The INSIGHT
theinsightnewsonline.com

VOL. 30 NO. 1519 INSIGHT MONDAY 19TH JUNE, 2023 PRICE Gh¢ 4.00

ECONOMIST

Kicks Against Over Reliance On Taxes For Revenue Under IMF Deal

...Insists Extractive Sector Can Bag $4.2 Bn Annually To End Economic Crisis

Dr. Said Boakye, Acting Executive Director of IFS

Dr. Said Boakye, the Acting Executive Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) is not happy about the bailout conditions under the $3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) extended credit facility which compels the country to overly rely on taxes to generate revenue.

According to Dr. Boakye the overreliance on taxation for revenue mobilization in the 3 billion bailout agreement will be highly detrimental to the country's economic recovery effort, and thus exacerbate the situation.

Ghana on May 17, received executive board approval for a 3 year, 3 billion dollar extended credit facility from the

cont. on page 5

We Didn't Inherit Dumsor From Mahama – Government Spokesperson Confesses

page 2

Exporting Occupation: Israeli Business Now Booming In Morocco-Occupied Western Sahara

page 9

Krontihene Nana Anobaah Nyateh Takes Over As Acting Chief Of Amanase

page 5

Prof. Enoch Opoku Antwi

Politics Of Bad Faith: The Issue Of Conflict Of Interest, Prof. Enoch Opoku Antwi Writes

page 3

The INSIGHT

EDITORIAL

AN APPALLINGLY BAD DEAL!

The revelation that an amount of $11 billion from oil exploration deals was allowed to go down the drain due to inaction or a deliberate attempt on the part of some officials of state to reap 'from the back door' is highly condemnable.

Clearly, the deal is a bad one and needs to be properly investigated to ascertain complicity, if any.

It is mind-boggling that a country with so many trained experts in oil and gas management could give away as high as a whopping 11 billion dollars to a foreign expatriate company when it had invested virtually nothing in the country's oil exploration project.

This is another act of giving for free what ordinary Ghanaians need to benefit from.

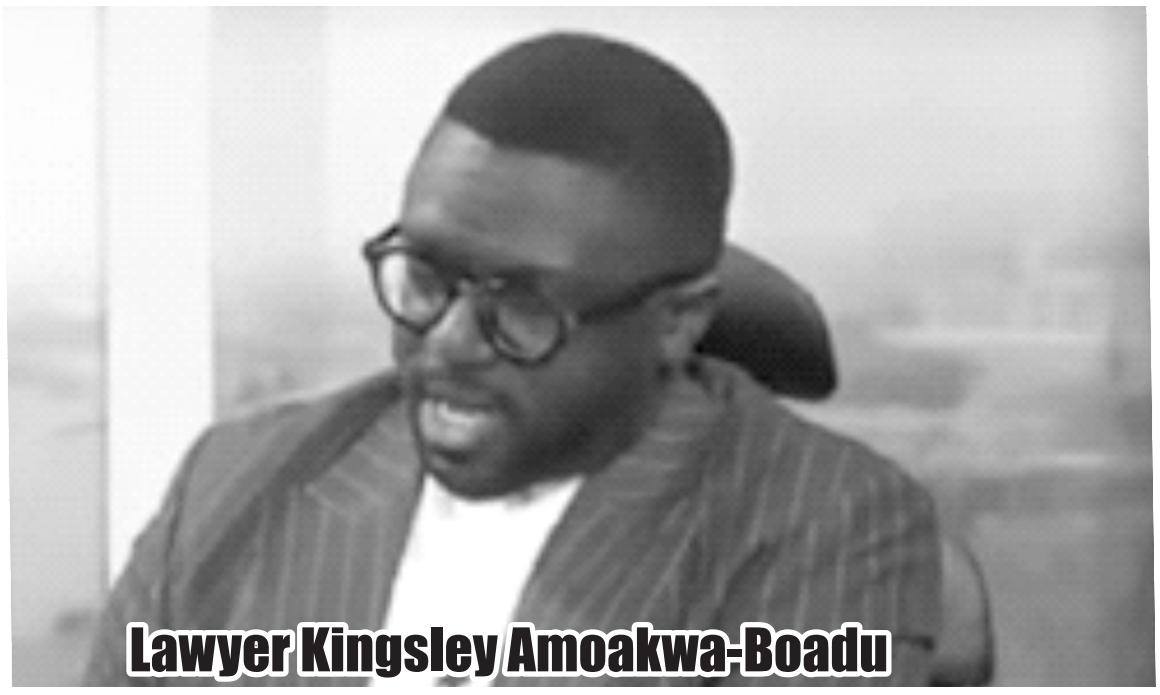
No one can and should attempt to justify why our officials deliberately let down the nation by negotiating off our interest in the deal.

Ghana's natural resources have not for the large part benefitted the teeming masses who constitute the poor village dwellers with no means of earning a living.

It is therefore surprising that considering how nationalization of oil and gas has benefitted most countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia, Africa particularly Ghana has failed to optimize the huge benefits and opportunities that international best practices offer and is engaging in acts untoward of a sovereign nation.

This is a bad deal and must be promptly and thoroughly investigated and reversed, if not cancelled.

We Didn't Inherit Dumsor From Mahama – Government Spokesperson Confesses



Lawyer Kingsley Amoakwa-Boadu

A spokesman person of the government, Lawyer Kingsley Amoakwa-Boadu, has been forced to admit by Dr Randy Abbey, the host of Good Morning Ghana, that the Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo government did not inherit the dreaded days of intermittent power supply, which is popularly known as dumsor.

Proponents of the government, including President Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo, have been dragging about solving dumsor when they came to power.

The president recently took a swipe at former President John Dramani Mahama that under his government, electricity was a privilege and not a necessity.

"... I wish to reassure you all that my government will continue to work towards "Keeping the Lights on", in spite of the global dynamics of energy pricing, because the alternative is not an option. We are not going back to dumsor, we leave that to President Mahama," Akufo-Addo said.

But, Lawyer Amoakwa-Boadu, after initially hesitating, admitted that the problem of dumsor was over before Mahama handed over power on the Thursday, June 15, 2023, edition of the Good Morning Ghana show, which was monitored by GhanaWeb.

"On 7th January (2016) of course, there was no dumsor in Ghana... I don't go on platforms to do pure politics; we are trying to solve Ghana's problems," he said.

He, however, noted that the fact that dumsor was over before Mahama left office does not mean that the Akufo-Addo government did nothing to help.

"But that is not to say that nothing has been done. In fact, we have reviewed the agreements. In fact, the World Bank is saying some of the agreements were overpriced and we need to review it," he said.

THE INSIGHT

ACTING EDITOR - BENJAMIN AKUFFO
(0244669960)
benjaminakuffo65@yahoo.com

Secretary - Gifty Agyemang

Design and Graphics - Godwin K. Attah

Production Manager - Kweku Menz

PUBLISHERS

Militant Publications Limited
P. O. Box NT 272
Accra-Newtown, Accra
Tel: 0244379344/0242836930
Email: theinsightonline20@gmail.com
LONDON CONTACT
5A Wesminster Bridge Road, London SE 1- 7XW
Tel: 0171-6201430
E-mail: prattc22@aol.com

Politics Of Bad Faith: The Issue Of Conflict Of Interest, Prof. Enoch Opoku Antwi Writes

OBONSAM TAWA!

By Prof. Enoch Opoku Antwi
Dean, Faculty of Business Administration & Communication Arts, Academic City University College, Haatso, Accra.

There is a strong argument that for good governance and effective checks and balances, Supreme Court judges, Electoral Commissioner, Governor of Bank of Ghana, and the Inspector General of Police, among others, should never be appointed by the president. This is because it creates conflict of interest situation and makes baloney of separation of powers. In this piece, I would want us to take a good look at one of the most abused phrase of our time: Conflict of interest!

In a political context, conflict of interest generally arises when a governmental official's personal, social, and financial interest interfere in any way (or appears to interfere) with his or her ability to act in the best interest of the country. In simple terms, political leaders, government appointees, and civil servants must discharge their responsibilities on the basis of what is in the best interest of the country, independent of personal consideration or relationships.

Depending on responsibilities, "the government" or "government official" should not have a personal or financial interest in the services they render to the people. The most common types of financial interest are ownership of property purchased with public funds, bidding to take on a project or a contract as a board member, buying a public property such as building that the government official has previously occupied even if legally, taking bribes or kickbacks in the course of performing an official duty; inside trading, and directly or indirectly including any subsidiary to extend or maintain credit in the form of loans through a political influence.

Of course, conflict of interest also includes a professor in a public university hiding behind academic freedom as a license to provoke political parties without consequence. That professor is a public servant paid through government payroll.

The ideal situation is for any public official to deal with the populace on an "arm's length" basis and must not offer or receive anything of value, including any payment, gift, secret commission, empty glory, or any other benefit to influence the decision or action of any individual.

Remember that even under anti-corruption laws, the definition of "government" and "government official" are expansive and often broader than expected.

Statements made, records submitted, and information provided by government officials, whether made orally or in writing, must be truthful and accurate. Government policies and procedures must be kept in good faith. Technically, there must be specific laws and policies governing the hiring of former government officials as it pertains in many developed countries. Government officials must record and report all transactions, including those where payments are made in cash. All tax allowances to which government officials are entitled to must be listed and declared for tax purposes.

Bottom line: government officials should discharge their duties as government officials. They should disclose any potential conflicts to the Attorney General and Department of Justice office before being audited in order to receive a determination as to whether or not the Attorney General's Office believes a conflict of interest exist. Do we now understand why it is important for each government institution to work in order to push back on conflict of interest?

Government officials should also disclose potential conflict of interest involving their spouse, siblings, parents, in-laws, children, and other members of their household. Evidently, government has no interest in preventing officials from engaging in lawful activities during nonworking hours. However, the official must make sure that their outside activities do not conflict or interfere with their responsibilities to the government or otherwise reflect poorly on the government. As an example, without approval by the government, a public official generally may NOT:

- Engage in self-employment or perform a paid or unpaid work for others in the field of interest similar to or in competition with the government.
- Use proprietary or confidential government information for personal gain or to the government's detriment.
- Use government assets such as a car or building or labor for personal use, except for incidental use permitted under government policies.
- Acquire any interest in property or assets of any kind for the purpose of selling or leasing it to the government, either directly or through a third party; or
- Make contributions to any political party, political campaign, political candidate or fellow public official, or any charitable organization of personal interest using government funds or assets unless the contribution is lawful and expressly authorized.

We may argue that based on the above listed points alone, it is quite difficult to avoid conflict of interest. That argument could be valid to a certain degree.

However, conflict of interest as a concept could be likened to paying tithe. If it is not 10 percent, then it is not a tithe but something different.

A section of political analysts, bloggers and social commentators argue that it is the responsibility of the president to set and maintain conflict of interest standards. I do not know what you think about this line of reasoning. However, it is clear to me that the president cannot do it alone. The people who report to him need to be accountable for meeting his standards. The president only needs to do his best to maintain each appointee's self-respect, and also model the way. Exemplary leadership is key here.

Government officials' engagement in conflict of interest is politics of bad faith. And politics of bad faith hurts everyone in a political party and the country in general. So, how do we avoid the politics of bad faith? Sometimes it is a question of making sure every government official is committed to the leadership effort. One way is to make sure every government official knows what to do with regards to an issue of a possible conflict of interest. Set the standards high in an onboarding process and initial orientations, and hold people accountable for meeting them.

The president may or may not appoint individuals to higher positions of trust (some are appointed, others might not be appointed by the president), but the responsibility to avoid conflict of interest is solely theirs (the individual). The devil continues to smoke his *tawa* (pipe). Conflict of Interest is none of his business, but ours as a nation to fix!

INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Millions Of People In The US Ration Medicine As Big Pharma Fights To Keep Prices High

By Natalia Marques

A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report published this month reveals that approximately 9.2 million people in the US try to save money by rationing their medication. Most adults between the ages of 18 and 64 take at least one prescription medication, but 8% of them—9.2 million people—ration medicine by skipping doses, taking less than instructed, or delaying a refill.

Meanwhile, pharmaceutical giants like Merck are fighting tooth and nail against President Biden's limited checks on astronomical medication prices. Giving the government power to negotiate medicine prices with companies is "tantamount to extortion," Merck argues in a recent lawsuit.

Based on data from 2021, the CDC found that the most marginalized of the working class are the ones who are most often forced to ration their medication. Almost a quarter of adults (23%) without insurance rationed their medication in order to save money, versus 7% of people with private insurance. 27 million people in the US have no health insurance at all. People with disabilities were three times more likely to ration medication than non-disabled people, as well as those with fair or poor health as compared to good health. Women were more likely to ration medicine than men.

A report published in November of 2022 found that one in six people with diabetes rationed their insulin. The number was one in four for Black people with diabetes. A third of uninsured adults rationed.

"The main takeaway is that 1.3 million people rationed insulin in the United States, one of the richest countries in the world," Dr. Adam Gaffney, Harvard Medical School physician and lead author of the study, toldCNN. "This is a lifesaving drug. Rationing insulin can have life-threatening consequences."

"There are stories of many folks in the states who are living with type one diabetes, for instance, who will try to stretch doses, try to make it to the next month and a lot of those folks 'dont make it," said Justin Mendoza, executive director of Universities Allied for Essential Medicines.

"You can't really survive without the proper dosage of insulin if you have Type 1 [diabetes]."

As working people are risking their lives to save money on costly medications, pharmaceutical giant Merck is suing the US government over a law that would empower the state to negotiate prices with companies for a limited amount of branded medicine. This reform in the Inflation Reduction Act of last year "is tantamount to extortion" Merck argues.

AbbVie's CEO claimed that the IRA's negotiations amount to "price controls" (not that there would be anything wrong with this, many of the world's largest countries have some system of price controls of medications).

Biogen is predicted to follow Merck with their own suit against the IRA. Their CEO also agreed that the IRA is "extortion" and called the law "draconian," and would prevent them from funding medical research on rare diseases.

But the battle for Medicare, the state-run health insurance program, to be able to negotiate medication, has been going on for a long time. "Medicare should have always had the ability to negotiate lower prices for its enrollees, because Medicare is the largest purchaser of prescription drugs in the US," says Mendoza. In 2003, "when the law was passed to get [Medicare Part D] through, pharmaceutical companies lobbied and kicked up a couple of votes and got the restriction in place that barred Medicare from negotiating."

Merck made over USD 14 billion in profits last year, AbbVie generated almost USD 12 billion, and Biogen USD 3 billion (a 95% increase from 2021). The companies seem unwilling to dip into their billions in profits to save the lives of poor and working people and fund necessary research.

A new CDC study shows that 9 million people are trying to save money by rationing medication, as pharmaceutical giants rally against price checks

"Pharmaceutical prices have been unchecked for far too long," says Mendoza. "We've seen that consistently for more than a decade, that pharmaceutical companies, when they have a monopoly, will raise the price so they can show profits to their shareholders and keep their investors happy."

"This is just yet another tactic used by large pharmaceutical manufacturers to try to hold on to profits without innovating anything new for patients."

At Least 79 Migrants Dead And Hundreds Missing After Boat Sinks Off Greece Coast

(Photo: UNICEF/Ashley Gilbertson). The number of dead is expected to rise as rescue operations are still ongoing. The ship had an estimated 500 to 700 migrants, mostly from West Asian and Northern Africa countries

At least 79 people have died and hundreds are missing after an overcrowded boat carrying migrants to Europe capsized and sank off the Greek coast in the early hours of last Wednesday.

The search and rescue mission in the Ionian sea, 47 nautical miles (87 km) off the Greek coast, was still ongoing on Thursday and the number of dead is expected to rise. So far, 104 persons have been rescued and taken to Kalamata in Greece.

According to unconfirmed reports, between 500 and 750 migrants were on the small fishing boat which is believed to have taken off from Tobruk, a city in eastern Libya, and was heading to Italy.

Most of the 104 survivors are from West Asian and North-African countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, with some coming from Pakistan and Afghanistan as well.

The Alarm Phone, an NGO working with migrant ships in the region, has refuted the Greek rescue mission's claim that the people on the migrant ship had refused their assistance before it sank. In a statement, the organization claimed that despite alerting the Greek and European authorities on time about the overcrowded ship heading towards Italy, the rescue operation was still delayed.

The sinking of the migrant boat is feared to be one of the worst ever such incidents in the Central Mediterranean region, already the world's most dangerous route for migrants according to the Missing Migrant Project of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

EU border control policies responsible

Eleni Spathana, a lawyer with the Greek NGO Refugee Support Aegean, told *Al-Jazeera* that such tragedies are "a side effect of the deterrent EU policies and all these efforts—no matter what—to keep the people in need of protection and support outside the EU territory."

UNHCR Greece and the IOM in a joint statement said that the deaths on Wednesday were "avoidable" and called for "more safe pathways for people forced to flee."

EU's border control policies have been held responsible for the rise in the number of migrants dying or missing at sea in the region. They have also given a boost to human trafficking as people are smuggled on overcrowded and unsafe boats which often leads to accidents. There is also systemic human rights abuse of refugees and asylum seekers in countries such as Libya.

Over 21,000 migrants have reportedly died or gone missing in the Central Mediterranean region since 2014, out of a total of nearly 27,000 in the entire Mediterranean region, according to the IOM.

IOM also reported that the first quarter of 2023 was the deadliest on record for migrants in the Central Mediterranean region since 2017, with over 441 migrants either dead or missing between January 1 and March 31.

ECONOMIST

Kicks Against Over Reliance On Taxes For Revenue Under IMF Deal

...Insists Extractive Sector Can Bag $4.2 Bn Annually To End Economic Crisis

from front page

international monetary fund.
Per the programme, the Fund says it expects Ghana to restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability while laying the foundations for higher and more inclusive growth.
However, addressing the media on its review of the IMF programme, Dr. Said Boakye said despite the institute's backing of fiscal reforms such as the review and subsequent streamline of statutory funds and a comprehensive review of government's flagship programme, the overreliance on taxation poses long term harm for growth and businesses.
“The structural fiscal reforms that the program proposes are broadly appropriate, and many accord with IFS' recommendations to the government over the years”, Dr. Boakye reiterated.
“We are glad that a key structural reform benchmark in the program is that the government should conduct a comprehensive review of statutory funds to assess their relevance and streamline them. We further support that planned comprehensive review of the government's flagship programs”, he added as some strengths the Institute had seen as part of the program.
The Institute however had issues with what it described as the over reliance on taxation for revenue mobilization.
“The program's effort to increase government revenue mobilization relies unduly on taxes. As a prior action for the program, many taxes were introduced in the 2023 budget and more are likely to follow under the tax-centered revenue strategy. Yet, overreliance on taxation is certain to hurt business and industries, and ultimately harm the economy's competitiveness and long-term growth potential”, IFS acting boss warned.
The IFS therefore admonished the government to take steps to increase extractive sector revenue as an alternative to taxation.
The IFS said government focusing attention on the extractive sector to raise revenue will help revive the economy.
The IFS said greater participation in the extractive sector would in addition to increasing domestic revenue would potentially increase foreign exchange inflows to stabilize the cedi.
The financial think tank noted that Ghana could raise more than $4.2 billion annually from the extractive sector to prop up the economy from the current crisis, which is more than the $3 billion government is raising from the IMF over the next three years as part of the ECF with the Fund.

Dr Boakye said Ghana could raise substantial revenue from the extractive sector through active participation of extraction of the country's mineral resources, joint ventures and production sharing approach.
According to him, studies conducted by the IFS indicated that out of the $22.72 billion worth of minerals produced in Ghana from 2015 to 2018, only $1.48 billion, representing a meager 6.5 per cent was paid as revenue to the government.

“The remaining $21.14 billion, representing 93.5 per cent went to the private producers of the minerals, mainly multinational, even though mineral resources are public endowed from God and should therefore benefit the state, which holds them in trust for the people,” Dr Boakye stated.

He said the country was not making much from its mineral resources because government relied on fiscal approach through concessionary arrangement to generate revenue.
“From IFS's research, the revenue gap between Ghana and its peers is largely due to the country's relatively poor revenue generation from the extractive sector, which is the result of leaving the sector in the hands of multinationals through concession arrangements that yield paltry revenue to the state, while the multinationals repatriate billions of dollars in resource rents,” Dr Boakye stated.
He said between 2015 and 2018 only 10.5 per cent of the $14.14 billion supernormal profit generated from mineral production, was paid as revenue to the government, leaving the private sector producers to keep as much as 89.5 per cent of the supernormal profits.
In contrast, Dr Boakye indicated that for instance, in Botswana, mineral revenue constituted about 95 per cent of supernormal profit and about 52 per cent of the total value of mineral production.
In the oil sector, the government of Ghana's revenue amounts to less than 20 per cent of the total value of production, whereas the Nigerian case in different.
“These wide differences in the extractive sector revenue generation are because in Nigeria and Botswana, the governments are active participants with significant stakes in their oil and mining sectors, respectively, while the Ghanaian government has limited directing participating interests in the extractive sector, and instead over-relies on fiscal instruments under concessionary arrangements to generate revenue,” Dr Boakye stated.

Dr. Said Boakye, Acting Executive Director of IFS

Krontihene Nana Anobaah Nyateh Takes Over As Acting Chief Of Amanase

Obaapanin Nana Ansaa Ayaw and Abusuapanin Seth Asamoah Asare, with support of the entire Royal Lineage of Amanase in the Ayensuano District of the Eastern Region have appointed Krontihene, Nana Anobaah Nyateh to act as caretaker Chief of Amanase.
The Krontihene Nana Anobaah Nyateh will take over the caretaker role from the Gyasehene, Nana Asiedu Dartey.
The change is due to recent happenings at Amanase, in relation to skeletons in bags and dead bodies found by the Suhum Police Command at the Amanase Palace.
The incident, it is believed has brought shame to the Chief of Amanase Osabarima Asamoah Asare Ampofo I, who due to old age has to step aside for the Krontihene to take over.
In a statement sighted by this reporter and signed by Osabarima Asamoah Asare Ampofo I, Obaa Panin Nana Ansaa Ayaw and Abusuapanin Seth Asamoah Asare cautioned the Gyaasehene not to hold himself as the caretaker Chief of Amanase or act on behalf of Osaberima Asamoah Asare Ampofo I, effective from June 11, 2023.
The statement revealed that Nana Asiedu Dartey is still holding his position as Gyaasehene of Amanase and will continue to serve Osaberima Asamoah Asare Ampofo I as such.
The statement cautioned that anyone who deals with him in any other capacity aside the role of Gyaasehene does so at his or her own risk.
Traditional leadership roles demand that the duty of the Gyaasehene does not extend beyond the walls of the Palace.
"As the hierarchy of traditional authority demands, Nana Anobaah Nyante, Krontihene of Amanase and Osahemea Nana Ansah Ayaw, would be holding the fort from now onwards until the royal family appoints a befitting member to take up the mantle of leadership as chief of Amanase", it stated.
However, during the Akwasidae at the Amanase Palace the Gyaasehene did not attend the very important event at the palace, this among other acts has compelled many to believe that his absence from the Akwesidae was as a result of the leadership role taken away from him.
This is their Press Statement;

Prioritise Menstrual Hygiene Like Free SHS To Keep Girls In School - Dr Priscilla Baffour To Govt

By Joseph Wemakor

Dr. Priscilla Twumasi Baffour, an economist at the University of Ghana, believes that the relentless fight by the masses to see the 'phenomenon of period poverty' fixed cannot be successful until menstrual hygiene management issues are given similar priority attached to the Free Senior High School education in the country by the government.

She argues that despite the fact that the free SHS program faces many obstacles, the government's commitment to enhancing the program is on track to create conditions that will allow education to flourish because of the priority placed on it by the government.

"We are aware that there are many problems with that program, but even so, the government has been very steadfast in maintaining that this is the course we are taking, and for that reason, I am arguing that if the period poverty problem is given the same level of priority, we can be sure that we will see results."

Dr. Priscilla Twumasi Baffour made this point on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, at the CDD-Ghana, Accra, during a roundtable discussion on the subject of "promoting girls' regular attendance in school through the elimination of 'tampon taxes.'

The goal of the event was to increase the number of girls who regularly attend school by looking into the possibility of lowering the 'tampon tax' or the reclassification of menstrual products to medical necessities in order to eliminate the taxes to increase access to sanitary pads and ensure that girls do not miss classes.

The 'tampon tax', the import taxes imposed on menstrual hygiene products in Ghana, has been an impediment to girls' accessibility to these products.

The roundtable discussion was attended by experts from various fields, including representatives from the Ghana Education Service, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education, among other civil society organizations.

The event, according to Dr. Kojo Asante, Director of Advocacy and Policy Engagement at CDD-Ghana, aims to identify and forge consensus among key stakeholders, including activists and non-governmental organizations working toward the urgent need to repeal the taxes.

It also seeks to brainstorm the key strategies for sustaining Ghana's activism toward reforming the taxes on menstrual hygiene products.

The roundtable discussion gave both the panelists and the attendees a forum to voice their concerns about the phenomenon of period poverty and to strategize on advocacy tactics they could use to pressure the government to address the issues by eliminating the 'tampon tax' on menstrual hygiene products, increasing access to WASH services, among other measures aimed at promoting menstrual hygiene.

The elimination of the "tampon tax" is not a silver bullet for improving girls' regular attendance in school. Changing deep-seated cultural attitudes towards menstruation also remains a challenge. However, this discussion provides an excellent starting point for enacting policies that support gender equality in Ghanaian education.

Lilipearl Baaba Otoo, a journalist and an advocate for Women's rights who shared a panel with three others believes removing the 'tampon tax' would decrease the price of such products and make them more affordable, thereby improving accessibility for girls.

She maintained that several countries across Africa, including Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, have already made menstrual hygiene products tax-free and called on the government to emulate those countries to help grant easy access to sanitary products to women and particularly girls thereby improving their regular attendance in school.

For her part, Nana Akua Agyapomaa Kyereh contends that although access to education is very important, there are limiting factors that are keeping the girls out of school which are no fault of theirs compounded by period poverty which ought to be addressed if the girl child can be in school as expected.

One of the key lessons that emerged from the roundtable was the need to have a conversation about period poverty and cervical cancer which has a direct correlation with human papillomavirus owing to high fatalities in women as a result of lack of vaccination. This suggestion was made by Kwame Sarpong Asiedu, a D&D Fellow at CDD-Ghana

Another critical lesson shared at the roundtable discussion was the need to whip up the attention of the media to join the campaign and contribute its quota through constant coverage of the issues and above all commit to agenda setting to drive the advocacy to achieve results.

In her concluding remarks, Dr. Priscilla Twumasi Baffour suggested that one way to achieve results is to see CSOs commit to lobbying people in authority who can make a change and the inclusion of influential women to champion the cause.

She equally called for the conversation to move beyond just taking off the import tax on sanitary products and focused on support of domestic production so that the prices of menstrual hygiene products could go at very competitive prices.

"I think that the conversation is a good start but truth be told that the taxes could be scrapped but you'll not see much difference in terms of the price on the market because the middlemen in there could just pocket the difference because of the nature of the product. It is not like it is expensive so people will not buy, you don't have a choice and you have to go for it".

Francisca Sarpong Owusu, Assistant Research Analyst at the Center, who shared the panel added,

"We have a National Gender policy which seeks to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all aspects of policymaking but in actual sense, gender is not considered in fiscal policymaking by Ministry of Finance."

The roundtable aimed to spark a national discourse about the importance of menstrual hygiene management and its impact on girls' education in Ghana.

The removal of the "tampon tax" would reduce the barriers and challenges girls face in accessing menstrual health products and consequently improve their academic performance and retention in school.

Dr. Priscilla Twumasi Baffour, an economist at the University of Ghana

The Five Unforgettable Books Of Ama Ata Aidoo

Prof. Ama Ata Aidoo, the renowned late Ghanaian writer

Professor Ama Ata Aidoo, one of Ghana's giant writers, died on Wednesday, May 31, 2023.

As a way of looking back on her remarkable, inspiring life, we take a look at some of her 5 most memorable books.

The following list is made available via guardian.ng:

"Our Sister Killjoy" (1977):

Synopsis: "Our Sister Killjoy" is a novel that explores the experiences of a young Ghanaian woman named Sissie, who travels to Europe as a student. Through Sissie's observations and encounters, Aidoo examines themes of cultural identity, colonialism, and the complexities of interracial relationships.

"Changes: A Love Story" (1991):

"Changes: A Love Story" tells the story of Esi, a Ghanaian woman who navigates the challenges of love, marriage, and societal expectations. Set in the backdrop of Accra, Ghana, the novel explores the lives of Esi and her two husbands, Oko and Ali, examining themes of feminism, tradition, and the changing roles of women in society.

"No Sweetness Here" (1970):

"No Sweetness Here" is a collection of short stories that delve into the lives of women in Ghanaian society. Aidoo portrays the challenges faced by women through narratives that address themes of gender inequality, patriarchy, and societal expectations. The characters in the stories reflect a range of experiences and perspectives.

"Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories" (2012):

Synopsis: "Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories" is a collection of short stories that explore various aspects of African life and culture. The stories touch on themes such as identity, politics, love, and social issues. Aidoo presents a diverse array of characters from different backgrounds and explores their interactions and conflicts.

"Anowa" (1970)

"Anowa" is a dramatic play that centres around the life of a young Ghanaian woman named Anowa. The play follows Anowa's journey as she defies societal expectations and chooses her own path, leading to tragic consequences. Aidoo uses the character of Anowa to examine themes of agency, tradition, and the clash between individual desires and societal norms.

Ama Ata Aidoo's works often feature complex and nuanced characters, particularly women, who navigate personal, social, and cultural challenges. Through her storytelling, Aidoo offers insights into Ghanaian society and the wider African experience, exploring themes of identity, gender, tradition, and societal change.

Source --GhanaWeb

Exporting Occupation: Israeli Business Now Booming In Morocco-Occupied Western Sahara

By Jessica Buxbaum / MintPressNews

By Jessica Buxbaum

On December 22, 2020, Israel and Morocco officially normalized relations after former President Donald Trump's administration declared occupied Western Sahara as Moroccan. In the years following, Israeli companies have boosted their business involvement in Western Sahara, suggesting the pair's cooperation is fueling each other's land theft.

In 1975, Morocco annexed part of Western Sahara – a region indigenous to the Sahrawi people – and its entirety in 1979. Few have accepted these actions: today, 82 countries recognize Western Sahara's independence, while only the United States recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over the land.

"The Worst of the Worst"

While Israel hasn't officially recognized Western Sahara as part of Morocco, several Israeli companies are already working with Morocco in the occupied territory. These include NewMed Energy, Ratio Petroleum, Selina Group, Halman-Aldubi Technologies, and an unnamed company launching an aquaculture project in Western Sahara.

MintPress News contacted the known firms for comment on why they are doing business in occupied territory, but did not receive a response.

According to watchdog group, Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW), the only companies pursuing oil and gas exploration in Western Sahara are Israeli — NewMed Energy and Ratio Petroleum.

"Those are resources that will be depleted and disappear under occupation before the conflict has been resolved, and that is very worrisome for the Sahrawi people," Erik Hagen, WSRW board member, told *MintPress News*. "So the stuff the Israeli companies are doing now is kind of the worst of the worst."

Investing in Another Occupation

Similar to the Israeli settlement enterprise in the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel is now boosting its economic opportunities in Western Sahara.

In September 2021, the Moroccan National Office of Hydrocarbons and Mines (ONHYM) signed an agreement with Ratio Gibraltar, a subsidiary of the Israeli oil company Ratio Petroleum, to search for oil and gas off the coast of Dakhla, a city in Western Sahara. The budding business partnership grew from there.

In December last year, NewMed Energy entered into a business deal with ONHYM and Gibraltar-based Adarco Energy for offshore gas and oil exploration in Western Sahara's Boujdour Atlantique block.

NewMed Energy is a subsidiary of Israeli firm Delek Group. According to WSRW, Delek Group is backed by a number of European and American investors.

Delek Group owner, Yitzhak Tshuva, is the company's largest shareholder, followed by the Norwegian Government Pension Fund. Deutsche Bank is the company's 10th biggest owner. Six U.S. financial companies hold shares: Dimensional Holdings, Vanguard Group, BlackRock, Grantham Mayo van Otterloo & Co, Charles Schwab Corporation, and Empirical Finance.

WSRW contacted NewMed Energy in December regarding its offshore drilling license in Western Sahara and received the following response from NewMed Energy's VP of Regulatory and Public Affairs, Nadav Perry:

I would like to clarify that all our actions in the past and in the present are done in accordance with and subject to international law and Israeli law and the laws in force. In addition, it should be noted in this context that we act in accordance with the stated policy of the Israeli government and we intend to continue doing so.

WSRW responded to NewMed Energy requesting clarification on which country's laws it is following but did not receive an answer.

This spring, more Israeli businesses began cropping up in Western Sahara.

Israel's Minister of Innovation, Science, and Technology, Ofir Akunis, announced in March that an unknown Israeli company will launch an aquaculture project in the occupied territory.

"This, and other areas of cooperation have been made possible by the Abraham accords," Akunis said of the deal during the 2023 UN Water Conference.

MintPress News reached out to the Israeli ministry on which company is responsible for the aquaculture project but did not receive a response.

In April, an Israeli hospitality company, Selina Group, opened a new hotel in the Western Sahara city of Dakhla. Also in April, a consortium of Israeli startups, led by Halman-Aldubi Technologies, announced it would collaborate with Morocco's Mohammed VI Polytechnic University to develop sustainable food solutions in Western Sahara. These startups include Seakura, Shachar Group, FreezeM, and Celitron.

Obtaining foreign investments in Western Sahara is part of Morocco's strategy to establish facts on the ground, International Crisis Group, an organization centered on preventing war and mitigating conflict, North Africa director Riccardo Fabiani, said.

"By attracting foreign investments in Western Sahara, you are effectively creating international recognition and acceptance for Moroccan control of Western Sahara," Fabiani told *MintPress News*.

With Israel increasing its business operations in Western Sahara, "you're signaling to other foreign companies that it's fine to invest in Western Sahara. It's business as usual," Fabiani said.

Before normalization, international companies would steer away from Western Sahara in fear of legal repercussions. But now, with more outside business involvement in the region, Fabiani noted, Western Sahara's label is changing on the global stage.

"The stances and positions that many Western countries and companies are taking increasingly toward Western Sahara is the idea that this is not really an occupied territory; it's more like a disputed area under control by the Moroccans," he said.

A Partnership That's Now Public

While Morocco and Israel normalized relations less than three years ago, the pair's collaboration has spanned decades, albeit in secret.

The Moroccan Air Force purchased Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) Heron drones in 2014 but did not receive the weapons until 2020.

The arms are reportedly being used against the Polisario Front, the group fighting for Western Sahara's independence.

"By doing this, the Israelis are effectively helping the Moroccans fight back the Polisario, and you could argue that it's a way of repressing the pro-independence movement," Fabiani said.

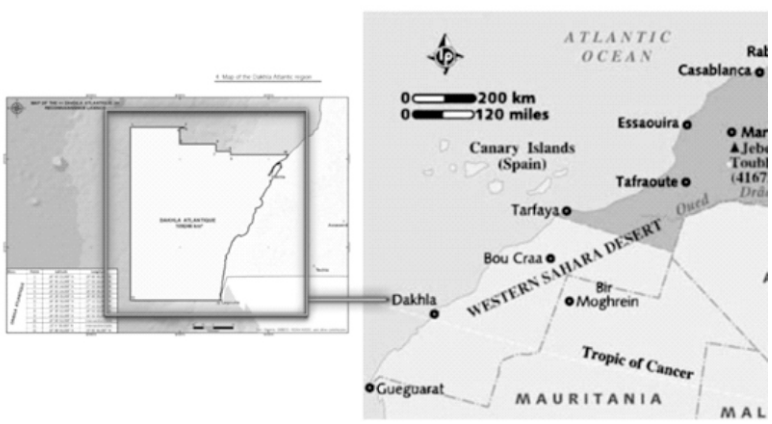
In 2018, the website MenaDefense.net uploaded a video of Moroccan police officers donning Israeli-made Tavor (X95) firearms during a parade. Morocco denied it received the weapons from Israel, saying they were acquired through a European firm. Several reports claimed the firearms were manufactured under a Ukrainian license; however, Ukraine denied this. That particular version of Tavor is not produced in Ukraine.

According to Amnesty International, Moroccan authorities used the Israeli NSO Group's Pegasus spyware to unlawfully target activists, journalists, and human rights defenders in Western Sahara between 2017-2020.

In 2021, Morocco bought kamikaze drones from IAI, and then purchased IAI's Barak MX antiaircraft and missile interceptor system in 2022. Israeli company BlueBird Aero System sold drones to Morocco in 2021, reportedly to be used for surveillance and intelligence collection in Western Sahara.

Under normalization, Morocco and Israel's military alliance is no longer just a secret. It's also intensifying.

"Before the normalization happened, the Israelis would collaborate with the Moroccans, but also wouldn't feel comfortable going beyond this covert intelligence or military or ad hoc cooperation," Fabiani said. "But with normalization, this has now reached a whole new level that is unprecedented."



Ratio Gibraltar's oil exploration claim in Morocco-Occupied Western Sahara

Why So-Called 'De-Globalization' Doesn't Count Much

By Prabhat Patnaik

Many economists these days talk of a process of "de-globalization" taking place; some others talk of the neoliberal regime of yesteryear no longer existing. Of course, nothing remains the same forever: as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus had said, "You cannot step into the same river twice." Some change in the neoliberal order, therefore, is inevitable with the passage of time. But the real point is: has the analytical frame used for understanding the economic reality of the contemporary world, with a view to changing it, become obsolete and hence in need of serious revision?

"Globalization," it must be remembered, never meant different countries of the world coming together voluntarily to set up a global order that would be mutually beneficial. Nearly 50 countries of the world today are at the receiving end of "sanctions" of various kinds. They are forcibly prevented from accessing essential goods, including in some cases life-saving medicines, from the global market. And the number was not much less a decade ago when "globalization" was universally recognized as being in full swing.

"Globalization" thus always meant something quite different from what is commonly ascribed to it. It meant the coming into being of a phase of capitalism where capital, including, above all, finance, had become [illegible] economies for its unrestricted movement. It had thereby curbed the capacity of the nation-state to intervene in ways that finance did not approve. And this globalized capital had enjoyed the backing, in its global operations, of metropolitan states, above all, and of other states by default. These metropolitan states, notably the US, decided on which countries sanctions were to be imposed, with the others falling in line.

"Globalization" thus represented a reimposition of Western imperialist hegemony on the world as a whole, excluding the socialist countries, but including countries which had been decolonized around the middle of the 20th century and had adopted, even while promoting capitalist development, various kinds of *dirigiste* strategies. It meant, in other words, the breaking down of any relative autonomy vis-à-vis imperialism within the non-socialist Third World.

As a complement to the unrestricted mobility of capital, "globalization" had also meant relatively unrestricted movement of goods and services across country borders (barring, of course, the countries that faced "sanctions").

What happened during this period of "globalization" was that new economic powers emerged, by whom the Western imperialist powers felt threatened. These included Russia, which inherited the massive production base built up by the Soviet Union and which the Western powers thought they had subjugated, until there was a reassertion of its strength after Boris Yeltsin left office. And China, which, while relating to "globalization" on its own terms rather than those dictated by the Western powers, witnessed rapid rates of growth because, among other factors, of the market access it enjoyed in the metropolitan capitalist world. Now, Russia has come under "sanctions" after the Ukraine War; and the trade of the Western world with China has declined to an extent, because of the latter's deliberate political effort to scale it down.

Such an effort in the case of the US has been motivated by several factors, from protecting domestic jobs (even though a good deal of imports from China by the US is produced there by US direct foreign investment) to a strong desire not to be too dependent on it. In the case of other metropolitan countries, there is the additional factor of US pressure. Of these factors, however, the desire not to be too dependent on China has been the far more decisive one.

US concern over rapidly growing imports from China began in the era of George Bush Jr., who tried to persuade the Chinese to appreciate the exchange rate of the yuan vis-à-vis the dollar; it continued under Obama who penalized US firms relocating production abroad. But it was Donald Trump who imposed tariffs to protect domestic production against imports from abroad; China was the major target of these tariffs.

Two examples underscore the overwhelmingly political motivation behind the Western scaling down of trade with China. The European Union has proposed a rule that solar panels that are to be used for the decarbonization of Europe should not be imported from any country that has more than 65% of the market share. This rule is meant solely to exclude China which has 85% of the market because of the extremely low price of the panels it supplies. Europe, in short, is willing to pay a much higher price for solar panels just to keep China out, which is a decision motivated entirely by geopolitical considerations.

Likewise, the Joe Biden administration's ban on semi-conductor exports to China, which is imposed against corporate wishes within the US itself, and which poses a major threat to the high-tech industries in China, including military technology and artificial intelligence, is motivated exclusively by geopolitical considerations, the sheer desire to keep China economically and technologically crippled.

In other words, even though there are no explicit sanctions against China at the moment, what we are seeing nonetheless is an implicit imposition of sanctions, either in preparation for a time in future when there would be explicit sanctions or out of a sheer desire to cripple China.

What is called "de-globalization" refers, in effect, to this entire new tendency of the Western powers to discriminate against China, their desire not to become too dependent on China. The effort essentially is to diversify trade relations away from China to other countries, even though such diversification turns out to be more expensive. The recent decline in the magnitude of US trade with China is a consequence of this. It is as if China is being added to the list of countries that are subject to Western sanctions. Interestingly, there has been no actual decline in macro-level parameters, like the ratio of total world imports to world GDP, which some economists have used as proxies for measuring the extent of "globalization". What they find through such measures is a slowing down of the progress of "globalization" but not its reversal.

As we mentioned earlier, however, "globalization" in our perception refers not so much to the phenomenon of countries becoming more dependent on one another; *it refers essentially to a relationship of power.* This power is exercised as much through the "sanctions" imposed against specific countries as through the drawing in of countries to the vortex of "globalization." The exercise of this power is the hallmark of imperialism. "Sanctions" are as much a symptom of the ruthlessness of imperialism as is "globalization" entailing the hegemony of globalized capital. Put differently, the so-called "de-globalization" is not a negation of "globalization" but a complement to it.

Globalized capital comes overwhelmingly from the metropolis and is enmeshed with the operation of metropolitan states. The hegemony of globalized capital, therefore, is *ipso facto* the hegemony of metropolitan states, exercised over the people of the world, and especially over the people of the Third World.

"Globalization", which may have the support of the big bourgeoisie of the Third World and even of the upper segments of the salariat and the professional classes, necessarily entails the suppression of Third World workers, peasants and petty producers.

The praxis for overcoming their thraldom is no different today from what it was a decade ago. Any improvement in the condition of the working people requires State intervention. For this, the State must have the elbowroom to intervene without being cramped by the fear of capital flight. But as long as the country remains trapped within the vortex of unrestricted capital flows, the State cannot acquire this elbowroom. Control over capital flows, therefore, becomes necessary for any progressive State intervention.

Put differently, an improvement in the material condition of the people requires not just a change in the nature of the State, namely, its being based on the support of workers and peasants; it requires in addition a delinking from the universe of unrestricted capital flows. The support of the working people alone is not enough. Control over capital flows is also essential if a set of pro-people policies is to be followed, though *such control may well attract imperialist "sanctions."*

This remains as true today as it was a decade ago. The so-called "de-globalization" that some economists are talking about makes not an iota of difference to this absolute need to confront the hegemony of globalized capital, behind which stand the phalanx of metropolitan States.

FUNERAL INVITATION

The Family and children of the Late

MR. KWEKU PRATT

designed & printed by Ike D
phone: 0242-284109 / 0266779585

BURIAL SERVICE: SATURDAY, 24TH JUNE, 2023 AT AMBASSADOR SCHOOL PARK, SATELLITE JUNCTION, OFF THE N S AWAM ROAD

FINAL FUNERAL RITES: SATURDAY 24TH JUNE, 2023 AT AMBASSADOR SCHOOL PARK, SATELLITE JUNCTION, OFF THE N S AWAM ROAD

THANKSGIVING SERVICE: SUNDAY 25TH JUNE, 2023 AT THE DIVINE HEALER'S CHURCH, POKUASE ASSEMBLY

AGED: 56

1967 - 2023

All sympathizers are cordially invited