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THE ORIGIN OF HIV AND THE WESTERN PROPAGANDA ON THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA: MYTH VESUS REALITY

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Abstract

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that damages the human immune system by destroying the Cd4cells and exposing the body to other infections. There is a lot of tales on its origin and instead of admitting its real state of veracity; the Western World opted to push its origin on the continent of Africa, capitalizing on the continent's backwardness and ill-informed nature. This study examines the western propaganda on the origin of HIV and how it is using disinformation to credit its origin on the African continent amidst verifiable facts to the contrary; the public is fed with distorted fact, half-truth and outright fabrication. The study has adopted a combination of methods. First, we relied on secondary data drawn from an array of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study; utilizing journals, conference and seminar papers, internet materials, reports and documentary excerpt and video clips. In interpreting our data, the relationship between the real origin of the virus and the western propaganda on the African continent was established at both theoretical and empirical level. Empirically, we used a qualitative and historical method that was critical and analytical in providing descriptive and historical details and providing clear perspective into our research problem. The study established that the conjecture on Kinshasa (DR-Congo), the Central Africa and West Africa, the chimpanzee shared blood with the Africans and the mutation tales were mere Western fabrication intended to deform and debase the image of the continent attributable to its backwardness, ill-formed nature and high level of ignorance. Recommendations such as: good governance, overhaul in the African educational system, thorough check and scrutiny of western scientist on experimentation in the continent and many more were proffered.

KeyWords: African Continent, HIV, Origin of HIV, Propaganda, The West

Introduction

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a disease of the immune system caused by infection with retrovirus HIV, which destroyed some types of white blood cells known as the *T-cells* and is transmitted through blood or bodily secretions such as semen (Cohen, 1992). Scientific research has it that *AIDS* leave an infected person vulnerable to opportunistic infections – infections by microbes that take advantage of a weakened immune system and such infections are usually harmless in healthy people but can proof life – threatening with *AIDS* (Curtis, 1999).

History has shown that this infection known as *HIV* came into being in the 1980s and 1989 precisely when its epidemics were reported. During its early year of appearance, governments across the globe, national and at the grass root were not spurred into action to meet the growing need for its education, counseling, definition of patients' right and conducting clinical research (Marriolt, 1998).

Scientific and medical history has revealed that the first *AIDS* case was recognize in the United States and was identified by American virologist – Robert Gallo. In June, 1981 the CDC published report on clusters of gay men in New York and California who had been diagnosed with what was seen as *pneumocystis pneumonia* or *Kaposi's sarcoma* – a rear illness that was observed only in people whose immune systems had been damaged by drugs or disease (Kotata, 2001). The report triggered concern that a disease of the immune system was spreading quickly in the homosexual community (Kotata, 2001). It was on this basis that the infection was first named – *Gay Related Immunodeficiency Disease*

(GRID) and with the growth of time, the illness was later identified in population group outside the gay community, including users of intravenous drugs, recipients of blood transfusions and heterosexual partners of infected people. It was in line with the discovery that the infection in 1982 was changed to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or AIDS (Fenster, 1999).

Not minding or given a thorough outlook at where the infection first started and the people that were first diagnosed with the infection; the *Western* world as it often sees Africa as less significant, disparage and irrelevant still acclaimed that the infection originated from Africa (Petersen, 2002). Africa, a continent which has never been praised and attributed with good thing by the *Western* World was wrongly accused with the emanation of the infection due to its lack of exposure, inexperience and ill-informed nature. Irrespective of the pitiable facts to substantiate; the West World as it often sees the black continent, went ahead with the postulation and was using disinformation; making it appear as if it is real (Bogart & Thorburns, 2005).

Popular critique of the African continent as regard where the HIV emanated is Bartlett (2006) who once stressed:

Using computers technology to study the structure of HIV, scientists have determined that HIV originated around 1930 in rural areas of Central Africa, where the virus may have been present for many years in isolated communities. The virus probably did not spread because members of the rural communities had limited contact with people from other areas (Bartlett, 2006:20).

Scientific studies of stored blood from the United States suggested that HIV was more of a creation than the shared blood and the mutation proposition but irrespective of these proofs, the West and its critiques- Biologist David Baltimore, Virologist Howard Temin and many more came out with a misinformed spin that the infection may be related to a retrovirus and this retrovirus were said to be found in chimpanzees and the chimpanzees were those in the continent of Africa. It is based on some of this wild and untamed contention that this study is predicated (Herek & Capitano, 1994). The study will be approached in this direction. General background will encapsulate the introduction and a problem will be defined alongside research questions and objectives. Methods will be stated and basic variables of the study will be conceptualized laterally with empirical overview. Results will be discussed lengthways with the conclusion established and the proffered recommendations.

Statement of the Study

HIV/AIDS is a viral disease that ravages the immune system and undermining the body's ability to defend itself from infections and diseases. Right from the inception of the infection to the present time, the Western world has been laying unfounded and tenuous allegation on its origin; stressing that it emanated in Africa even with the over whelming evident that it was discovered in the United State (Pride & Willson, 1997).

Another problem which also excites this study is how the African continent for long has been equated with things and issues which are absurd, bizarre and ludicrous. The Western or so-called developed societies have never seen anything good about the continent and fond of ascribing hapless and undesirable things and events to the continent (Osmond, 2003).

It is against this scenery that the following research questions were posited to guide the study.

- a. In what way is the tenuous allegation of HIV origin related to the African continent?
- b. Why is the African continent often being undermined by the Western world?
- c. How can the disinformation on the Origin of HIV in Africa and other belittlement of the continent can be checkmated?

The Central objective of the study is to ascertain the origin of the infection (HIV) and rebuff the unfounded propaganda by the West on Africa. The specific objectives are to:

- a. Examine the tenuous allegation put down by the West on the origin of HIV.

- b. Assess the belittlement of the African continent by the Western societies.
- c. Provide a clear picture of the origin of the infection and reasons why the Western World should disabuse from unfounded presumption on the African continents.

Methodology

The research approach to this study is the documentary research design. The research relied on secondary data drawn from an array of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study such as books, journals, magazines, conferences and seminar papers and newspapers. Other sources of secondary data were reports, documentary and many others. There were qualitative soft publications and entries in recognized and official websites. Being a non-experimental research, the use of qualitative descriptive analysis is employed for the analysis of the generated data. This was done through careful analysis of the formulated questions in line with the reviewed literatures. Thus, under the findings and discussions, each discourse is based on some background assumption presented.

Conceptual Explication

What Is AIDS/HIV?

AIDS is the final stage of a chronic infection with the Human Immune Deficiency virus. AIDS is a disease in which there is a severe loss of the body's cellular immunity, greatly lowering the resistance of infection and malignancy. It is also a syndrome caused by a virus called HIV. It occurred as a spell because the infected people are not born with the disease; they get it after being infected with the HIV virus and it is the immune system i.e. the part of the body that fights off the disease (Kimmel, 1999). The disease in turn attacks the body immune system, specifically, the CD4 cells often called the T Cells. The HIV is a virus that lives in human blood and breast milk. The differences between HIV and AIDS is that, HIV is a virus that caused the infection while the latter is the condition mostly at the stage 3 (stage that the HIV has caused damage to the immune system) after contracting the HIV virus. The former is a virus and unless it is contacted before it could lead to AIDS (Zeilizer, 1995). The former is a condition, state and definition. However, people can live long; have healthy lives with the HIV virus without even developing AIDS. When HIV infects a CD4 Cell, it commandeers the genetic tools within the cell to manufacture new HIV virus and the newly formed HIV virus then leads the cell, destroying CD4 Cell in the process (Wolseley, 1990).

The losses of CD4 Cells endanger health because these cells help other types of immune cells respond to invading organism. The average healthy person has over 1000 CD4 Cells per micro liter of blood. A person infected with HIV, the virus steadily destroys CD4 Cells over a period of years diminishing the cells protective ability and weakening the immune system and when the density of the CD4 Cells drops to 200 cells per micro liters of blood, the infected person becomes vulnerable to AIDS related opportunistic infections (Gandy, 2000).

What is Propaganda?

Propaganda is derived from the modern Latin word – in *congregation de propagandafide* (meaning congregation for the propagation of the faith). It is deceptive or distorted information that is systematically spread. According to Childs (2009), it is a dissemination of ideas and information for the purpose of inducing or intensifying specific attitude and actions. It is frequently accompanied by distortions of facts and by appeal to passion and prejudice; it is often thought to be invariably false or misleading.

Stephenson (2018) has defined propaganda as the process of misinforming the society by revealing to them misleading information instead of factual ones. The essential distinction lays in the intentions of the propagandist to persuade an audience to adopt the attitude or action he or she espouse. It can be disseminated by individuals, groups – business, ethnic associations, religious organizations, political organizations, government at all levels, professional and or set of people with something in common (assemblage, party, consortium, alliance, and or a confederation).

Propaganda always tries to bring about, convert, influence and win over through rational, emotional and whatsoever means of appeal through the organization of personal opinion.

What and where is the West?

The word *west* is a noun that stands for countries in Europe and North and South America and societies adhering capitalist doctrine. They are countries with Greco-Roman and Christian traditions (Mason, 2000). These are countries of the world especially in Europe, North and South America whose culture and society are mostly influenced by traditions rooted in Greek and Roman culture and in Christianity. It also refers to the non – communist countries of Europe and North and South America during the cold war.

It is also known as the western hemisphere, a term that denotes capitalist societies which have wielded a lot of power and influence on world politics.

An Empirical Overview of the Origin of HIV

HIV is one of the most known dangerous epidemics in human history and was first identified in 1981 among homosexual men and intravenous drug users in New York and California (Bates, 1999). After the detection in USA, evidence abound that the infection began to spread among heterosexual men, women and children across all the society due to factors such as globalization, trade and movement among and across nations (Mason, 2000). This narrative later changed with Africa being seen as the hub and the hatching ground of the infection. This was because the infection reached its peak in the developing societies and Africa was the single continent that is belittled by the West (Fine, 2001).

Apart from the obvious fact that it first started in New York, some group of scientist from the Western world in an attempt to play down the reality; stressing that they used computer technology to study the structure of HIV and were of the view that it originated around 1930 in the rural area of Central Africa despite the overwhelming evidence that the first case was found in United States of America in 1981 (Baldwin, 1985). Whenever the false postulation is disputed and question of the first case and it's non – correlation to the continent of Africa was raised to be justified; the cheap answer usually takes this tune:

The virus probably did not spread because members of these rural communities had limited contact with people from other areas both in the 1960s and 1970s. Political upheaval, wars, drought, and famine forced many out of the rural areas and some migrate to find jobs and thus the acceleration of the infection (Baldwin, 1985:10).

The above statement lacks logical and scientific coherence in a lot of ways. The first infection was detected in New York in 1981 and the claims was that – It is in Africa and in 1960s and 1970s and was unheard. Political upheaval – war, drought and famine and flood were seen as the interface of migration that aligns it to the African continent. 1960s was the time that most African countries were battling to lose themselves from the shambles and strings of colonialism (Demaris, 1994). History abounds and has shown that it was the period that a lot of countries in Africa attend their independent. No case of the incidence of the virus was heard and no one was found or has ever been tested with the infection in the continent. A cheap question which for long has been tucked and ignored by the West is how long it takes the body to develop HIV antibodies after infection – that is when the immune defenses have compromised and the body is less of CD4 Cells (Fine, 2001). The West would always avoid it because it will point out their antics, misjudgment and their prejudice on the wrongly accused continent (Jones, 2003).

Scientific method has clearly shown that almost all persons infected with the infection develop antibodies within 2 to 12 weeks and in some rare and extraordinary period, 6 months before the manifestation (Waters, 2012). But despite all this, the apologist and polemicist kept emphasizing that the infection started in Africa in the 1960s and if it was asked why it took almost two decades as against the 2 to 12 weeks and at its extraordinary 6 months for it to manifest not in the African continent but in New

York and on the citizens of USA. A pseudo respond will be provided without corroborating it with facts (Waters, 2007)

The propagandists – David Baltimore, Howard Temin and Virologist Robert Gallo who first discovered the human retrovirus – HILU-1 and HTLU – 11 (HTLU stand for Human T. Cell Lymphotropic Virus) capitalized on the weakness of the African continent in terms of its lacking and backwardness in exposure, scientific notation and exploration to misinform and as well associate the malaise with the continent (Mason, 2002). This disinformation was burned out of their long-established beliefs that the continent is dark, inferior and only bad things would only come out or be found from the continent (Waters, 2007).

John Barlelt in the later parts of 1990s came out with the chimpanzee's perception of HIV and demonstrated that those human retroviruses were more closely related to retrovirus found in African chimpanzees and not the chimpanzees in other continents (Masons, 2007). No question on how the chimpanzees got the infection has ever been raised, what were given attention were the discoveries and the approbation that was meted out to those that have discovered it (Jones, 2003). Virus is not a living thing and not an organism: it does not have a genetic make-up and it is poisonous substances that evolved from chemical composition of elements – viral protein P24 Capsid and why is it traced in chimpanzees and the chimpanzees in Africa? The historic drama of equating the continent of Africa and other developing society with pessimism for long time has being the habit and practice of the West. Ebola just like HIV is also a product of western manipulation in 2011 (Waters, 2007). What the West always wants is the commendation for the discoveries, the invention of drugs and vaccine and many more. Wangari Maathai – the only African woman to have won the Nobel Prize and a Kenyan ecologist once averred that the HIV is a created biological weapon. In her word, she said:

HIV/AIDS was invented as a bio-weapon in some laboratory in the west – we know that the developed nations are using biological warfare, leaving guns to the primitive people. They have the resource to do this. It is not a course from God. It was a tool design with an intention (Maathai, 2010: 11).

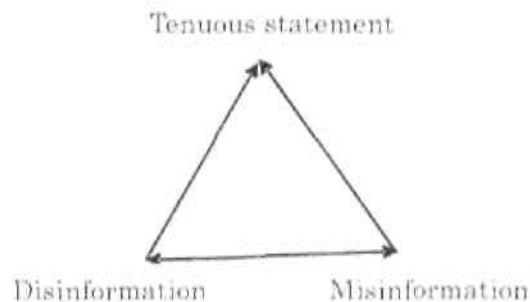
Corroborating on the view, a renowned development historian – Bala Usman in a symposium in 1990 debunked the Kinshasa (DR Congo) perception of HIV in 1920 and the crossed species from chimpanzees to human being in Africa. He questioned it non – appearance at the time until 1980s and in a different continent; New York in the midst of drug abusers and gay men as pneumocystis caprinji, pneumonia and gay-related immune deficiency (GRID). He attempted to create a correlate between the first associated name of the infections – Gay – related immune deficiency and its later adoption of African origin. He sees it as a tool the Western world was exploiting to further under develop the developing societies and Africa precisely.

Theoretical Underpinning

Disinformation and misinformation triangular model of propaganda was adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. It was propounded in 2010 by Collins and the essential element of the model is that whenever a fact is to be distorted and manipulated; the real substance of the fact will vanish; giving way to deceptive, illusive and disingenuous details. It is mostly used to debase and hide a real fact from the eye of the public (Stephenson, 2018).

The theorists of this model also point out that the sole motive of those who practiced the spurious act is to satisfy their ego; which they often see as the best and what is good to everyone. The propagandists see other societies or those that they often demean and equated with the anomalies as group that is ill – informed and ill – conceived and that anything that is produced from the debased group is tenuous and not genuine. Espousing in the same line, Bala Usman in his manipulation thesis sees the manipulators of the facts as purveyors of underdevelopment and would always pretend as if the mean well with their pretentious and superfluous deeds (Usman, 2007).

Figure 1: M2Model of Propaganda



Source: Smith, 2016

The theory has the following tenets:

- a. Manipulative information is deceptive and is mostly being seen as real.
- b. Distorted facts that is well speculated can be seen as true statement
- c. Spreader or transmitters of distorted facts often hide some certain scene to play to the gallery.
- d. The purveyors are mostly well acquitted group who capitalize on the weakness of the unfamiliar and unwitting group.

The theory is applicable to the study in the following ways:

a. Au fait and Ignoramus

The West or the Western countries are set of societies that are knowledgeable, well – informed and well – acquainted. The developing societies or underdeveloped world are societies that are not only backward but witless, unaware, ill – informed and oblivious. The Western World for long has been capitalizing on the gab to perpetuate its noxious, pestilential and hostile act on the African continent. The people of Africa were the victim of the slave trade, colonial subjugation, imperialism, apartheid and many more. The HIV virus was first found in 1981 in New York and was first called (GRID) but because the Africans are always seen as decoy and ill-informed groups, the real narrative was later changed- that it evolved from crossed species between chimpanzees and the human being in Kinshasa (DR Congo) sometimes in the 1920s. If it is DR Congo why was it first ascribed as GRID ? And why did it take a longer time for it to manifest in a distant land (New York) and not even in a nearby country in the continent.

b. Self–Defeat and Under-development

African leaders right from the pre-colonial time (slave period) to colonial and post-colonial epoch were always acting as stooge and toy of the Western world. They are always afraid and shy to speak up for the continent and would prefer to betray the continent to please the Western World. The Western world in turn uses the string of tools like: aids, loan (debt), technical assistance and many more to perpetuate their tenuous act. The HIV infection has killed a lot of people in Africa than in other continents and a lot of people are still infected. The West further uses this tale to continue to insinuate that the infection emanated from the continent as against its real origin among the gays in New York.

Results

In the course of the study, the following were unraveled:

- a. The first Case of AIDS was found in New York in United States of America in 1981. It was first seen or mistaken as pneumocystis pneumonia or Kaposi's sarcoma – A rear illness that was seen in people whose immune system had been damaged by drugs and diseases. It was till CDC published a report on cluster of gay men in New York and California whom were diagnosed with the infection. The

quick spread of the infection among homosexual communities (users of intravenous heterosexual partners) led to the rename of the infection to Gay – Related Immunodeficiency Disease (GRID). It was in 1982 the name for the illness was changed to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. Despite this historical fact, Western scientist came out with a strong disinformation that the virus spread from chimpanzees to humans and at three separate occasions in Central Africa in the 1940s and 1950s. Popular promoter of the disinformation was John-Bartlett (2009;10) who posits that:

Human retroviruses were more closely related to a virus found in African chimpanzees than to each other. They evolved from retrovirus that originally infected chimpanzees. The chimpanzee's retrovirus likely infected people and underwent mutation to form the human retrovirus (John-Bartlett, 2009:10).

If actually it is as being insinuated, then what halted the virus from spreading right from 1940(s) and the 1950(s) and why did the first case start in New York? And why the sudden change in its name from GRID to AID in 1982. This does not only show that there is uncertainty about it rather, a signal that something is hidden about it. The Western scientists want to hide the real origin and were only using the African continent to play to the gallery.

b. The study found that Africans also contributed to the growth of the disinformation thesis due to their backwardness in sciences, scientific and general history, loose lifestyles, negligence and laxity toward global issues. Africa over relies on things that come and are being said by the Western world. African scientists for long have no confidence in themselves and a lot has chosen to fly abroad due to poor incentive, poor working environment and many more. None of them have ever refuted the Western's dis-information that are being presented without verifiable facts, prove and figure. Lasun – an African laboratory scientist stressed:

Our scientist's knowledge in this part of the world is so inferior. We only read books that are designed by the Whites. We agree to their concepts and terms unquestionably. Many scientists today cannot boldly classify virus I must admit. From my little knowledge, I know viruses are nonliving things that can release poisonous substance or toxin only when they find a living cell.

This assertion corroborates with the spin of Heller (2014) in his study – *Rumors and Realities: Making sense of HIV/AIDS conspiracy Narrative and Contemporary Legends* in which he stressed that the social context of the early HIV/AIDS epidemic in USA provided the fertile ground for rumors about transmission – a condition he called as evidence of ignorance and historical racial oppression.

c. The study found that there is more to the virus and labeling its origin to Africa. Certain truths were hidden and the attempt in the reconstruction of the narrative on Africa is just a misinformation to take away the world view on its actual foundation. The increasing quest to make name from discoveries, invention and the passion to be renowned by Western scientists and the supremacy in weaponry science (Biological and Nuclear weapon) are at the heart of the origin of a lot of viruses. *Ebola, Anthrax, SARS* and many others were linked to these facts. Africa for long has been used as the cover or ground for soft-landing. The Western world often capitalizes on the weak characteristic of the people – being ill informed, ignorant and ill – conceived to easily push blame on it. This also tandem with the perception of socialist scholars such as *Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Ernesto, Chantal Mouffe, Bala Usman* and many others who often adduced that the virus has an underdevelopment coloration; created with the aim to render some certain societies backward.

Table I: Verifiable Facts on the Origin of HIV

S/No	Raised Questions	Verifiable Facts
1.	Where HIV case was first found?	New York
2.	Who was first found with the virus?	Gays in New York
3.	Its first name	GRID
4.	Year the case was confirmed	1981
5.	Who are the undesirable elements?	
6.	Pioneer of the chimpanzee tale	Beatrice Hahn

Source: Adopted from books, reports and documentary, (2020)

The study has also found that the *HIV* virus is more of a creation of a laboratory than the handy work of nature. The study uncovered that if it was a creation of nature as the Western Scientists and their allies have been pug nosing, it would have a resistance in terms of climate variation and if it is something that has been in a cell of an organism- animal and specifically chimpanzee as it's wrongly seen, it would be seen in the chimpanzees in other continent and not necessarily Africa as it is being misinformed. Espousing on the origin of *HIV*, *De Niro Rosenthal* in his film documentary-*Tribeca* attempted to unravel the mystery of the creation of *HIV* by the *West* and factitively revealing some codes in a tale. *Ajajanus Vonderplantz*- an American nutritionist and activist in a video documentary in 2010 enthused:

HIV was created in the laboratory by a "do it good group" to depopulate the human population but with much emphasis on some group. At its creation, 90% of it was injected to the gay people in New York as vaccine and 10% to non-gay and this was to create a reason to associate it to the gay and that is why it was called GRID. The gays were seen as the undesirable and thus were used as guinea pigs for the experimentation

Corroborating the proposition, Robert Strecker attested to the artificial creation of the virus in the laboratory and the revelation of Henry Kissinger who has once said that depopulation should be the highest priority of the foreign policy toward the third world countries and the systematic manipulation of scientific element in the name and quest for recognition and debasement of certain groups

Conclusion

The Western world has long history of libeling the African continent with disparaging and censorious comments, remarks and pessimism. They often capitalize on the continent's degree of backwardness, poverty level and the high level of ignorance that proliferate among majority of the people in the continent. Apart from being their victims during the era of slave trade and plantation, labourers before the advent of industrial revolution and sufferers of colonialism, the continent and its citizens were mostly regarded as object of racial discrimination, ground for the practice of apartheid and the guinea pig for scientific experimentation.

In the midst of overwhelming substantiation, the West often capitalizes on the oblivious characteristics of the continent to misinform and hide her heinous act – failed experimentation, awful innovation and many more. Western scientists for long have been using Africa as their ground to hide their appalling and horrific testing and research. They have shown this disinformation on the origin of viruses such as HIV, Ebola and many others. Pfizer experimentation in Kano State of Nigeria that resulted to the death of seven children and the formation of over hundred children as deaf, dumb, sluggish speech and other disabilities in 1996 and many others is a testament to their act. Whenever it is a success as in the term of discovery, they withhold it and when it is a failure, it will be libel with African origin and they receive the glory for the unearthing.

HIV is a creation of Western world through failed scientific experimentation and instead of conceding the fact, disinformation was used to attribute it to the African continent due to high level of ignorance and witlessness, unfamiliarity and laxity that are characteristically common in the society;

stressing that it came from shared blood relationship between human and chimpanzee to mutation and other misinformation on Kinshasa speculation (DR. Congo), then to Central Africa postulation, to west Africa and now on Cameroon.

Recommendations

It is against this background that the following recommendations were proffered:

- a. There is the need to put in mechanism to checkmate Western researchers who often come to the continent with concealed and mystifying motives. This will go a long way to control the use of the continent for pessimistic studies and inane experimentation.
- b. The African continent needs a thorough overhaul in its mode of doing things. It is high time the continent woke up from its slumber and learns to be informed, be rationalized and be enlightened like other continents across the globe. This will go a long way to stop the Western world from belittling it, playing prank out of it and using discarded statement on the continent.
- c. African leaders need to provide good leadership and governance to the people. This can be done through strengthening of democratic governance by promoting participation, accountability and transparency. This is because most of the continent's leaders are often used as subterfuge to aid most of the hideous experimentation and propaganda. Pfizer and the then minister of justice of Nigeria in 2007 and the swap of corruption charges and the reduction of the fine of 7 billion dollars to just 75 million dollars and many more are common examples
- e. The continent also needs to learn how to voice out and defend itself against unguided utterance and disinformation projected on it by any group or society. Channels of litigation like the International Court should be utilized so as to serve as deterrence to harbinger of propaganda, disinformation and pseudo- scientific experimentation under the guise to make names and discoveries without verifiable facts, proof and figures

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