

# Post Colonial Development in Africa

by Michael Mann

Over the past few decades, various regions have been blessed with massive economic development. The poster child for this growth is China, which has seen double digit growth every year for the past decade (World Bank, 2012). [Foreign Policy](#) magazine predicts an economy valued at \$123 trillion by the year 2040. While China, a previously humiliated, (at the hands of the Japanese) but not colonized nation has been very fortunate, many other states have not been.

Post-colonialism is defined in anthropology as the relations between nations and areas they colonized and once ruled. (Fischer-Tine, 2011) The causes are plentiful, but three major reasons for a lack of development are paramount. In the past, only the richest and most powerful families received quality educations. In more recent years, this trend has shifted to provide education for many post-colonial nations citizens. Still, work is unavailable, forcing an exodus of professional workers out of their homes and, in many cases, their countries altogether. Second, arbitrary borders have been established by the colonial rulers in the past which have caused widespread conflict to say the least. Finally, we look at the actions taken by outside groups (NGO and MNC's), and they are majority of self interest. The funds flowing out of the nations do not make their way back into the nations. This phenomenon hinders growth economically and in job creation.

Where do we go from here? There are a plethora of solutions available to these nations. In fact, distinct economic theory has been practiced and failed in these states time and time again. Now, we must ask ourselves, how can these nations discover economic growth? What can be done domestically and internationally to help foster this growth?

Many post colonial African nations have come a long way in terms of education. In the past, a quality education was only attainable by the rich and powerful within these states. Recently, we have seen higher education attainability rates throughout the post-colonial world. But, what happens when an education cannot help you make a living? This, among other issues, is a cause for lacking development. Wage rates are extremely low, and there is not a market for highly skilled or professional labor within many African nations. To this end, an education does not necessarily provide jobs in nations.

This is the antithesis of the developed world. Many African youth that receive education almost always leave their homes. They will either leave their homes for larger cities in search of work and education, or they will leave their countries altogether in an attempt to send money home to their families. Those that leave their country find it more profitable to be taxi drivers in Europe than to be Professional workers in Africa. So, education is not valued, nor are there returns on investment for the youth that are lucky enough to receive an education. In order to mitigate this issue, corporations and NGOs must invest in African professional labor, and moreover, make it worth Africa's while. At the lowest level, better access to education must be provided. African nations

must then provide professional jobs to employ these trained assets. A prime example of this is South Sudan, who has abundant supplies of oil. Regardless of the issues with Sudan attacking the disputed border area as recently as this week, Juba is far removed from the oil rich region. This vast supply of oil to China should be invested in through labor from both the South Sudanese and their huge trade partner, China. This investment back into South Sudan will improve the labor landscape dramatically and in turn boost economic and social development in the nation.

Perhaps the biggest cause of conflict is the borders which were arbitrarily created by colonial rulers during their tenure. These ongoing conflicts detract from the ability to focus the massive amounts of attention required to develop post-colonial nations. It also creates a natural rift in everyday life, from education to culture and even language. Just this month, we have seen this phenomenon in Mali. On April 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Taureg tribe declared independence from Mali, calling their new nation Azawad. [Al-Jazeera](#) provides a summation of the Taureg's struggle, explaining their roots being nomadic and spread out over Libya, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Algeria. Muammar Gaddafi gave them a chance, and they became his "personal defiance force". Towards the end of last year, the Taureg claimed their land by capturing strategic cities and fronts and declaring independence. They called themselves the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. This is not central to only Mali and West Africa. Throughout the Horn of Africa (HOA), these same issues are present. With ongoing struggle, and conflict both socially and territorially, progress is hindered. Financial benefits are given to the groups or regions that are populated by the popular tribe or cultural group. Further, development is halted by the fact that cultural conflicts cause inefficiency and language gaps cause issues with communication and labor. The long term solution to this problem is to allow the African Union (AU) to set borders in a non-arbitrary way. This will provide the framework, literally, for the nations to homogenize and promote efficiency which will lead to development.

Now, in theory, we have an educated population who can communicate and get along without cultural and language barriers. The last huge impediment is Multi-national Corporations (MNC) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Many MNC's invest in cheap labor as they have in Asia and Latin America in the past. However, in the case of post colonial African nations, the return on investment is the missing piece. Foreign corporations extract profits from natural resources; take South Sudan and China for example. China is a huge oil trade partner with South Sudan. However, there is a conflict on the border where the oil lies as well as issues with the money that is coming from China. Multi-national Corporations and many European and American nations as well as organizations send money in the form of humanitarian aid to Africa. The issue here, is that the nations do with the money what they think should be done with the money. They reinvest the money inappropriately, boosting up industries that coat the pockets of already rich and powerful nations. Some of this money is reinvested to provide aid and water; however a very small percentage is invested in education and the workforce. (Meijer, 2004)

Africa's post-colonial states have great number of ailments. Literally, they have the lowest access to running water, high famine rates, low literacy and education levels and are generally at the bottom of

the globe when it comes to development. These issues stem from their roots as post-colonial nations naturally, through arbitrary borders that cause conflict, a lack of industry for professional labor and inappropriate funding designation by the recipients of foreign aid and MNC investment. Through hard changes and a long process of change, these post-colonial nations may begin to show signs of growth. It starts with the youth and education system. Once there is a quality workforce, synonymous to that of India's, Foreign investment will come in the form of investment, not aid. This investment can be used to bring cultures together and eliminate a lot of the impediments to growth. Finally, the nations need to be re-organized in a way that is not conducive to conflict and cultural differences. Inherent conflicts exist in many of these post-colonial nations that will not be erased until the borders that create the conflicts are redrawn. These are not quick fixes, but daunting lengthy tasks that must be addressed now.

### **Works Cited**

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