

# **Of Immigration, Neoliberal Globalisation, *Mtumbaism* & the Struggle for a Just and Progressive World Order**

## **Essay by Mwandawiro Mghanga, Chairperson of SDP**

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### **Part I. Neoliberal Globalisation, Immigration and Immigrants - The Reality and Consequence of Growing Poverty amidst Plenty**

#### **An example of the life and struggles of immigrants in the West**

A few years ago, I conducted a one week research under the title, *The Life of Immigrants in Gottsunda* for the course of Research Methods at Department of Rural Development Studies, at the Swedish University of Agriculture (SLU) Ultuna. In the process, I made thirteen interviews that involved sixty persons, men and women, young and old of different nationalities that included Swedes, Africans, Iranians, Kurds plus people from former Yugoslavia. I chose Gottsunda, Uppsala, as it is not only one of the largest suburbs in the fourth largest city in Sweden, it is also the place with the highest concentration of immigrants in Uppsala. In fact, immigrants form the vast majority of the residences of Gottsunda.

During the interviews, I learned that unemployment is one of the greatest problems among the immigrants in Gottsunda. I was informed that many people in Gottsunda were either unemployed or under-employed. Many of those I interviewed said that they wished to work but could not find jobs even when information from the press, internet and the labour offices often announced increasing job opportunities. Many said that when immigrants do find jobs then they are usually low paying ones such as cleaning, washing dishes or assisting disabled or aged persons opportunities not commensurate with their skills or education.

They further claimed that compared to immigrants, Swedes are more advantaged in all ways as far as employment is concerned. Many also believed that lack of knowledge of Swedish is often used as an excuse to deny immigrants job opportunities as many of them speak adequate Swedish for the jobs they apply for if not perfect Swedish. As a consequence of all this, the immigrants are either forced to continue studying and learning skills they do not use all the time or resigned to doing jobs they don't like or that are below their potential simply in order to survive. Others are forced to undergo the 'humiliation' as they put it, of depending on social security. Unemployment contributes to low incomes and a life of poverty and struggle for survival among the immigrants who are forced to resort to various coping strategies to deal with the problem. Most of those I interviewed also said that the main reason they reside in Gottsunda is that it was the only place in Uppsala they could find an apartment easily. In other words, it was not their wish or decision to live in Gottsunda, although many also said it is a beautiful place with all the necessary services available. They even said that many Swedes are moving away from Gottsunda that is becoming an exclusive immigrant suburb. As a result, the children of immigrants attend schools where the majority of the pupils are immigrants and hardly get the chance of mixing and integrating with Swedish children and helping to improve their Swedish. This is likely to lead to disadvantages in acquiring education and skills and therefore careers, the process that leads to the same fate experienced by their parents.

I was also informed that the immigrants in Gottsunda resort to various strategies of coping with the situation of unemployment. These include

- working to 'survive'. This means accepting to do any work available irrespective of the level of education, job experience or carrier choice;
- Making sure they live on the cheapest food possible, second hand clothes and other consumer goods;

- Establishing social networks: people visit one another, make parties in their houses, lend each other money and provide one another with solidarity in times of need. This is the alternative to socialising in restaurants - the lifestyle their low incomes cannot allow;
- Studying: rather than giving in to under-employment or unpaid jobs (*praktik*) or the 'humiliation' of depending on social welfare, many immigrants opt to study even when they don't need the studies. Often the courses they take do not lead them to employment and are not recognised by institutions of education or employers;
- 'Black jobs': others do black jobs or businesses to add to their incomes even when they are exploited in the process or while realising they are committing crime by so doing;

As an immigrant myself who had lived in Sweden, and at Uppsala for that matter, since 1991, I naturally sympathised and appreciated with what I heard during the short research. As a matter of fact, I identified with many of the sentiments raised by those I interviewed. The participants of the research could have been describing my own experience, that of my wife, friends and neighbours. They could have been talking about the frustrations and plight of academic professionals of all sorts with immigrant backgrounds. They could be talking about the conditions of immigrants not only in Sweden but in the West in general. For it is common knowledge that immigrants are the most marginalised communities in the West, they are the poorest of the poor. This notwithstanding the lucky few who occasionally manage to climb their way to the top.

But it is a known fact that people immigrate to the West in search of better and prosperous lives. So if the life of most immigrants is as that described by the immigrants in Gottsunda, why continue to emigrate to and stay in Europe? Why don't the immigrants simply pack and go back to their countries of origin? After all, the life of the immigrants from Third World countries in the West is many times better than that they would ever dream of in their countries of origin! In Europe they can at least expect social security while most of them will be threatened with hunger or even starvation in their countries of origin, not to mention gross violations of their human rights! What right have they (the immigrants), therefore, to complain? This is the response of extreme rightist migration policies that breed racism and xenophobia and that are, unfortunately, growing all over Europe and the West.

Xenophobia is also rearing its ugly head in Africa. In South Africa, Black South Africans have repeatedly organised violence against other Black Africans from the other countries of the continent who they blame for escalating the economic and social problems ravaging their country that include poverty, unemployment and inequality. In Kenya too when the state fails to solve the problem of the growing insecurity, especially terrorism, they blame it on refugees from Somalia and threaten to repatriate them to 'their country' while building a 'Chinese wall' between Kenya and Somalia to prevent Somalis from entering the country. All this is happening when African leaders at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa are talking all the time about the need of regional integration. After the overthrow and murder of the great Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, and the consequent destruction of the Libyan state and nation, xenophobia against Africans South of the Sahara has escalated in the country.

The purpose of this essay is to refute the easy questions and simplistic answers based on racism and xenophobia by arguing that the problem of immigrants and immigration is complex and is a manifestation of globalisation, particularly neoliberal globalisation. My contention is that the solution to the myriad problems related to immigration and immigrants is not closing borders or building walls against immigrants who include refugees, discriminating against them, ignoring their plight or only pretending to be dealing with their problems.

Rather the solution lies in addressing and dealing with the root causes of that force millions of people from all over the world, but mainly from the Third World, to move away from their countries of origin to seek a life elsewhere against their will. It is in opposing global capitalism that is also escalating the exploitation and oppression of the poor and working classes in the developed countries.

I will also argue that the problems caused by immigration and immigrants to nation-states is a reminder that no country can be free from the adverse effects of neoliberal globalisation, the socio-economic system in the world today that is responsible for increasing poverty and underdevelopment to the majority of countries and peoples of the world. Furthermore, I hope to put across the message that the problem of immigration and immigrants is global and needs global solutions from the perspectives of those being marginalised by globalisation and those struggling for a just, progressive, humane and sustainable world order. Neoliberal globalisation is planting the seeds of racism, xenophobia and antagonism between immigrants on the one hand and the increasing poor and marginalised indigenous citizens of developed countries on the other one.

As the process of neoliberal globalisation continues to unfold, with its impacts felt throughout the world, immigration - people moving from their countries of origin to go to start life in other countries or away from their homes - has increased. Global capitalism has become a reality even in the remotest parts of the world, but also the reality that is uprooting millions of people from their nations, cultures, and livelihoods and triggering the problem of immigration and immigrants which is now a crisis.

But the major concern or problem is with the escalation of immigration from the South to the North, from the underdeveloped nations to the developed nations, from the poor to the rich countries. The countries of the South hardly feel threatened by immigrants from the North. In any case, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, compared to the immigration from the South to the North, there is hardly any significant immigration to the South. Again, immigrants from the North are welcomed in the South as they are likely to bring the much needed resources in the form of direct foreign investments, 'aid' or through tourism. Discrimination against immigrants from the North in the South is hardly heard of. On the contrary, it is the people of the South that are discriminated against by immigrants from the North in their own countries. For the poor are downtrodden at home and abroad.

But mass immigration to the rich and prosperous countries promising better opportunities and that are caused by poverty and underdevelopment are not new in history. Millions of Irish people immigrated to the US following the hunger, poverty and sufferings caused by, among other things, the failure of potato harvest as a result of potato blight in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. At the same time, millions of Swedes immigrated to the US to escape the life of poverty and oppression from feudalism in search of a better life. Millions of Europeans emigrated to USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to escape poverty, prison and all types of persecutions, and in search of means to make sustainable livelihoods. During colonialism, Africa became the homeland of millions of European settlers, the majority of whom could not hope to ever own land, property or become wealthy in their countries of origin. Is it unexpected, therefore, that today millions of people are immigrating to the industrialised countries to escape the hardships caused by the collapse or malfunctioning economies in most of the Third World countries that, besides, is attributed to the unjust unipolar world order? In any case, people have always immigrated from where there are less prospects for a better life to where there are more prospects for a better life. That is why the immigration of people from rural areas to urban areas is not only inevitable but unstoppable.

The developed, industrialised, High Income Countries (HICs) are building legal, physical and all types of barriers to prevent immigrants from Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union from entering their countries. Yet emigration from the poor to the rich countries seems to be unstoppable. Immigrants are prepared to take all types of risks and to endure all forms of hardships and humiliations to enter and live in the rich and prosperous countries. Thousands of people die every year in the process of migrating to the rich countries while criminal organisations are making huge

wealth in cross boundary human trafficking or the smuggling of immigrants into the European Union, North America and Australia.

In the Western countries where they migrate to and have become a reality, the immigrants are the most marginalised groups and the poor of the poor. In South Africa, however, immigrants from other countries of Africa are seen by the poor indigenous South Africans to be more better off than them (Black South Africans who were exploited, oppressed and marginalised by the apartheid system for centuries and who are still exploited, oppressed and marginalised by the capitalist system now under the government dominated by the Black elites. This is in fact the basis of the growing xenophobia in the country.

Many cities and towns in the West are being characterised by exclusive suburbs for immigrants that are avoided by the citizens of the host nations. Within these suburbs there are divisions based on the nationality, race and religion of the immigrants. Tensions and violence based on these divisions are common. But what is worse is that the governments and states of the host nations hardly put efforts of helping in integrating immigrants to the society they have become part and parcel of.

Increasingly, immigrants are causing fear, despondency and uncertainty from the poor and marginalised citizens of the HICs who have to compete for employment and other meagre resources available to them with the immigrants. This leads to racial and ethnic tensions and even violence that is increasing in Europe and in the world today. All these conditions form fertile soil for the seeds of neo-nazism and extreme rightist politics that are in the ascendance in Europe and North America. Reactionary and racist politicians are consolidating and increasing their political hegemony by preaching to their desperate fellow citizens that the root causes of the economic, cultural and social problems (including unemployment, terrorism and crimes of all sorts) in their countries are migrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, poor European countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries. The rightist politics and politicians, of course, ignore the role played by immigrants in the economic and cultural development of their countries. They also refuse to acknowledge the need for immigrant labour given the fact of the ageing population of Europe and the industrialised countries. Neither do they see the fact that it is neoliberal economic and social policies that are responsible to the growth of poverty and unemployment among the majority of the citizens in the developed countries. For the flexibility and global nature of present day capitalism allows capitalists to shift their industries and capital from their home countries to other countries where tax, labour and environmental policies allow them to make much more profits. This does not only cost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the industrialised countries of the North, but also leads to cut on government expenditure on key social services that the working class desperately needs.

As a matter of fact the social welfare system in Europe - including in the Scandinavian countries is being eroded rapidly by the neoliberal leaders and policies at the expense of the majority of citizens. Poverty among the majority of citizens has increased. When I was in Sweden from December 2014 to April 2015 I was shocked to see beggars outside all the supermarkets and railway stations I visited - something which I did not see when I was in the country in 2013! As the implementation of neoliberalism continues with privatisation of even essential services such as housing, water, transport and health the gap between the rich and the poor are increasing as also hostility to immigrants by the indigenous populations.

In short, immigration and immigrants is a real and complex problem today as shown by the escalating crisis of hundreds of thousands of immigrants dying in the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea while desperately trying to cross to Europe from Africa and also Asia. The recent xenophobia in South Africa in which indigenous South Africans have lynched fellow Africans who have immigrated to South Africa blaming them for the social and economic problems they are forced to live with is also a manifestation of the global problem of immigration. The Kenyan government is building a 'Chinese Wall' between the country and its neighbouring Somalia that it blames for the origin of terrorism that often causes deaths and destruction. At the same time, asylum seekers from Somalia who have been forced to flee to Kenya

for fear of the Al Shabaab terrorists are in turn also terrorised by the Kenyan government by being threatened to be repatriated back to the country they fled from to avoid the deaths, torture and persecution. Yet whether we like it or not nations cannot plan their economies without taking into account the reality of immigrants. Neo-Nazism is rearing its ugly head throughout Europe by exploiting social and economic problems being created by neoliberal globalisation. Immigrants become easy scape-goats for what is in fact the negative impacts of contemporary capitalism and imperialism in the world today. These were conditions that brought Hitler to power in Germany and gave birth to fascism. Remember, if we do not learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it. What, therefore, is neo-liberal globalisation?

### **3. Neoliberal globalisation and increased marginalisation of the poor nations and peoples' of the world**

The fall of the Soviet Union and the communist states of Eastern Europe that brought about the end of the classical Cold War, is one of the greatest events that ended the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The effects of the fall of the Soviet Union are being felt not only in the former communist countries but also all over the world. The fall of the former Soviet Union was accompanied by the acceleration of the process of neoliberal globalisation. The globalisation of economic, political, social and cultural life that many agree is a continuous process dominates contemporary current affairs. Yet globalisation which is in fact dominated by global capitalism in theory and practice, is utilising the scientific and technological revolution in the world to turn the whole world into a market place controlled by few multinational and transnational corporations. Global capitalism is dynamic in producing new technologies, economic growth and enormous wealth that is appropriated by few individuals or families. It transcends nation-state boundaries and seeks to remove from its way any regulations and morals, be they labour standards, taxation policies, environmental requirements, national laws, etc., that prevent it from ripping and dominating the world. The Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation provide global capitalism with the institutional framework to facilitate its operation and expansion).

The growing inequality in economic growth rates, accompanied by the widening gap between the rich and the poor, is producing dangerous political and social problems in many countries and societies. As the masses of the poor see their chances of escaping acute poverty diminish, they are becoming increasingly resentful of those whose growing wealth is evident. This resentment is especially pronounced in the impoverished shantytowns that surround many of the seemingly prosperous towns in the low-income countries. In the hostile, inhospitable and inhuman environments that characterise slums, large numbers of people, especially among the growing legions of unemployed youth, are being attracted into extremist political and religious movements that promise a better life to the majority poor. All sorts of violence, crime, prostitution and violation of human rights by states and individuals has increased, especially in urban areas. Street gangs, drug trafficking syndicates and mafia type organised crimes are dominating societies and unleashing terror and insecurity. Religious inspired terrorism has found fertile ground under these circumstances.

Deep class divisions are also emerging or escalating in China and the post-communist states of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states. Following the introduction of market liberalisation reforms in these countries, the gap between the rich and the poor has become considerably worse, while newly formed capitalist class (including the Mafia) has accumulated enormous wealth that they display in highly conspicuous manner. Unemployment, poverty, disease, crime, violence and lack of access to necessary social services is an embodiment of the restoration of capitalism in these countries.

Another consequence of neoliberal globalisation is the growing income differentiation based on inter-group relations in multi-ethnic societies. In most societies, the divide between the rich and the poor is not the only schism that matters: of far greater significance are the divisions between various strata of the poor and the lower middle class. When such divisions coincide with ethnic or religious differences, and

when one group of poor people find itself mainly making less economic progress than a similar group of different ethnic composition, the result is likely to be increased ethnic antagonism (so called tribalism and xenophobia), and at the extreme, increased inter-group violence or even war. The brutal civil wars triggered by tribalism that happened in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Peru, Colombia, Rwanda, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and to a lesser degree Kenya that together caused enormous deaths and destruction while producing millions of refugees and immigrants, are examples.

Immigration caused by war and political persecution is well known and appreciated. It is immigration caused by the adverse effects of neoliberal globalisation that has hardly received attention for today economic immigrants that are growing in their millions are regarded as threats to the civilizations of the developed countries. Political, legal and physical walls are constructed daily by developed countries to lock out immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Yet should for example China or India disintegrate and degenerate into civil war, as happened in the former Yugoslavia, due to neoliberal globalisation, no country in the world - least of all Europe, North America and Japan - will not feel the catastrophic effects that will be caused by hundreds of millions of refugees and immigrants and that all will have to deal with. The immigration crisis happening in the Mediterranean Sea between Africa and Europe is but a warning that worse is yet to come should neoliberalism continue to dominate the world. But the masses of the world have a right and duty to make capitalists and imperialists pay for their crimes against humanity, even if this means migrating to the doorsteps and homes of capitalism and imperialism to sharpen the class contradictions there.

## **Part II. *Mtumbaism*, How the process of neoliberal globalisation is turning Kenya into a second hand nation**

### **1. Introduction**

*Mtumba* is a Kiswahili word that was originally used to refer to second hand clothes. This is because the first second hand commodities that were sold at a large scale were clothes. Now that today second hand commodities have become the norm rather than the exception in East Africa, *mtumba* refers to all second hand items, clothes, shoes, utensils, vehicles, machines, food, etc. In this essay, I also take the liberty to refer to as *mtumba* all foreign ideas or ideologies that are aimed at preventing progressive change and that serve to maintain the political, economic and cultural order of poverty, dependency and underdevelopment in Africa. In Kenya, like in many parts of Africa, the importation, buying, selling and consumption of all sorts of second hand items has become a culture. It is this culture and process of dependence on second hand foreign goods, values and ideas that I call *mtumbaism*. *Mtumbaism* is a consequence of the implementation of neoliberalism economic policies in the African continent and contributes directly and indirectly to the phenomena of immigration.

In this essay, I will analyse the impact of *mtumbaism* to the economy, culture and psychology of Kenya and Kenyans from the perspective of globalisation. This will be based on my own experiences, observations and reflections as a Kenyan in Kenya and in Europe. I will attempt to demonstrate that neoliberal globalisation is contributing to the underdevelopment of Kenya and compromising its national freedom and sovereignty. Increasingly, many Kenyans both professional and ordinary people, are immigrating to Southern Africa, Europe and the USA hoping to find opportunities of earning better living. The brain drain from Kenya to the more prosperous or promising countries is inherent in the process of immigration and neoliberalism while it also contributes to vicious circle of underdevelopment. What is true of Kenya is also generally true of most of Africa, Asia and Latin America, subject to the specific conditions of each country.

## 2. The reality of the phenomena of *mtumbaism* in Kenya

### The trade in second hand clothes

Kenyan markets, whether in the rural or urban areas, are today full of all sorts of *mitumba*, second hand commodities, most of which are imported from Western Europe, USA, Canada and Japan. In the 1960s, there were hardly any *mitumba* in the Kenyan markets. Then second hand clothes were referred to as *Marehemu George*, meaning the clothes of dead people personified by the dead King of England, George VI. This was in order to discourage people from wearing them. It was only desperate people who had to wear clothes left behind by the dead. One, therefore, had to be extremely poor in order to wear *mitumba*. In those days, the material circumstances allowed Kenyans to hold on to their pride. Then the economies of African countries were performing well and causing positive development. This was more so in Kenya where the people were enjoying one of the highest standards of living in the continent. Emigration due to poverty or unemployment was hardly known. The vast majority of Kenyans who went to study abroad would rush back to Kenya as soon as they finished their studies. As for ordinary Kenyans, the idea of immigrating in search of a living did not exist. Not so nowadays!

Today the trade in *mitumba* has grown to be one of the largest informal economies in the country. One of the biggest import commodities of the country is *mitumba*. The largest markets in Kenyan urban and rural areas deal with second hand clothes and other *mitumba* items. Thousands of people earn their living through buying and selling *mitumba*. The majority of Kenyans now wear second hand clothes. While in the beginning one considered it a shame to wear second hand clothes and if s/he had to s/he would not reveal the fact, nowadays second hand clothes have been accepted as part and parcel of life and are sold and used openly and without shame.

The harsh living conditions brought about by the deteriorating economy, that as in most Sub-Saharan Africa began in the mid-1970s are eroding the pride of Kenyans. This includes using all means possible and enduring all types of risks and degrading conditions to immigrate to foreign countries and do the kind of jobs they would not accept to do in their country of birth.

Today the majority of Kenyans are so poor that they cannot afford to buy new clothes. As poverty escalates and the neoliberal economic policies cut more and more jobs through retrenchment brought through the 'rationalisation' of the civil service, privatisation of state enterprises and the closure of local industries unable to compete with foreign industries, the number of those who rely on *mitumba* is increasing rapidly. Second hand clothes are seen and even accepted as the solution in a situation where millions would practically go naked without them. The problem is that while *mitumba* may alleviate the immediate problem it is certainly not the long term and sustainable solution to poverty. It is in fact part and parcel of the problem that constrains the development of local industry, trade and agriculture. Its implication to the cultures and humanity of Kenyans and the future of the country is horrendous, to say the least.

### Other *mitumba* commodities

Again, in the beginning *mitumba* was only about clothes. However, today the majority of Kenyans buy and use all sorts of *mitumba* commodities: shoes, socks, inner-wear, blankets, bed-sheets, curtains, utensils, etc. Many vehicles and most cars on Kenyan roads are *mitumbas* imported most from Japan and also from Europe, the majority of which enter the country via Dubai and are therefore also called *dubais*. The cars also use second hand tires and other second hand spare-parts imported from Europe and Japan. All sorts of food-stuff, milk, eggs, sugar, meat, fruits, a lot of which is considered as *mitumba* in their countries of origin, are sold in the Kenyan supermarkets and open markets. Food that today in the West is regarded as junk food<sup>1</sup> and therefore unhealthy has of late appeared in the Kenyan markets and is

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becoming more and more popular among the middle class, thanks to economic liberalisation. Here I refer to the food sold by multi-national corporations such as *Macdonald's* that are increasingly being criticised for their unhealthy foods. One of the impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation is the coming of *Nandos*, a South African food company equivalent to *Macdonald's*. Fast - food restaurants have increased in the food markets in Kenyan towns where they sell frozen chicken, meats, and hamburgers, some imported from outside the country. This is having a negative effect on the eating habits of Kenyans as fresh and health foods are becoming more and more expensive. Tobacco multinational corporations that are prohibited from advertising in the Western countries advertise freely in Kenya and encourage the youth to the dreadful smoking habit. Unilever and Nestle, for example, the multi-nationals that have a giant share in the food and beverage industry in Kenya, have committed themselves to reject "genetically modified ingredients for their European products" It should be noted that the commitment of the corporations is to European markets and not Kenyan ones. So even in a situation where the question of the impact of transgenic organisms and food to health, safety and the environment has not been resolved, the corporations regard Kenyans as *mitumba* citizens of the world and can therefore afford to gamble with their lives with impunity.

### **Kenyans are consuming *mitumba* ideas and culture**

*Mtumbaism* is not about material goods alone. It is also about education, ideas, culture. In the era of great scientific and technological revolutions in the world, particularly information technology, Kenyans import *mitumba* knowledge from the West through the print media, radio, television, the internet and other electronic media. To make it worse, this is happening when knowledge is increasingly being privatised and commercialised in the name of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), and in the process underdeveloped countries like Kenya marginalised in relation to scientific research and information (The Crucible II Group, 2000).

Yet, today, in the era of globalisation knowledge is deemed to be the most important factor of determining the development of a nation (ibid., 2000:4). Books that are no longer needed in schools in Europe, USA, Canada, Japan etc. are either sold or donated for use in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions in Kenya that are too poor to afford up to date ones. Kenyan scientists and researchers in Kenyan institutions of research and higher learning use second hand equipment bought from the northern countries or donated to them. In the age where computers are invaluable in the search for knowledge, there are hardly any computers available to universities and institutes of research and higher education in the country, leave alone schools. But the scarce resources available disappear through corruption or are squandered through importing luxurious cars and other goods for the Kenyan elites. The professors and lecturers at the institutions of higher learning are either too busy dealing with too large classes of students or are engaged in money minting activities to find time to renew and develop their knowledge through research.

In the process of privatisation of universities - including public ones - the university administrators are more concerned in making money for the universities (and for themselves of course) than production of good knowledge to the students and the country. As a consequence, education standards have gone down alarmingly. Thugs who find fertile ground in the corrupt institutions impose themselves upon other students (transformed into zombies) to be student leaders with the connivance of university administrators. Academic freedom that is seen as a threat to the stability of the institutions by the corrupt and reactionary professors that administer them is not tolerated in the universities that are governed through imposition of the culture of fear, threats, intimidation and silence. Ironically, there is more democracy in Kenyan society in general than inside the educational institutions that continue to expel students arbitrarily and to prevent robust intellectual discourse. This process produces *mitumba* graduates who enter the cycle of *mtumbaism* going on in the country that is also reflected in the Kenyan leaders today. The exiting *mtumba* education teaches students and pupil's values of individualism, greed, selfishness, corruption and worship of money rather than those of creativity, hard work, honesty,

modesty, patriotism and commitment to the common good and humanity. They are not encouraged to search and struggle for truth, social justice and a better Kenya and world.

The Kenyan mass media depend on foreign news agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press, AFP, etc. for the global news they print and broadcast to Kenyans. The majority of the Kenyan journalists, whether from the print or electronic media, write and broadcast bourgeois platitudes on democracy, human rights, governance, gender, etc., that only strengthen capitalism and imperialism in the country. The mass media that is mostly owned by foreign and local capitalists, exists to make money and to defend the status quo of neoliberalism. Their content is riddled with lies and permeated with corruption and gives voice only to those in power, with money and defenders of bourgeoisie ethics and platitudes that are repeated daily and weekly. They have no space for those who challenge the status quo of the capitalist and imperialist system established in the country. Besides, American and British films, many of which are outdated, dominate Kenyan national television and the videos seen in private homes. And while this is happening local films made by local artists are rejected, ignored and hardly popularised. Second hand commercial advertisements are preferred to local made ones to the detriment of local advertising companies. *Mtumbaism* and neoliberalism fights against the growth of local art and artists.

Under *mtumbaism* and neoliberal globalisation the importation and consumption of pornography has increased. Gender and feminist activists led by the petit-bourgeois women and men, the majority of whom are in NGOs sponsored by Western countries do not find it necessary to struggle against pornography in the country. Pornography is extremely humiliating and dehumanising, especially to women, as much as it is allowed by bourgeois freedoms. At the same time, anti-social habits that are regarded as anathema by the cultures of Kenyans are today being imposed as agendas for discussion by donor nations through the media and some local NGOs. Instead of, for example, struggling to change the material conditions that force people, especially women, into prostitution, some people especially in NGOs, are now making money by making seminars to organise prostitutes whom they call 'sexual workers' to form trade unions and thus legalising sex as a commodity. Yet prostitution is one of the worst manifestations of the degradation and exploitation of the poor, especially women.

NGOs, that are supported by the imperialist's aid in all ways and that are presented as an alternative to the state, are strong holds of bourgeois ideas and values in the country. Many are led by extremely greedy 'professional' beggars and con men and women who are experts of writing proposals for 'aid' money, rubbing shoulders with foreign diplomats or donors, organising seminars and workshops in urban areas and publishing books, mostly in English, that remain in their luxurious offices. Corruption, tribalism, nepotism, cronyism, lack of transparency and accountability, intrigues, etc., are characteristics of the majority of Kenyan NGOs. The foreign donor organisations that in many cases are led by people who are just as greedy and corrupt, know this, but as long as the local NGOs continue to embrace neoliberalism in theory and in practise, they will continue to receive funding from them.

Thus in the process of *mtumbaism*, like most of other African peoples under the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed upon the nation by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) through the government, Kenyans are made to depend on the Western definitions of democracy. They are taught that bourgeois democracy is not only the Alfa and Omega of democracy but also that it is above classes, states and nations. Today terms such as 'human rights', 'good governance', 'transparency', 'accountability', 'gender', 'peoples participation', 'grassroots', etc., have become platitudes that are only paid lip service by the governments and non - governmental organisations who parrot them. For as long as they remain devoid of history and class analysis, as long as they are not integrated in the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle, they will remain as hollow and elusive as bourgeois' democracy itself.

Neoliberalism, assisted by the Kenyan state, pro-capitalist NGOs, electronic and print mass media and bourgeois intellectuals and politicians of all sorts, strives to make Kenyans believe that there is no alternative to the capitalist system and the neoliberalism imperialist world order. In this way, foreigners

and their stooges in power in our country shape the everyday worldview of Kenyans. So it happens that Africans are made to view and measure their cultures from standards set by outsiders who advocate for the globalisation of bourgeoisie values - *mtumbaism*.

### ***Mtumbaism is a manifestation of neoliberal globalisation***

*Mtumbaism* is yet another testimony about how neoliberal globalisation has made a large section of human beings into second hand citizens of the world. It is about the inequality between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, in the era of globalisation based on capitalist ideology and praxis, and how this relationship impacts on the livelihoods, economies, cultures and psychology of the people of both countries. It is about the struggle for survival of the people whom Fanon (1967) has called the “wretched of the earth”, people who today have to depend on things and ideas produced and disposed of by other people. In the face of economic globalisation that worships the power of money and the 'wisdom' of market forces, the creative potential and humanity of billions of marginalised people is being squeezed out.

Within the rich countries, it is the poor or people from the working class and immigrants who are reduced to the depending on *mitumba* material goods. *Mtumbaism* has therefore a class character both at the national and international level, with the poor and marginalised people being reduced to consuming things used and not needed by other people. Consumerism is a characteristic of capitalism. In a system based on competition, exploitation of person by person and the worship of material things rather than human values, there is the culture of buying, accumulating and disposing of things even when they are still useful. For example, one would buy a shirt or a blazer and use it for one week and throw it away to buy a new one. There are second hand commercial and charity shops where people can dispose of their *mitumba* "to help the poor people of Africa and the Third World" and clear their conscience in the process. This is what starts the process of the accumulation and globalisation of *mitumba* as I witnessed it in Sweden. *Mitumba* cannot accumulate from the poor people of the South and the North who cannot afford to throw away things until they are sure they are no longer useful. That is why in Sweden, for example, the majority of the consumers of *mitumba* are immigrants, mainly from the Third World, who also form the vast majority of the poor and marginalised, or whose cultural roots, values and obligations cannot allow them to engage in bourgeoisie consumerism even when living in foreign countries.

### ***Mtumbaism and 'Aid'***

*Mtumbaism* has a parallel with the phenomena of foreign aid. Like foreign ‘aid’, *mitumba* flows from the North to the South, from rich to poor nations and not the other way round. But decades of foreign aid to Kenya have not brought about self-reliance and development. Instead, the country has become poorer and more dependent. That is why many people in Kenya would subscribe with the views expressed by the likes of Yeebo: “What passes off as 'aid' in the third world is nothing but a form of economic control aimed at keeping poor countries on a political leash. It is only when this form of containment does not hold out the advance of progressive forces, as it happened in Grenada under the New Jewel Movement, that direct and crude forms of intervention are used”.

When there are calamities such as drought, floods, famine, war, etc., it is normal for those not affected by the calamities to donate things, including second hand items, to the victims. Such charity is humane and is driven by the desire to reduce suffering, to save life and to help fellow human beings in need. Under these circumstances one should not be ashamed to give or accept such aid, even in the form of used things.

However, when one becomes perpetually dependent on things used or not needed by other people - *mitumba* - under all circumstances then certainly there is something wrong. A government that allows its country, economy and people to be dominated by foreign aid or imported *mitumba* cannot be relied upon to lead the country towards liberation and development. Therefore, those philanthropic individuals and

charity organisation both in the North and in the South that participate in the business of flooding poor countries with imported second hand clothes and other items are, whether consciously or unconsciously , helping global imperialism to harm the economies, cultures and humanity of the poor, dominated and exploited people of the world. What they need to do instead - if they intend to contribute to eradication of poverty in Africa and the so called third world - is to provide moral and material support to progressive forces struggling against capitalism and neoliberalism and ultimately for socialism.

### **Aid is not inherently bad**

It is important to point out at this stage that I am not arguing that aid is inherently bad. Aid plays a positive role when it is given to a country in order to help it start off on the path of development. Such aid based on internationalist solidarity is progressive, genuine, desired and is in fact, an embodiment of the coping strategies of African societies.

For example, among the Wadawida, my ethnic community that live in Taita - Taveta County of Kenya, there existed a traditional system called *kuturuyana*. This system was a form of aid of helping less successful members of society to move towards success. A person without a cow would be given a cow by his relative, friend or neighbour to look after. The first calf of the cow would belong to the person given the cow. The second calf would go to the original owner of the cow, then the third calf would go to the person given the cow to look after, etc., etc. In the meantime the one looking for the cow would be using the milk and manure of the cow. This applied to all domestic animals and it ensured that every member of society would own cattle, goats, sheep, chicken, etc. at one time or the other. If we think of the Chinese proverb, this was the type of aid of teaching others to fish rather than giving fish to them all the time.

There was also *ngua* and *ngambi* based the communalist traditional culture of the Wadawida. A person who needed to build a house or till a large piece of land would prepare food (and sometimes also homemade traditional beer) and request his relatives, friends and neighbours to come and help him or her. He would also expect to help others in the same way in return. Other times friends - especially the youth - would organise to work for each other in their parent's farms in turns continuously for a certain period of time. This was called *kiko*. I consider this to be genuine aid, as it is reciprocal, is based on the principle of equality and solidarity and is devoid of paternalism and is also intended to ensure mutual progress. The popular *harambee* movement in Kenya that has been the basis of Kenya's rural development has its roots in the culture of *ngua*, *ngambi* and *kiko* which is also found in many Kenyan and African traditional societies. Unfortunately, the spirit of *harambee* has been abused by the successive corrupt regimes that have ruled Kenya since independence. Just as imperialism distributes 'aid' and 'loans' to the same nations it exploits and impoverishes, and just as the capitalists and feudalists everywhere use charity and sympathy to the poor to win their love, confidence and trust and to ensure the stability of their reactionary system, in the same way today the ruling classes of Kenya amass their wealth by exploiting the poor and then bribing them (their victims) with a few crumbs of the wealth taken from them in the form *harambee* donations. This is akin to the trickle-down economics of neoliberalism that give false promises to the exploited and oppressed while escalating inequality.

### **There was a time Kenya was free from *mtumbaism***

In order to comprehend the impact of *mtumbaism* and dependency to the Kenyan society today, it is necessary to make a more detailed historical analysis of culture and development in Kenya. After all, we can learn from history about what to do and what not to do, that is if we do not wish to repeat history. Again, argue, it is impossible to fully comprehend the issues and problematics of development in Africa without appreciating the role of culture in the process of development and the impact imperialism has had and continues to have on African cultures.

Historical analysis of Kenya like that of the rest of Africa based on the writings on African history and socio-economic development show that the culture of *mtumbaism* - dependence on things produced and made by foreigners for our basic needs - was never the culture of our people. The reactionary culture of resigning to fate and losing faith in our own creativity and ability to solve our own problems; this chronic disease of dependency - believing that we can never develop without foreign aid; this was never the culture of our ancestors. It was a culture imposed upon the Kenyan people first by colonialism and then neo-colonialism, and perpetuated by the *mtumba* regime classes controlling economic and state power. Today, in the era of neoliberalism, a new form of capitalist globalisation, this negative culture has taken even stronger roots as evidenced by the phenomena of foreign 'aid' and *mtumbaism*.

Historians explain that thousands of years before Europe invaded our continent, we African people had a rich and dynamic material and intellectual culture. Before colonialism arrived in Kenya our ancestors were not living in caves, under trees or on top of trees. Neither were they sitting and waiting for foreign aid or God to come to provide them with shelter or to teach them how to build houses, toilets, etc. Our people had developed their own housing systems. They were living in well built houses which not only provided sufficient shelter to them commensurate with their environment and stage of development, but which were also designed and built with the aesthetics that considered and appreciated their concrete material needs, customs, morality and philosophy of life. I actually saw this housing system among my people, the Dawida, when I was growing up between 1960 and 1969, before the land consolidation destroyed the villages. I have described a typical Dawida house in my MA thesis in Literature (Mghanga:1997). The unpublished thesis is available at the Department of Literature of Stockholm University, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, and University of Nairobi Library. Dawida's historical and cultural heritage, philosophy, property and land tenure, food and drink, agriculture and animal husbandry, natural resources use and management, medicine and health, social customs, political and legal systems, material culture, etc., is summarised by various researchers in Were and Soper (1986).

From wood, our people were making different kinds of furniture, utensils, tools, works of art, weapons, etc. They were skilled in pottery, using clay to make many sorts of pots, household objects, which are still used and commended by science.

Thousands of years before the coming of colonialism in Kenya, our people had an agricultural system that was developing. They had managed to tame all sorts of grain, root, stem, fruit and vegetable crops and they were increasing their quantity and quality to meet their food needs. In the same way, they were already breeding different varieties of animals and birds. Bee keeping was common while fishing was part and parcel of the culture of those communities that lived near the sea, lakes and rivers. All this means that our people had agricultural diversity that assured them of variety of foods that provided them with not only plenty to eat but also with a highly balanced diet, which, besides, was composed of several delicacies.

It is this farming system that has been described by Rodney (1974:40) in the following words: "In the centuries before the contact with Europeans, the overwhelming dominant activity in Africa was agriculture. In all the settled agricultural communities, people observed the peculiarities of their own environment and tried to find techniques for dealing with it in a rational manner. Advanced methods were used in some areas, such as terracing, crop rotation, green manuring, mixed farming and regulated swamp farming. The single most important technological change underlying African agricultural development was the introduction of iron tools, notably the ax and the hoe, replacing wooden and stone tools. It was on the basis of the iron tools that new skills were elaborated in agriculture as well as in other spheres of economic activity...Most African societies raised the cultivation of their own particular staple to fine art. Even the wide spread resort to shifting cultivation with burning and light hoeing was not as childish as the first European colonialists supposed. That simple form of agriculture was based on a correct evaluation of the soil potential, which was not as great as

initially appears from the heavy vegetation; and when the colonialists started upsetting the thin topsoil the result was disastrous”.

Thus traditional agricultural systems of the African peoples was organised to meet the food and other needs of the family in particular and the society in general. The culture of farming for the market far from our land to meet the needs of foreigners at the expense of the local requirements, was not the culture of our ancestors. Neither was the culture of malnutrition, hunger and eating the same food day and night all the year round. Even now as I write, I remember, with great nostalgia, the number of our traditional foods which I used to eat during my childhood and that are today disappearing, or have already disappeared, as the culture of cash crops for foreign markets is imposed upon the Wadawida like all other Kenyan nationalities.

Long before British colonialism invaded Kenya, our ancestors were progressing in the field of science and technology. Science and technology was developing to meet the increasing material and other requirements of the societies. Our people, for example, already were identifying and extracting iron, copper and other metals from their ores. At the same time, they had developed the technology of producing high temperatures that enabled them to smelt the metals and to make copper and iron tools and implements. To hunt and to protect themselves from their enemies, they were developing weapons and perfecting the art of war. In the field of astronomy they were able to study and to provide names to several heavenly bodies. Through this observation they could recognise the changes of the seasons and predict the weather to enable them to plant and harvest the right crops at the right time. My kinsmen and women the Dawida, for example, could predict the weather by observing the behaviour of Kirema (the Dawida name for Mount Kilimanjaro). Thus our people were advancing in physics and chemistry and were creatively using the sciences to add to the quantity and quality of their productive diversity. While our ancestors were using science to make the things they needed, today Kenya's *mtumba* education system produces graduates of physics and chemistry who cannot produce the things produced by our ancestors.

In the field of biology, our ancestors were able to classify many living things into plants and animals. In turn, they were also able, to a large degree, to classify the animals into mammals, birds, insects, fish, reptiles, etc. In the field of botany, they knew and gave names to many different species of plants. They also identified several plants according to their use values. They were also moving forward in the field of medicine and health. They could identify, classify and treat many types of diseases. They were increasing their abilities to combat many types of viruses that were affecting human beings, their animals and crops. Long before contact with foreigners, the Kenyan people had made their contribution to the global cultural and biological diversity analysed by The Crucible II Group (2000:9-10). By losing our linguistic and cultural diversity through the emphasis on education alienated from the local reality and from production, we are also losing the invaluable indigenous knowledge that ought to be the basis educational development.

In short, as time moved on, our people were increasing their knowledge of the laws of nature and were using them to improve their lives in their specific environments. This also indicates that they were developing their productive forces, they were increasing their material culture both quantitatively and qualitatively. Yes, contrary to what is happening today, we were not static, we were making history, we were moving forward, we were developing and we were doing so depending on mobilising our internal human and natural resources.

In the area of intellectual and social culture, long before colonialism, our people were living in organised societies that were geared to ensure that they lived in peace and harmony. They were governed by definite codes of conduct, morals, philosophies, and customs, values and beliefs. For example, the institution of the elders had the responsibility and the authority of leading the society and ensuring conflict resolutions, observation and conservation of the environment and cultural values, and unity and development of the

families and societies. This is, in fact, the basis of the indigenous institutions whose role in development is discussed by Havnevik (2000:38-48).

In the arts, literature, music, dances, theatre, pottery, handicraft, curving, painting, etc., we had made a lot of achievements that survive to this day.

We had our own education system which had the aim of teaching different skills needed by the family and society and to pass the cultural heritage of the society to the younger generation to ensure continuity.

Nyerere (1968:45) describes this education: “The fact that pre-colonial Africa did not have 'schools'-except for short periods of initiation in some tribes - did not mean that children were not educated. They learned by living and doing. In the homes and on the farms they were taught the skills of society, and the behavior expected of its members. They learned the kind of grasses that were suitable for which purpose, the work which had to be done on the crops, or the care which had to be given to animals, by joining with the elders in their work. They learned the tribal history, and the tribe's relationship with other tribes and with the spirits, by listening to the stories of the elders. Through these means, and by the custom of sharing to which young people were to conform, the values of society were transmitted. Education was thus 'informal'; every adult was a teacher to a greater or lesser degree. But this lack of formality does not mean that there was no education, nor did it affect its importance to society. Indeed, it may have made the education more directly relevant to the society in which the child was growing up”.

In the above quotation, Nyerere shows that traditional African education embodied the culture of the societies. It united theory and practice and was aimed at meeting the material and intellectual needs of the people. It was delivered through participatory and interactive methods in which all parents and adults played the role of teachers or facilitators. In this regard, not only was the education democratic by involving everyone in acquiring and sharing knowledge and experience, it was also able to preserve and sustain the cultural heritage of the society through bringing together the young and old generation in the process. In this way, the formal or school education introduced in Africa by European colonialism, is wasteful and inimical to the culture of the people since, as wa Thiong'o (1979) argues, not only is it alienated from social production, but it also does not involve parents and the community outside the school system in the education process. School teachers become the sole experts and medium of the 'formal education' that implement curricula that ignore or look down upon local or indigenous knowledge (The Crucible II Group, 2000:9-10) that has been developed for thousands of years. Yet in the end it has always turned out that it is the 'formal education' that is irrelevant to the needs of the society for failing to integrate the new and the old, tradition and modernity, science and intuition, theory and practice, the community and the school system. This was also my own experience (Mghanga, 1997) when I conducted research on Dawida oral narratives.

I have attempted to point out that Kenyans had rich and dynamic cultures long before the invasion of colonialism. However, I have not said that the culture was complete and more developed than it is today. For development is a continuous process. My argument is, like all human beings in the world, Kenyans (and Africans for that matter) were creating and developing their material and intellectual cultures. We were determining and shaping our own destiny long before colonialism or contact with Europe. And this is a challenge to Kenyans and Africans today when we depend on foreign aid and *mitumba* for our livelihoods. It is the basis for self-criticism: there was a time in our history when we were independent and acted accordingly, we were relying on our creative work and labour and our own resources to solve our own problems, fulfil our needs, develop ourselves and societies. Then we believed in our abilities and ourselves, we were free and increasing our freedom. How come today we have resigned to poverty, dependency, and *mtumbaism* and accepted to be a second hand nation and people? It is for this reason that the late Babu (1980:52) found it necessary to remind us: “This mentality of dependency, the mentality of asking for alms and charity, which is becoming universal in our countries, must be combated vigorously before it evolves into a habit”.

Unfortunately, the negative mentality pointed out by Babu has become a habit, a culture. Hundreds of thousands of people migrate from Africa to Europe, North America and other continents in search of good life that their governments have failed to provide to the citizens due to bad governance, corruption and imperialism. In the process of migrating, thousands perish in the high seas and deserts. They are forced to risk their lives to cross legal and physical barriers made by states to prevent the poor and oppressed to enter the so called developed countries. When they arrive in the countries they migrate to they are confronted with problems of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, humiliations of all sorts, unemployment and poverty that is growing in the developed nations. Yet human beings have a right to move and settle wherever they wish to on our planet. However, escaping from your country of birth for political and economic reasons and settling in another country without making a contribution in the struggle of changing the situation for the better should not be embraced by conscious citizens and human beings. Conscious citizens and human beings should instead struggle against dictatorship, violations of human rights, corruption, capitalism and imperialism in their countries and also in the world that are the basic causes of the problems that trigger the crisis of immigration. Conscious citizens and human beings should join or form progressive organisations/social movements and socialist/communist political parties to struggle against reactionary ruling regimes, capitalism and imperialism, in their countries and regions and also in the world.

In so doing, it should always be emphasised that the economic problems in our countries are not only due to internal factors. There are global dynamics that continue to impact negatively upon our nation, destroying our sovereignty, underdeveloping our nations and reducing us into *mitumba* countries. What follows is a brief analysis of these internal and external processes of underdevelopment.

### **The internal and external factors that force Kenyans into *mtumbaism***

#### **The impact of neoliberal economic policies**

Today, manifestations of neoliberalism are found in Kenya as well as in every African country. Bourgeois economists - themselves beneficiaries of the system - take pride in the economic growth that in most countries of the continent are more than five percent. Modern infrastructure of planned housing, roads and supermarkets that provide all types of consumer goods, mostly imported, are available for the high and middle class citizens engaged in the consumerism that is now a culture. Roads and other transport infrastructure are being constructed mostly in urban areas and also to connect towns and the countryside to facilitate the market economy that is part and parcel of the modernisation of neoliberalism. Lorries ferrying imported goods from port cities to the interior cities and empty containers from the cities in the interior to the ports cause traffic jams in the roads and highways. For the dominant economies in the cities of most African countries are based on trade of imported goods with little local manufacturing. In the cities the traffic jams are caused by the thousands of large gas guzzling flamboyant cars driven by the high and middle classes. Everything is being privatised including common resources such as water and energy. Private health facilities, schools and luxuries of all sorts are available to those who can afford them - the high and middle classes. Plush hotels, pubs, restaurants and guesthouses where the high and middle classes spend their free time eating, drinking and making merry have mushroomed in the cities and exclusive suburbs. The gap between the rich and the poor, the plush suburbs of the few and the slums where the majority of the urban people live, and the towns and the countryside's has widened as the process of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies continues to unfold. The economic growth has hitherto failed to trickle down to the majority of the citizens contrary to the promises of the trickle - down economic promises of neoliberalism.

As a matter of fact, like in other African countries (Hamrel, S. and Nordberg. O., 1992:7), from the mid-1980s and particularly in the 1990s and hitherto, Kenya has registered a lot of growth in corruption, mass poverty, crime, slums, unemployment, all forms of violence, violations of human rights and class inequality. Most of Kenyans live in abject poverty, want, and suffering. Today, Nairobi like other Kenyan

cities and towns, has become a symbol of the dilapidation, crime, ruin, corruption, exploitation, oppression and loss of all the achievements Kenya had made before it started implementing SAPs (Hamrel, S. and Nordberg. O., 1992:7). Thieves, robbers, cone men and women, tribalists, traitors, suspected illicit drug dealers, people charged with crimes against humanity and idiots are now in charge of the highest affairs of the country<sup>2</sup>. The leaders practise corruption and nepotism openly, without shame or apology (*the Star*, Wednesday April 29, 2015).

A farmer who today is suffering from hunger can only have hope of defeating it tomorrow if he or she can see the seeds he or she has planted growing. As far as the Kenyan economy is concerned, nothing positive is being done hitherto that can provide hope that after three, four or five years the economy will be transformed into the path of delivering development to the majority of the Kenyan people. There are no indications yet that at one point or the other we shall begin to get more employment, better medical, health, housing, water and educational services for the Kenyan masses. Neither are there any signs showing that the present state of insecurity and corruption will end soon. All successive regimes that have governed Kenya including the present one have continued to implement similar political, social and economic policies based in capitalism and imperialism that plunge the majority of citizens in the cycle of poverty. They have refused to learn from history since they are in power to maintain the status quo of exploitation of the majority of Kenyans and primitive accumulation.

History informs us that the right wing economic policies being implemented by the government today together with their populist platitudes have not improved the lives of the majority of Kenyans for the better. I remember that about 15 years ago the World Bank and International Monetary Fund appointed a team of civil servants, popularly known as the “Dream Team”, and that was initially led by Richard Leakey, and that was directly responsible to the twin Bretton Woods institutions and not to the Kenyan government or nation. Apart from Leakey (who two months before then was Head of the Civil service and Secretary to the Cabinet) the IMF-WB dream team that was supposed to heal the economy included Martin Oduor-Otieno (Permanent Secretary Ministry of Finance), Mwaghazi Mwachofi (Financial Secretary Ministry of Finance), Shem Migot-Adhola (Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture). Otieno was hired by the IMF-WB from the Barclays Bank where he was an Executive Director; Mwaghaai was a senior employee of the IMF while Adhola was an employee of the WB. All of them were part of the conditionalities of the IMF-WB for resumption of loans to the country. They received exorbitant salaries and benefits that were many times more than that of other civil servants of their ranks who were paid directly by the Kenyan government. However, the IMF-WB as explained by Olukoshi (1998:34) attributed the failures of SAPs to lack of technocrats who had the knowledge, ability and will to implement the neoliberal economic programs. Thus it was argued that the dream team deserved all their financial support (including exorbitant salaries) in order to be committed to overseeing the implementation of the SAPs by the government of Kenya.

The dream team did nothing significant that provided the solution to the economic, political and social problems bedeviling the country. Instead, the 'dream team' tried to implement the neoliberal WB-IMFs SAPs that had failed to solve the problems of underdevelopment anywhere in Africa (Olukoshi, 2000; Olukoshi, 1996; Olukoshi, 1998; Havnevik, 2000; Moyo, 2000:11-16); Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad, 1992; Giles, Brown, Milward, and Azck-Williams, 2000). And the conditionalities were imposed upon Kenya by the then were harsh. They compromised even the little national sovereignty that was left to the country (Redfern, 2000; Kisero, 2000; Ochieng, 2000; Munaita, 2000). That aside, the point here is that the Jubilee government in power today several years later also believes that by appointing technocrats committed to neoliberalism it will steer the country towards the development path of solving the plethora of economic and social problems bedeviling the country. But history continues to show that this is as much a pipe dream as that of the said dream team.

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<sup>2</sup>Kenyan electronic and print media report about all this daily.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss why SAPs continue to fail to deliver economic development, poverty eradication, and participatory democracy and generally improve the welfare of the majority of people. In any case, this subject has been researched and discussed extensively, including in the literature quoted in this essay. My point is that, the implementation of SAPs based on the global capitalist ideology, i.e., anti-statism, privatisation, trade liberalisation, rationalisation of the civil service (retrenchments), cost-sharing and cutting government expenditure on public social services, etc., continue to drive the majority of Kenyans deeper and deeper into poverty and therefore to dependency on *mtumbaism* for survival.

Take the cost sharing in medical services for example, in implementing these anti-social policies no measures are taken in favour of the already over-burdened poor of the poor. The consequences are disastrous. As I write, Kenyans are dying of hunger in the rural and urban areas. Unable to even afford medical consultation fees and the cost of medicine, many Kenyans have turned to quacks or are simply dying in their homes. Today even hospitals are prisons for those unable to pay medical fees after treatment, which is if they are lucky to be admitted in the first place. While public hospitals are collapsing, private hospitals are mushrooming in rural and urban areas driven by the desire to squeeze as much profit from sick Kenyans as possible. Even nurses are opening private hospitals. Medical ethics of saving or prolonging life are no longer valued, it is money that counts. Even medical prescriptions by doctors and drugs from private chemists cannot be trusted entirely to cure diseases as all is only about profit and nothing else counts.

The education front is no better. More and more pupils and students from poor families are dropping out of universities and other high institutions of learning simply because they are unable to pay fees. Privatisation, lack of educational facilities, poor working conditions of teachers and lecturers, poverty among students and members of staff are contributing to the low standards of education in Kenya's educational institutions. Coping strategies in the form of *harambees*<sup>3</sup> organised by families, relatives, friends and communities to pay for hospital bills or fees for education are part and parcel of everyday life. But the problems are such that the coping strategies are unable to cope, living things to fall apart.

### **Impacts of SAPs to the economy - trade liberalisation**

The neoliberal economic policies of 'live everything to market forces' being implemented by the Kenyan government today are destroying the country's agriculture, industry and commerce.

#### **On the sugar industry**

Sugar cane farming has altered land use in western Kenya. Many of the peasant farmers who were using their land to produce food crops, mainly for subsistence but also for sale, used a lot of their prime land for planting sugar cane since the beginning of 1970. While in the 1970s this reduced agricultural diversity and food security, it at the same time raised the standard of living of the peasants of western Kenya that became a sugar zone through the payments they received for selling their cane and also employment in the factories. The sugar factories in Mumias, Nzoia, Miwani, Muhoroni, Sony, fed by cane from small-scale and large-scale farmers were operating well and employing thousands of workers both directly and indirectly.

But starting from mid 1980, and particularly in the 1990s, Kenya's sugar industry has been in trouble. This is blamed on many factors, including corruption, mismanagement and climate change. The greatest share of the blame, however, is attributed to neoliberal globalisation. Before the country started implementing SAPs, the sugar industry was protected from foreign imports. With trade liberalisation Kenya's sugar industry faced unfair competition from cheap imported sub-standard or *mitumba* sugar

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<sup>3</sup>Here *harambee* refers to fundraising activities, as they are popularly known in Kenya.

entering the Kenyan market, often smuggled through the Mombasa Port by all types of crooks connected to the ruling class, including Al Shabab. Unable to sell their sugar and therefore to buy and pay the cane of farmers, the factories started laying off workers. Increasingly, the dilapidating and often unserviced machines for crushing the cane were unable to absorb the crop. Cane began to dry in the farms uncut. Burning of the cane in the large-scale farms by the workers and small-scale growers were common. Kenya is now importing sugar, often of low *mtumba* quality. While the rich elites benefit from importing the sugar, the collapse of the sugar industry has increased poverty, particularly in western Kenya, and therefore the number of those who have to rely on *mitumba* consumer goods.

#### **4.2.2. On the textile and shoe industry**

I entered secondary school in Nairobi in 1974. Starehe Boys' Centre, my former school is located around Gikomba, one of the largest open markets in East Africa. I remember that until the time I completed school in 1979, most of the clothes sold in the market were new from the then Kenya's growing textile industry particularly at Thika, Eldoret, Kisumu but also Nairobi, Ruiru and Nanyuki. The Bata shoe factory at Limuru also employed thousands of Kenyans, apart from utilising the animal skins from the country. The factories were a source of employment for thousands of Kenyans, including many from my village, caused the towns to grow very fast. Cotton production in the country was growing to meet the demand of the factories.

However, the 1980s saw the dominance of imported *mitumba* clothes in Gikomba Market, all other Nairobi popular markets and of all the urban and rural areas in the country. It is at this period when Kenya's economy started falling rapidly, increasing the number of poor Kenyans. Now the import of *mitumba* is the dominant business in urban and rural areas. Unable to sell their textile and shoe products to the growing masses of poor people who cannot afford new clothes and shoes, many Kenyan textile industries have closed and the remaining are at the brink of closing. The Limuru Bata Shoe Company which now specializes in selling imported shoes is tottering at the brink of total collapse. The implication is the increase in the number of unemployed and therefore more poverty and *mitumba* customers. It also means the destruction of Kenya's cotton agriculture and the livelihoods involved. What is worse, it means that the country is losing the skills of making clothes and shoes. Tailoring, shoe making and repairing that formed an important informal economic sector is also disappearing as people wear ready - made *mitumba* clothes and shoes. *Mtumbaism* is therefore also destroying the creativity of Kenyans as they are made to depend on designs and choices of the clothes and shoes they wear - this has negative implications on their culture.

#### **Impact on local businesses**

Trade liberalisation has forced Kenya to remove or reduce trade restrictions to imports of all kinds and to stop the protection of local industries and businesses. This means that apart from global second hand clothes and shoes, the Kenyan markets are now flooded with cheap imported commodities of all sorts. Many of these commodities enter the country through corruption, i.e., without paying import duty or without being satisfied by the Kenya Bureau of Standards. They are therefore sub-standard goods or *mitumba*-type. Foreigners are allowed to engage even in retail trade, including selling fish, chicken, eggs, fruits, *ugali*, chips, meat, beer and all types of hawking while Kenyans close businesses or go unemployed. With hardly any meaningful employment opportunities, the vast majority of the residences of our towns have been turned into hawkers and petty traders who merely eke for a living.

#### **Impact on import substitution industry**

Kenya's import substitution industry that was seen as a strategy towards the industrialisation of the country is now threatened with extinction. A good example is AVA, a motor vehicle assembly industry

that used to be one of the largest employers in Mombasa (*Econews*, 1999). The company grew due to the government's policies of the 1970s of nurturing local industry. Following neoliberal reforms including trade liberalisation, tariffs on imported vehicles were lowered. It became cheaper to import new cars directly from Japan or Europe than to buy the ones assembled locally at Nairobi, Mombasa and Thika. Again, *mitumba* vehicles mostly imported from Japan but also Europe via Dubai, dominate the Kenyan markets. As a consequence of this AVA was forced to close, adding to the economic problems of Mombasa that is already ravaged by the falling of the tourist and hotel industry.

Thus instead of developing towards industrialisation by realising our agricultural and manufacturing potential, we are being reduced into a nation of only selling all forms of imported goods, including garbage. The effect of this is seen in the increasing unemployment, underemployment, poverty, insecurity and escalation of the vicious cycle of *mtumbaism*.

## Summary and Conclusion

No country in the world has achieved freedom and sustainable development through dependency on aid or loans from imperialist countries. Neither has any country developed by relying on exports of unprocessed agricultural and mineral goods while importing all manufactured goods from foreign countries. All industrialised countries of the world initiated their development by first protecting and nurturing their local industries, agriculture, trade and targeting them to harness the human and natural resources of their countries, to develop the home market and to integrate them in the production process. That is why countries like China, Cuba and North Korea that do not depend IMF-WB loans and strategies for development, countries that have rejected the neoliberal economic path of development being imposed upon Kenya, African and other Third World countries, these anti-imperialist countries have made unique progress towards human development despite the challenges they still face. They have preserved their national sovereignty, are respected for what they are and are not regarded as *mitumba* nations, as much as they are hated by the imperialist system.

The basis of Chinese enormous development was the revolutionary economic strategy of self-reliance, harnessing its own natural and human resources and building and organising its economy to meet the needs of its people (Sison, 2000:7-13; Babu, 1979:85). China jealously protected its industries from foreign domination, rejecting capitalism and imperialism and opted for socialism, from 1949 up to the 1990s when it started implementing capitalist economic reforms based on the socialist system. Still with strong state control of the economy and politics of the country, with its national sovereignty still intact, China is participating in economic globalisation from the position of strength. It is in fact a superpower today.

Countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have now joined Africa and other Third World countries in the path of underdevelopment, dependency, exploited and dominated nations by rejecting the socialist path and opting for capitalism. The process of capitalist restoration in the countries took 35 years, from 1953 up to 1989. After fully entering the arena of the market economy dominated by global imperialism, these countries that used to provide aid to the Third World before 1989, have today become beggar (*mitumba*) nations, are losing their sovereignty and are infested with all the social, political and economic contradictions of the third world countries (Martens (1953:3).

In short, my contention is that until we start focusing our political and economic policies towards self-reliance strategies, producing our basic needs and sustaining the primary economy (industries and agriculture) and secondary economy (tourism and the services sector) meeting this goal, we cannot start developing. Populist and parochial economic policies being implemented by the Kenyan government purportedly to create employment - so called youth funds, youth and women enterprise funds are only conduits for corruption and creation of false hopes. Rather than investing in social development and distribution of wealth, the government is instead investing in a salaried economy of rewarding the elites

of all sorts with huge salaries at the expense of the poor masses and development. The widening gap between the few rich and the majority poor is a ticking bomb that will explode sooner or later. Already the worsening insecurity in the country and the growing workers strikes is a manifestation of the social explosion that is coming.

Kenya will continue to sink deeper and deeper into *mtumbaism* as long as the country continues to allow its economic policies and affairs, and destiny, to be determined by imperialist nations, institutions and ideology, i.e., neoliberal globalisation. After years of misleading the country to follow the path of capitalism and neo-colonialism that has not brought about development to the majority of the people of Kenya (Kaniaru, 2000), the present regime that worships neoliberalism continues to force us along the same painful path of slavery and stagnation. Clearly, therefore, the leadership of Kenya has neither the will nor the ability to liberate us from imperialism and lead us towards economic and social progress. It must be removed from power and replaced with a patriotic and progressive state.

The former President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, used to remind Tanzanians and Africans, that while dependence on other people for material needs is bad, it is even worse to be dependent on other people's idea. *Mtumbaism* is destroying our humanity; we are being made to think we are lesser human beings than others whom we are increasingly depending upon for our livelihoods. When Kenyan men and women wear *mitumba* inner - wears, for example, psychologically they cannot regard themselves as the equals of the original users of the items. Liberating ourselves from *mitumba* ideas or decolonising our minds as Ngugi Thiong'o (1991) puts it, is a necessary step towards social and national liberation - the road towards poverty eradication, freedom and development. Decolonising our minds will lead us towards focusing the struggle primarily at empowering the people politically and economically to remove the corrupt and reactionary regime, in order to remove the neo-colonial capitalist system being imposed upon the country by the process of neoliberal globalisation. This is the path of liberating Kenya and Africa from *mtumbaism* and of moving towards freedom, social justice and progress.

That is why I find it necessary to end this section by quoting the late Babu (1979:7): "At UNCTAD V in Manila in May this year, Prebisch courageously admitted his error of the 1960s and told the developing countries, "we have lost the way and taken the wrong path. He said that after 30 years of development in Latin America, differences between the privileged consumer classes and others were increasing and 40% of the population was below the poverty level. This was because of the system of development based on imitation of capitalist production of consumer goods in marginal areas. He said that as long as development was based on the existing models with the support of the centre (that is advanced capitalist world), any attempt to link with the centre is a pipe dream that will ultimately lead to explosive social consequences. He emphasised that the mere play of market forces could no longer solve the problems of development. He advised developing countries not to wait for the centre to solve its problems and then tackle theirs, but to act on its own, by setting up "autonomous development processes, mobilising their own national resources, human and material, and establishing new industries and technology".

The explosive social consequences mention in the quotation above are not only happening in countries under imperialist domination - so called developing countries - but in imperialists countries - so called developed countries as well. The present crisis of immigration and terrorism escalated by neoliberal globalisation and the increasing cycles of financial and economic crises in the West tell the whole story. In other words, capitalism and imperialism has failed to solve the problems confronting the majority of the people of the world. They must be replaced by the socialist system, i.e., globalisation based on human solidarity.

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**Mwandawiro Mghanga, Chairperson of Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDP),  
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