

# **Interrogating the Challenge of Domination in the Contemporary World**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discusses contemporary global problems, emphasising domination as the root of other world challenges. Recent studies on world history focus on either poor leadership or poor infrastructural facilities as banes of underdevelopment in third world countries. This paper shows that the nature of relations among countries is the major factor that influences other challenges in the world. More specifically, the paper demonstrates that imperialism, with its variant manifestations of domination, colonialism and neocolonialism, is the major factor that creates other problems, both at local and global scenes. The paper uses largely secondary sources to maintain that third-world countries have faced a series of problems, including poverty, poor infrastructures, poor leadership, corruption, insecurity, environmental issues, etc. These challenges, according to this paper, have foreign influences. Therefore, the nature of relations among countries at the global level has to be altered radically for peace and development to reign in underdeveloped countries.*

## **Introduction**

With the world becoming a global village due largely to the influences of information and communication technology, contacts and relations in various sectors between one country and another are continuously becoming much easier. Improvements in state relations have upgraded the standard of living in some countries, particularly in the developed economy. Conversely, some countries, especially in Africa, that came out of colonialism more than fifty years ago are endlessly being exploited by the developed world. This form of relations characterized by exploitation sows

the seed of many problems in the contemporary world. This paper discusses some dominant issues that influence affairs in the Contemporary World. However, the paper contends that domination, rather than any other factor, has been responsible for most of the world's contemporary issues and challenges.

### **Some Dominant Issues in the Contemporary World**

Over time, the world has changed, and one epoch gave way to another; as Croce famously stated, "All history is contemporary,"<sup>1</sup> shows, among other things, that societal problems keep changing because of human dynamism, and therefore, each society shall derive lessons from the past that suit its peculiar condition. This perception, of course, influences writers to write what they consider to be their period's dominant themes or challenges. A recent example is the book by Yuval Noah Harari titled *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.<sup>2</sup> Among his other arguments, Harari challenged Fukuyama's perception of "the end of history" by showing some crises inherent in liberal democracy, such as human rights abuse, poverty, exploitation, threats to immigrants, and infringement on people's liberty in the name of fighting terrorism.

Of course, specific dominant issues in our world today may be regional. However, others are continental and global. This division informs the creation of regional organisations, such as the ECOWAS, the European Union, and the Arab League, to solve specific challenges. However, everyone must show interest in global events because, in one way or another, a country is affected by global events in politics or the economic sphere. Therefore, many issues attract the attention of governments at various levels, including international organizations, journalists, human rights

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<sup>1</sup> . See W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, London, Hutchison, 1977, p. 33

<sup>2</sup> . Y. N. Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2018. Some of the issues raised by Harari include Disillusionment, job, liberty, equality, community, civilization, nationalism, religion, immigration, terrorism, war, humility, God, secularism, ignorance, justice, post-truth, science fiction, education, etc.

activists, and researchers. Some of the predominant issues include globalization, poverty and underdevelopment, freedom and justice, democracy, terrorism, imperialism and domination, gender, global warming, corruption, health challenges, security, terrorism, food security, education and culture, investment, migration and challenges of refugees and so on. In his speech for the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nigeria's independence, President Muhammadu Buhari mentioned some of these contemporary issues; "We will continue to support initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges of our times: global and regional crises and conflicts, terrorism, trans-border crime, climate change, human rights, gender equality, development, poverty and equality within and between nations, etc."<sup>3</sup> Other issues raised by President Buhari include investment, a stable economy and youth empowerment. These challenges really influence the nature of politics and relations at national and international levels. Although all these issues have relevance and have been shaping our lives, some are more influential than others, for in the study of causation, there is a cause of causes.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, most of the dominant issues in our contemporary world are the products of imperialism and domination.

### **How Domination Influences Developments in the Contemporary World**

Domination refers to the subjugation, annexation or exploitation of one country by another, one class by another, one society by another or one person by another, either directly or indirectly. Some factors are worthy of note here. First, this domination may be an extension of one country into another. Second, it may happen within a particular country, for instance, if a class of wealthy individuals or a class of corrupt political elites tries to manipulate votes to perpetuate themselves in the position of power to control the apparatus of the state. Third, domination involves injustice

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<sup>3</sup>. [dailytrust.com.ng/buharis-speech-on-nigerias-58<sup>th</sup>-independence-anniversary](http://dailytrust.com.ng/buharis-speech-on-nigerias-58th-independence-anniversary)

<sup>4</sup>. E.H. Carr, *What is History*, London, Penguin, 1990, p. 34

and unfair treatment. Fourth, it is characterized by the exploitation of inferior economically or technologically, superior, or simply, by a more brutal category of people. It is, therefore, not surprising if domination becomes a menace and results in many inimical consequences.

Since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, when Europe began to engage in slave raiding, the differences between man and man and between one state and another, based on unfair means, began to appear sharply. Europe became more developed as resourceful human beings, for instance, from Africa, were taken across the Atlantic. The exact process that developed Europe and America to the level of the Industrial Revolution was also responsible for Africa's underdevelopment.<sup>5</sup> Although some authors argued that African leaders should be blamed for the contemporary underdevelopment in Africa,<sup>6</sup> atrocities committed by European slave raiders cannot be ignored. Therefore, the slave trade was the basis for the creation of sharp division among different regions in the world, with some becoming technologically and economically developed through the process that starved, stunted and arrested the economic and technological development of other regions. Similarly, colonialism wreaked havoc on the colonized.<sup>7</sup> Through colonialism, colonisers exploited, on a massive scale, resources in the form of agricultural products and minerals from the colonized society. Therefore, most countries termed underdeveloped or Third-world countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America experienced foreign domination throughout their history.

Even after political independence, the Western capitalist nations have continued with the new form of colonialism, referred to as neocolonialism, through the use of some organisations such as the World Bank and IMF in order to perpetuate themselves on other countries. Apparently, those who

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<sup>5</sup>. See W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Abuja, Panaf, 2005, P. 53

<sup>6</sup>. See B. U. Gusau, *Africans are not Blameless*, Gusau, IEC Publishers, 2009

<sup>7</sup>. See W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, ...

colonized would have better infrastructures than the colonized. The issue of developed and underdeveloped or developing came into being. Therefore, discussing contemporary forms of development and underdevelopment must consider the issue of domination. Furthermore, inequality between underdeveloped and developed countries is also a feature of industrialization. This industrialization, in no small way, contributes towards global warming. Global warming affects not only temperature but also food production. The negative effect of global warming on food production is more severe in tropical countries that do not even have large-scale industries.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, underdevelopment is a product of domination. Underdevelopment has certain features, such as poverty, hunger, and poor infrastructural facilities that are associated with domination. Unfortunately, most underdeveloped countries face poor leadership, which aggravates their situation. This promotes the call for good governance, justice and fair play. Another main concern, particularly from the Western countries, includes democracy and human rights. However, these need to be further interrogated because the developed countries have been invading different countries, which contradicts the claim of democracy and human rights. Instances of this abound. Imperialism and domination contributed to the First and Second World Wars outbreak. Domination and economic exploitation contributed to the outbreak of other wars in many parts of the world, such as the Vietnam War and the Gulf Wars.

Besides, domination also results in the rise of terrorism and terrorist organizations in different countries. For instance, the Zionist creation of the state of Israel in 1948, through the support of the USA, Britain and the United Nations, contributed to forcing the Palestinians to take arms

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<sup>8</sup>. See I. Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now*, London, Profile Books, 2011

against invaders. Similarly, with the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, people from different parts of the Middle East rushed in order to extricate Afghanistan from foreign invaders. The formation of al-Qaeda was a consequence of that occupation. However, the irony was that, during the Afghan-Soviet War, the Mujahedeen were called freedom fighters by the United States. The United States looked at the war through the lens of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup> However, when the Mujahedeen challenged the United States upon its military station in the Middle East, they (Mujahedeen) were referred to as terrorists by the United States.

Similarly, the first and second Gulf Wars had devastating effects and contributed to the rise of militant organisations. With the overthrow of Saddam's government in Iraq, ISIS emerged, and then killings and destruction became common in the country. Libya was also devastated by foreign intrusion. It was reported that the spread of weapons into Nigeria, through porous borders, from Libya exacerbated the Boko Haram crises. Part of the consequences of these wars was the infringement upon people's rights as a result of killings, destruction of peoples' properties, migration, refugees, and food crises. This, therefore, relates to the outbreak of diseases, crimes and unemployment.

There has been a lot of public outcry, particularly from the Western world, over promoting democracy, justice and human rights. This did not manifest in reality because the Western capitalist countries always have an interest in the resources of underdeveloped countries. America and Europe have, therefore, been interested in the politics of the underdeveloped countries. In the 1940s, Mossadeq's government in Iran nationalized the country's oil, which British oil companies dominated. Before nationalization, Iran received only 16 per cent of its oil. As a reaction to

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<sup>9</sup>. G. Leech, "Islamic Extremism is a product of Western Imperialism," accessed at [www.counterpunch.org](http://www.counterpunch.org), published in 2016

nationalization, the United States and Britain orchestrated the overthrow of Mossadeq's government and installed Shah Reza Pahlavi. Garry Leech commented on the consequences of the overthrow of Mossadeq's government;

Under the Shah, Western oil workers flooded into Iran, and the country's capital, Tehran, became a decadent playground for high-paid foreign oil workers who engaged openly in un-Islamic activities, including alcohol consumption, casino gambling and prostitution. Moreover, while the country's oil wealth flowed into the pockets of foreigners and the Shah and his cronies, most Iranians struggled to survive in poverty.<sup>10</sup>

There are many contradictions here. The United States and Britain overthrew a democratically elected government. Second, they continued with the exploitation of Iranian oil wealth. Third, Iranians were left in abject poverty. So, where is the democracy? Where is the promotion of freedom? Where is the promotion of good governance? Mossadeq's overthrow and the consequences of such actions contradict democracy, freedom and good governance. Furthermore, examples similar to those of Iranians may be found in other countries.

Moreover, domination is apparent at the level of international organisations. The United Nations has been dominated by a few countries as permanent members in the Security Council, while most countries, particularly those from the Third World, have no significant voice.<sup>11</sup> The views and positions the UN took represent those of America and its allies. Moreover, the World Bank, IMF, Commonwealth, and other organisations appeared to be avenues where America, Europe, and other imperialists continued to dominate developing countries. Therefore, the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries continues to grow sharply due largely to domination.

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<sup>10</sup>. In G. Leech, "Islamic Extremism is a product of Western Imperialism," accessed at [www.counterpunch.org](http://www.counterpunch.org), published in 2016

<sup>11</sup>The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China are the Security Council's permanent members.

## **Conclusion**

This paper argues that domination is the most crucial factor influencing events in the contemporary world. The reason is that almost all the contemporary challenges are the products of domination. As shown in the above paragraphs, imperialism, domination and exploitation led to poor governance, poverty, insecurity, terrorism, problems of refugees and the collapse of the entire superstructure of the dominated society. Ironically, those countries who claim 'civilisation' are responsible for domination, which involves the use of atomic and nuclear bombs. Therefore, domination has been responsible for most of the contemporary problems in our world today. This explains why most international conferences on democracy, human rights, freedom and justice, etc., ended without substantial and meaningful results. The reason is that such issues are not the actual problems in themselves but are caused by another, more severe challenge-domination. But America and Europe want to avoid the issue of domination being addressed as such is their means of sustenance. To use a hypothetical statement, without domination, the world would have been in peace, each country would have governed itself based on its peculiarities in religion and culture, and trade transactions would have been done fairly rather than under the dictate of some few countries.



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