliancism, we should be interested in knowing how our activities figure in other people’s plan just as the other people care, too, about how their activities figure in our own orientation”.<sup>47</sup> The above have in the past, suffered a total neglect and this have undoubtedly left Africa in the state of perpetual subjugation that it has found itself.

Very instructive to the African search for progress and a kind of development that is sustainable is the imperative of being weary of foreign aids. The scramble for foreign aids as the basis for African development is self-destructive. This is because it tends to, and encourages foreign domination. It also leads to the sacrifice of a nation’s sovereignty on the altar of aids that are not sustainable and leads to a calculated shifting of creativity and innovativeness. To quote Ogundowole, “foreign aids undignifies, humiliates and dehumanize our people”.<sup>48</sup>

It must be noted that a people that know themselves, that are sure of themselves having confidence that the path they tread are in the right direction and in their best interest are not at the mercy of others. They do not leave their success or otherwise in the hands of fate. Selfreliancism, as an operational ideology, through its elevation of the culture of “do it yourself” stimulates the development of human reason and consequently sends it to work. And this breeds self-confidence which is in turn a necessary ingredient that puts man in polar position to taking responsibility. However, this is only possible when the opportunity presents itself and fertile grounds provided for him to put his mental capacity to test. In Africa, the situation is quite different.

A situation where almost all the vital economic and some other activities of a country is preferably in the hands of foreign ‘experts’, the possibility of the development of the reasoning power of the indigenous would be experts is grossly inhibited. The march towards self-reliancism is thereby obstructed and complete alienation is upheld instead.<sup>49</sup>

The above represent the prototype and the exactitude of the African experience where foreign nationals and “experts” build roads and engage in almost all the productive ventures of nation states thereby pushing back the frontiers of any drive towards selfreliancism and further fanning the ambers of neocolonialism. In fact, Ogundowole argued that, it is due to the lack of opportunities for nationally useful positive problem solving rational thinking owing to the lack of opportunity to try out their own real and latent capacities that have led most people in the new state (Africa) to direct their energies into wrong and negative channels. Here, “people engage themselves in various dubious praxes which they miscall business but which in fact, are praxes working against the overall progress of their own society”.<sup>50</sup>He further stressed that:

The point is, after providing jobs for the foreign nationals who most probably would otherwise might not have found one at home, the new states (African states for the most part) now proceed to give them a royal treatment even though there are indigenes that are equally qualified or might even be more qualified. We have not quarrel over a genuinely rare expert in a particular field

which falls within the priority area of a new state and in which there are no qualified indigenes absolutely. Such a truly rare expert may be given a presidential treatment, we have no axe to grind over that but a situation where every Dick and Harry is accorded royal treatment while equally qualified indigenous “Dicks and Harrys” are on the streets in search of employment and millions of other citizens live in squalor and abject poverty amounts to threading along the path of economic and political suicide.<sup>51</sup>

Answering the question of what should be done to reverse this trend. Ogundowole’s submission is here considered necessary. To quote him:

To remove this obstacle inhibiting the attainment of self-reliance, *African* states must as a matter of organised policy more than ever before, set up and sponsor intellectual groups amongst their indigenes for major development projects. Instead of relying completely and all the time on foreign transnational companies, the so called experts, etc. which hitherto has been a common feature in the praxis of the new (African)states.<sup>52</sup>

The plausibility of this position is evident in the fact the expert advice so called that is sought from the foreign experts possesses within themselves for the most part the tendencies of promoting the interest of the foreign allies so to speak which are as historical records intimates are subjugatory in their disposition.

As a people, Africa has been deaf to the voice of reason for far too long. To this end, the submission that is reached in this paper is that, from the food we eat to the clothes we wear, from the automobiles we drives to the materials we use to build the houses we live in, from the phones we use to the electronics and gadgets in our houses, from the political ideologies that drives our politicking to the relations we have at the world stage, we should be guided by the ideals and temper of selfreliance.

Consequently, Africa must change her behaviour. This change of behaviour is in two fronts: on the individual front, the crave for foreign goods, be it second handed and already used ones must stop. This thinking has made Africa a dumping ground for very substandard and dangerous products. In contradistinction, the goods and products that are produced on the African soil by Africans for Africans should be cherished and patronised. On the government front, as a matter of policy, boarders should be closed to all goods and services that are produced in Africa by Africans. This will to a large extent trigger production and fuel the growth of the economy. While the decision of Nigeria among other African states to close her boarder and ban the importation of selected goods is commendation, much stilt needs to be done in that regard. A situation where those who are saddled with the responsibility of stirring the ship of state vote monies in billions of naira to buy highly exotic foreign cars rather than patronise automobiles produced in Nigerian on the one hand; and do not feel safe to be treated by Nigerian doctors or in Nigerian hospitals but travel on medical tourism abroad cast doubt on the sincerity of the idea behind boarder closure in some African states.

The idea that whatever is from the western world is axiomatised and is the best with a total disregard for and reference to those produced within the shores of Africa as substandard is bad and stands in need of correction. Calling such products and goods that

are produced in Nigeria and Africa “local” is also derogatory and unacceptable. Hence, the imperativeness of a complementary attitudinal change. Following from the above, we should strive to use the crude oil we refine, we should eat the food we produce, wear the clothes that we produce from fabrics that we weave in Africa, take the drugs we manufacture and drive the automobiles we manufacture, we should use the phones and electronics that we manufacture. Then should we find them to be inadequate in standards, the idea of “do it yourself for yourself” will drive us into research and studies geared at improving on them to meet our taste and up the standard.

While we agree that selfreliance is not self-sufficiency within the context of not needing any help from anyone, our prescription is that African states should seek help from amongst themselves before looking elsewhere for foreign loans and aids. This is because aids and loans as we have argued earlier in this paper are shrouded in secrecy and are intended for the most part and are intended at keeping Africa in constant servitude and subjugation. The time to renege on the reckless spending of tax payers’ money that should have been used to sponsor researches, build hospitals and industrialise modern African states in view of the dearth of resources and struggling economies has come. This activity, the logic of which is standing on its head because religion is a personal matter has continued unabated with an unflinching support and defense by the simple to the utmost dismay of critical minds.

While it is crystal clear that the philosophy of selfreliance possesses within its kernel, the propensity to trigger development in Africa. In fact, it can be said to be the philosophy of development for African in this age. It is imperative to note here that the fate of backward and third world nations which rejects and downplay selfreliance is obvious. Those who renounces selfreliance or refuse to uphold its principles but instead clings to an obsolete and self-negating ideological principles, are bound to assume the presence of profundities, secrets and the working of fate where in fact nothing but uncontrollable factors enter into play.<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, “the hesitant, indecisive, passive, feeble nations with its incapacity to make decisions and to liberate itself from the complicatedly- woven but exploitative realities of contemporary world , the lopsided international capitalist economic order to be specific, in the end develops a complete blockage of action”<sup>54</sup> and consequently spurns her chances at selfrealisation and sustainable development. A nation (African nation states) “which has lost every bit of self-assurance because it failed to consciously organise the activities of its people in a way to provide them with real chances to prove their worth and to increase their power, mental and material and use same for progress enhancing development...energies of most her people are diverted into wrong and negative channels”<sup>55</sup> which for the most part stunts and in fact, constitutes clogs in the wheel of such a nation’s development.

### **Conclusion**

As we draw to the conclusion of this discourse, a number of positions have been raised in this paper and a rehearsal of a few is here considered necessary. That Africa has not developed in a manner that is sustainable and that only the majority of African nations are still left in the derogatory club of the third world where basic human needs and social

amenities are still seen as luxury. This is indisputably the true reflection of the African contemporary situation which coheres with the actual state of affairs. Attempts that have been made in the past to get African out of her present condition have yielded little or no results largely due to the neglect of the social conditions of the African people. Granted that development must take strong root from within, it is here argued that the time have come for Africa to discover herself, to initiate development processes based on ideologies that are amenable to the prevailing realities of African and make themselves the subject of history rather than its object as it were. In response to the above, Ogun dowole advanced and advocated for a self-reliant approach which stimulates the development human reason and advocates for the provision of the enabling environment for local content to thrive over and against the engagement of foreign experts and advice whose disposition to the sustainable development of African is questionable in view of their subjugatory tendencies.

To this end, it is here believed that after decades of limbo, Africa can come alive again. The conclusion that is reached is that for Africa to develop herself in a manner that is sustainable, Africa must rediscover herself and run while other walk. And to run, it must do so like the fastest land animal in world history, the Cheetah which is incidentally of African origin and within the context of the philosophy of Selfreliance. It is only along the lines of this philosophic temper that Africa can liberate herself from external servitude, the shackles of suppression, oppression, subjugation and consequently reclaim her place among the League of Nations.

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