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Historians agree that corruption was a pandemic in European life and politics in the 1800s, and that since then, corruption has generally declined along with economic growth and prosperity. What can Africans learn from this?

From the outset, when reading the very scarce literature on Western corruption it is clear that the decline of corruption largely corresponds with sociopolitical change and most importantly ECONOMIC GROWTH

Two main reasons are given for reduction in corruption: 1. SUSTAINED GROWTH which results in more entrepreneurship & productive investment

2. A PROSPERING ECONOMY that can afford to pay civil servants well, improving overall living standards, reducing motivation for corruption

There is very limited historical literature on corruption in Europe which often gives the impression that this is/was never really a major problem. Not so, for e.g for centuries England, was described as “shot through with corruption and venality”, just like the rest of Europe...

This period of rampant corruption in the West was at a time when Europe was at it's poorest economically. Even with the plunder and looting of the rest of the world, Europe would occasionally fall into hard times, and at this time, corruption would increase accordingly

For instance, in the late 1800s, the Netherlands was cash-strapped and on the brink of bankruptcy because of wars and revolutions in the colonies. It is at this time that corruption in the country suddenly spiked, culminating in the Letters Affair scandal of 1865 for example

So, what did the Dutch do to combat this new wave of corruption? Did they go out on campaigns and marches to "to uproot corruption in all it's forms". No, not really. They understood what their problem was: lack of money. So they went out to make more money...

They went to exploit Indonesia by implementing policies that said up to 100% of all crops grown there were to be exported to the Netherlands. If the locals wanted them they'd have to import. Instant cash! As expected, corruption became less of an issue in the Netherlands

The point is not that what the Europeans did leading to reduction in corruption levels was acceptable, but that they diagnosed the problem correctly: poverty and lack of economic growth cause corruption, not the other way around

In the 19th century, the United States which today prides itself in toppling "corrupt regimes" around the world, was faced with the same type of corruption faced by all developing nations today. What happened there?

It's important to note that even though the U.S was a developing country in the 1800s, it was by no means poor. It was not dealing with extreme poverty. This meant they were only dealing with low-level corruption as there is evidence that corruption decreases with more wealth...

Hence America's path to fighting corruption was made easy by the immense wealth they possessed. Had they been poor it would have been a different story. The moral of the story is Africa needs to get it's money up first

This is the problem Africans are facing: the assumption that poverty and lack of development is caused by corruption. This leads to whole nations focusing all their energies chasing flies with sledgehammers while the real causes of their deprivation continue unabated

The lack of extensive discussion & the revisionism around the prevalence of corruption in Europe during colonial times suggests that they've always understood how much of a minor impact it has in the development of nations - it's just a diversion, sleight of hand

You see, if the West can keep Africans moping around 24/7 about tenders & corrupt government officials it should be easy to keep draining and milking the continent and funneling trillions in minerals and currency away every year. No, it's not a conspiracy theory



Today, Africans are ashamed of even demanding reparations because they're told by their colonisers that it's corrupt & lazy, that what we instead need to to do is borrow more IMF money, "strengthen democracy", "defeat corruption" & we will be like

the West. Gaslighters of note



What Africans need to do is get their priorities right, stop being cynical & fatalistic about some "corruption emergency". Improve the livelihoods of the masses first, this will make it easier to reduce venality. Like how the West has been doing it all this time

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