# Telescopic Philanthropy, Emancipation and Development Communication Theory

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**Abstract**

Development communication theory can be framed as the rescue mission of the global north to save the global south from itself. It is in view of this that this paper asks: what does it mean to found the emancipation of the postcolonial nation on the philanthropic whim? Using Derrida's theory of gift as a framework, this paper opens up discussions around the cost of international development assistance on the instrumentality of the postcolonial state as an agent of national development. It uses illustrative examples from Ghana and Uganda to demonstrate how development aid has transformed the postcolonial state into an instrument of tutelary governance, and invites development communication scholars to question the discursive and performative functions of international development assistance.

**Keywords:** development communication, gift, telescopic philanthropy, postcolonial state, Ghana, Uganda

## Introduction

One obvious way by which countries of the Global South get to become headline news in the mainstream developed countries is when there is a bad news like the outbreak of war, famine or disease. Africa is notorious for this particular symbolic construction. This character of news about the Global South is a well-known feature. What is not well commented on, however, is the second dynamic to this paradigm of doom and gloom, which is the heroic Western act of saving Africa from itself. This act of philanthropy has become the dominant prism through which Africa gets to make it into the headline news of the developed world. Examples abound in the mass media. When Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears who, after suffering from bad press due to their personal mischief, wanted to salvage themselves and their economic fortunes as entertainment celebrities, they announced plans to travel to Africa to campaign against poverty and AIDS, even though they probably would not do so in fact. Madonna is now associated with a non-profit organization, "Raising Malawi", after adopting a child from an orphanage in Malawi. The metaphor of the perpetual African child cannot be lost in this. Oprah's school project in South Africa, like Madonna's adoption story, is difficult to criticize, because doing good, altruism, and charity are acts that are almost impossible to challenge. Increasingly, Mr. Paul Hewson (alias Bono) is better known for his campaign to save Africa than for his music with the band U2. We know that celebrity valuation is based on the economy of image circulation. And thus the philanthropic attraction to the poor lies in its difference.

Lucy Irigary would have said both the celebrities and their object of seduction, the poor, are located in a specular economy (Irigaray 1985). It is this economy that I think critical scholarship in Development Communication should attend to. For we need to answer the question: What comes after giving? The role of the media in the construction of this second dynamic of telescopic philanthropy has not received much scholarly attention as what I have called the paradigm of doom and gloom. Thus this chapter is an attempt to draw attention to this aspect of how Africa is repeatedly represented as an object of charity and how this has wider ramifications on the emancipatory potential of the continent. In a sense, then, this chapter is about a global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, alms givers and beggars, saviors and their helpless objects of heroism.

What does it mean to found the emancipation of a continent on the philanthropic whim? It is in the rescuing of the poor, or helping the "undeveloped" to attain what Schramm (1964) called the attainment of the "Great Society", that development communication theory finds its reason d'être as an academic and programmatic area of inquiry. Thus we need to problematize the relationship between philanthropy and the epistemic foundations of development communication. I will develop an argument around the characteristic feature of the Global North as the source of charity and the Global South as the object of emancipation, and how this dynamic impacts on the state and transforms it into an instrument of tutelary governance. Such a view can be used as a framework for rethinking development communication scholarship and the question of emancipation. Indeed the project of development communication theory can be framed as the rescue mission of the North to save the Global South from itself. Drawing from theories of charity, and philanthropy, this paper attempts to open up discussions around the limits of altruism and the poverty of development communication theory as an emancipatory practice.

## From Charles Dickens to Present

"Telescopic philanthropy", as a phrase, was first used by Charles Dickens in his novel *Bleak House* some 150 years ago to poke fun at and critique what was then an English fascination and obsession with designing development projects to save Africa and Africans from poverty, and to usher them into a modern economy of production. In the Dickensian narrative, the story is told of a Mrs. Jellyby, a friend of John Jarndyce, who neglects her house and children and is obsessed with projects designed to save African in the Congo from poverty by teaching them how to grow coffee to enable them to earn an income. In retrospect, it is clear that what Dickens was describing was the genesis of what is now a global industry of state, non-governmental charities and celebrity acts of philanthropy to save Africa from itself. Dickens was noted for his journalism and the use of the novel as a means of social critique. His discussion of telescopic philanthropy is instructive because it allows us to understand the practice of international development as pre-dating the post-World War II Truman era. It also allows us to understand how international development framed as charitable interventions that northern developed countries do to global southern countries as acts that are tied to the domestic power politics of the so-called benefactor countries.

It is against this backdrop that I am motivated to argue that the problem with Africa is as much a problem of development as it is the troubling impact of international aid on the continent's self-initiative. Evidently what I am aiming to argue is not about a global divide of technological haves and technological have-nots. The global divide that interests me is the global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, that between donors and beggars, between philanthropist and objects of charity. The institution that is partly responsible for this global divide is the global media. As we have seen from Dickens, the attempt to save Africa is not new. Indeed, Susan Thorne's (1999) provocative interpretation of 19th Century middle class formation in Victorian and Edwardian Britain makes the case that saving the heathens in Africa was always preferred to saving the heathens at home, and that this particular fascination with the distant other had a definite imperial logic. It is a logic that is still with us today. I will be coming back to this particular angle of the past to relate it to the present.

I have been conducting interviews with retired international development workers who were active in the 1960s. And recently I had a chat with SD[1] who was instrumental in lobbying for the creation of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). He told me his earliest achievement in the late 1950s was helping to bring the first batch of African students to Canada to study. When the first batch arrived, he welcomed them and asked what they wanted to do for their first weekend. The African students told him they wanted to visit a First Nations Community. He was shocked. Shocked because, not only did he not know where they lived, he was not even sure whether as a Canadian he was allowed to visit a First Nations Community. Later he found out that a First Nations Community was located about five kilometres away from his home. He did not know of them until then, but he knew of how to save faraway Africa. His neighbours, the First Nations people, probably needed development assistance more than the distant Africans did. But saving the distant other has always been the preferred practice. Today the theme of telescopic philanthropy as the means of emancipation from poverty has taken centre stage in global discourses on Africa. What is interesting, and disturbing about this development of the discourse of aid is that there has been a shift from state actors to a predominance of private individual and corporate actors. Saving Africa has now become the new celebrity public statement.

It has been some 60 years since international "soft power" was re-articulated in the garb of compassion as international development with the proclamation of the Truman doctrine (Truman 1964). Sixty years into the present, we know that this model of assistance is a failure. For instance, in 2007, the Senate in Ottawa, an arm of the Canadian Government, released an extensive report showing that 40 years of Canada's development assistance through the state agency CIDA has been a dismal failure (Senate of Canada 2007). Among others, the Senate Committee recommended, as an option, that CIDA be shut down. While this is unlikely to be implemented, it points to the fact that institutionalized international development initiated from the developed countries to support the development of developing countries is not working.

Action Aid International has been at the forefront of documenting the amount of phantom aid in international development assistance. It reports, for instance, that: "Eighty-six cents in every dollar of American aid is phantom aid, largely because it is so heavily tied to the purchase of US goods and services, and because it is so badly targeted at poor countries" (Action Aid 2005 p. 19. See also Action Aid 2006 for a follow-up report). The Canadian Senate report stated that since CIDA was created in 1968, it has spent 12.4 billion dollars in bilateral assistance to sub-Sahara Africa with no demonstrable results. Why should it be surprising? Imagine that 81% of CIDA's 1500 employees are based in Ottawa with field staff having no executive authority (Senate of Canada 2007).

If we remind ourselves that the original idea of international development assistance that the US invented was not about development of the Global South, but about developing a global instrument of soft power and containment (Samarajiwa 1987, Escobar 1995), then the epistemic commitment of development communication theory ought to question the language of help that characterizes international development. Much of the development communication literature of the past 60 years has been on how to become an effective handmaiden of this dubious re-invention of international diplomacy called international development (See Waisbord 2000 for a comprehensive statement of various theoretical, methodological and strategic commitments in the field). Arturo Escobar's (1995) Foucualdian take on development and other post-development theorists are also instructive here.

Development communication theory as an area of inquiry needs to take into account the price the so-called poor pay when they get a clinic built, pipe-borne water provided or a school built through the altruism of the philanthropist, the gift giver, or the new missionary worker of international development. I want to use a recent EU decision to illustrate this point. In July 2008, the BBC reported that the European Commission had agreed to use one billion euros of unspent European farm subsidies to aid African farmers (BBC 2008). The BBC report, which showed a picture of an African farmer labouring a rice field, went on to quote European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso as saying "The impact of high food prices is particularly severe for the world's poorest populations" and adds that without the EU's assistance, the UN's goal to reduce global poverty will fail. This European act of altruism, upon a second look, is not only a phantom one, but a Trojan Horse that is meant to purchase a highly needed strategic advantage for the EU in a growing global tide against EU and North American agricultural subsidies and how they negatively impact on farmers in the Global South. The price Africa will pay for getting the "spare change" of one billion euro dropped in its begging bowl is that it will lose a strong standing in making a case against the EU for subsidizing its farmers so that they can unfairly compete with Africans in a global food market. What the EU's charitable gesture does against the discourse of fair trade and the fundamental illogicality of preaching free trade in Africa while maintaining farm subsidies in Europe is far more significant that any apparent altruism it might suppose. Here then is the point about giving being an act of self-interest.

## Impossibility of Gift

International development assistance, either through the agency of the state or the private individual or corporation, has come to acquire the look of a gift to be given to the Global South by the Global North. Despite the attempts at pushing Freirean conceptions of participatory development and post-development advocacy of grassroots development to make this gift-giving paradigm effective (as in the discourse of aid effectiveness), it is still a challenge yet to be overcome. Part of this difficulty lies in the discourse of gift that founds the discourse of international development. From the Global North, the media focus is on the assistance being sent down. From the Global South, led by the postcolonial state and the army of NGOs, the discourse is about how to attract development assistance and make aid effective.

One is tempted to think that the push to "fix" aid to bring about development, as evident in the September 2008 Accra conference on Aid Effectiveness, is founded on a visceral need to assuage guilt feelings of historical wrongs to Africa rather than any critically examined conviction of the relationship between aid and development. And even then this reparative altruism is not an innocent one. Anyone who knows the story of European slavery and colonization of Africa cannot help but develop the compassion to help undo the wrongs of the past. And in such a position, a compassionate heart founded on the values of charity, philanthropy and assistance becomes inevitable. The task, I think, is to remind ourselves that it is not always the case that our do-good intensions translate into good outcomes. And the problem does not lie in how doing good is carried out. It lies precisely in the philosophical assumption that Africa must be helped. There is no co-relation between international development assistance flows and economic take-off. One Ugandan journalist, Mwenda (2007), has already pointed out that the example of the Marshall Plan in post-War Europe used to justify the transfer of aid to Africa is an overstated case. American aid to Europe under the Marshall Plan accounted for about 3% of the GDP of the receiving European countries. The average African country today receives about 15% of GDP as aid. And yet the success story of reconstruction in Europe is not replicated in Africa in its quest for modernization. William Easterly (2006) presents us with enough evidence to dispel our religious belief that aid is good for Africa's economic growth and human development. He shows with hard statistical evidence that there is an inverse correlation between aid and development.

Since Marcel Mauss (1969), the literature on the sociology of gift has expressly demonstrated that the gifting relation is not an altruistic act. It is heavily loaded with debt. Indeed, despite its neoliberal undertones, an argument can always be made that the market is a superior form of exchange relations because market transactions result in a permanent liquidation of debt (Godbout 2000) between the parties. Gift-giving only results in the unresolved question of reciprocity, and for that matter, debt, or better still, poison.

What then is the debt that African countries owe for being recipients of development assistance in this global divide of donors and beggars? The trouble with the gift as a means of exchange, according to Derrida, is its impossibility (Derrida 1992). The possibility of the gift is contingent on its relation of foreignness to the economy. As a result, the possibility of the gift requires the absence of reciprocity, exchange, counter-gift, or debt. If the gift is reciprocated, it cancels out the gift as gift. The gift is thereby annulled if any restitution for the gift is ever given. The gift must not only remain unpaid, but cannot even be recognized as a gift by either the donor or recipient. Acknowledgment of the gift gives rise to gratuity, self-recognition, and other symbolic forms of reciprocity. Therefore, if the gift is recognized as such, the gift is annulled, and if there is no gift, then there is no gift. The possibility of the gift is its impossibility.

Derrida points out that the relationship among time, the economy, and the gift is an important one that we should attend to. In time, all gifts are reciprocated and, therefore, part of the economy. Not only does the impossibility of the gift highlight that the gift is, in fact, always a part of the economy (through the logic of exchange), but that the gift finds its legitimation in its defiance to the economy; a defiance that, according to Derrida, does not in fact exist. According to Derrida, there is no "logic of the gift" because the discourse of the gift is always speaking of something other than the gift itself. Unlike Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu (1996; and 1990) argues for the possibility of gift through time. The time lapse between the inaugural gift and the counter-gift allows for a collective delusion of the possibility of the gift. But more significantly, Boudieu points out the role of the gift in the perpetuation of what he calls "symbolic violence". And this symbolic violence is more severe when the counter-gift is practically impossible as is the case in charity, which ultimately leads to a lasting relation of dependency and enslavement of debt.

Here then is the power of Truman's re-articulation of international soft power as international development assistance. It also illustrates the burden of debt resulting from gifting that the African farmer and his continent owe the EU for the one billion euro of aid. The cost of this aid as a Trojan horse is never discussed in the mass media. The gift will always facilitate the speaking of something other than itself. And it is in that something that we may find the true cost of international aid. Not in the feel-good stories of building a clinic for the village through donations – stories my graduate students love to bring to my class. It is precisely these forms of symbolic violence inherent in the gift that post-development scholars see as the driving force behind the post-WWII development project.

## From the Gift of Spiritual Salvation to the Gift of Economic Emancipation

Looking back at the 19th century European missionary work abroad helps us understand its contemporary parallels with the international development aid industry in its quest for the economic emancipation of Africa through assistance. Both the missionary work of the 19th century and the institutional practice of 21st century international development assistance today have some very eerie similarities. Imagine a Canadian NGO that sources funding from CIDA to promote human rights education among African journalists. To qualify as an expert and be sent to Nigeria, one must be under 30 years of age and a Canadian citizen. One of my graduate students was sent on this project for one year after completing a bachelor's degree in the social sciences. She was sent to Nigeria to conduct workshops on sensitizing Nigerian journalists to human rights issues. She arrived in Nigeria only to discover that a good number of those attending had been working as journalists before she was born. Some had risked their lives under military governments to demand freedom of speech. A good number also had graduate degrees. Yet, this young missionary of human rights was given the task of teaching Africans the gospel of human rights. What facilitates this absurdity is the reality of the global divide of donors and beggars.

When she told me her experience as an NGO staff facilitator of human rights education in Nigeria, she reminded me of the qualifications required to be allowed to work as a missionary in Africa two centuries earlier. In 1876, the Ladies Committee of the London Missionary Society rejected the application of a woman "with native blood in her" from modern day Mumbai (formally Bombay), who thought she had all the skills to work in Africa. She was told it was official policy to recruit "only English ladies with thorough English education" (Thorne 1999: 108). While race was used as the measure of qualification, citizenship is used today as the measure of qualification to work in the secular missionary work of international development. If race was used in 19th century missionary work as the structural mechanism for ensuring that international development assistance functioned properly as a means to ameliorate domestic conditions in Europe, citizenship is the new structural mechanism to ensure that international development assistance functions properly as a means of creating "jobs for the boys" – perhaps an even more sanitized version of good old pork-barrel politics. In both processes, the compassionate language of philanthropy and charity has been mobilized to mask them.

I have a second example. In the business of international development assistance, we do know that the World Bank was instrumental in articulating private sector participation in international development. Today it is a very expanding industry. Indeed the feel-good stories of helping the Global South grow out of its dehumanizing poverty trap have achieved new levels of appreciation with the coinage of a new lexical monstrosity – "philanthropreneurs" – to designate the reinvention of the relationship between capitalism and development (Strom 2006). Bill Gates quits his daytime job to become a full-time charity worker; Pierre Omidyar, founder of eBay, wants to use investment capital and donations to expand micro credit programs. The list can continue. Alan Abramson, head of the non-profit and philanthropy program at the Aspen Institute, puts is quotably:

> These guys have firsthand knowledge of the market's power, and they're asking themselves why they can't make money and tackle some of the problems once addressed primarily by government at the same time (quoted in Strom 2006).

This is a repeat of history with a twist. If the state and multilateral institutions are instrumental in inviting the private sector into the lucrative business of development in the 21st century, in the 19th century it was the missionaries who invited Empire into the edifying business of the civilizing mission.

As Susan Thorne shows in her re-reading of colonial historiography, it was when the distant focus of missionary activities increasingly came under attack at home that the London Missionary Society strategically introduced the discourse of social imperialism and the need for Empire to actually come on board to facilitate the civilizing mission abroad (Thorne 1999). We know that one of the reasons for the World Bank's appeal to the private sector to come on board international development assistance is the supposed dwindling of resources for the non-profit sector. And here again, if we compare the strategies for raising funds both then (in the 19th century) and now (for instance World Vision's infomercial on TV and "telethons"), the imperial and colonial logic becomes even more poignant (Jefferess 2002). For instance, in an attempt to widen the social base of its collections, the LMS introduced a penny-a-week guild in 1903. By 1916, there were penny-a-week clubs among the working classes (Thorne 1999: 114). We know the consequences of the missionary work in Africa and how it facilitated colonialism. Given the similarity of missionary work in Africa then and now, what are the consequences of international development assistance today?

## The Cost of International Development Assistance

There has been a wealth of NGO literature in recent years that shows how international development assistance is a phantom one (Action Aid 2005 and 2006; Christian Aid 2005). The empty promises from G8 summits are not new. What is not often articulated is the real cost of aid. My argument is that if missionary work in the past facilitated the actual colonization of land, the missionary work of today (international development work) is facilitating the actual colonization of the postcolonial state. One only needs to look at the “Letters of Intent” submitted by African governments to the IMF every six months to see how the external aid industry underwrites new modes of state accountability, which I can only describe as tutelary governance. Letters of Intent are periodic reports that governments under structural adjustment submit to the IMF to explain how they are governing their country and how they are disbursing development assistance. They must also explain why they have not fulfilled IMF and World Bank expectations, should there be any failings. These letters are often signed by the African country’s Minister of Finance, and depending on how trusted the government is, counter-signed by the governor of the Central Bank. If you have a state that depends on external sources to balance its budget, why will it be accountable to the citizens at home that it governs? What aid does is to prevent African governments from engaging in production relations with their citizens and local businesses.

Andrew Mwenda (2007) presents some startling statistics on Uganda to alarm us. In the 2006/07 national budget of Uganda, the Government’s projections were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Expected Revenue: | 2.5 trillion Shillings |
| Expected Foreign Aid | 1.9 trillion Shillings |
| Recurrent Expenditure | 2.6 trillion Shillings |
| Development Expenditure | 1.8 trillion Shillings |

Recurrent Expenditure is the cost of administration of the country, which includes some 70 ministers, 114 presidential advisors and 333 members of parliament, among others. At the Ministry of Health headquarters, the government provided 3000 FWDs, yet none of the 961 counties has an ambulance at their clinics.

Ghana is another illustrative example. Shortly after celebrating debt relief under the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), Ghana turned around and spent 60 million US dollars to celebrate its 50$^{th}$ anniversary as an independent nation (*Daily Graphic* 2009). The Ghanaian Government then commissioned a 176 million US dollar presidential mansion to be built and subsequently signed a 37 million US dollar cheque to order a presidential jet (*National Enquirer* 2009). All these expenditure were heavily criticized by members of civil society, yet the state refused to budge. According to the *National Enquirer* (2009) newspaper, the president “attracted a lot of criticism from minority parties and sections of the Ghanaian public, when commissioning the project, for not seeing to the priority needs of the people, such as addressing the acute water shortage and lack of capacity to deal with sanitation in the cities, and described the choice as amounting to a misplaced priority.” The Ghanaian state refused to budge because it expects volunteers and donors from rich countries to come and build the schools and clinics that are badly needed in many parts of the country. This is a country where a donation of furniture or books at a cost of USD 5,000 to a community school makes headline news.

The vulgarity of the postcolonial state, which founds its legitimacy in the articulation of national development, yet does otherwise, can be seen in the table below. At the end of 2008, when Ghanaians elected a new government, parliament approved a package of ex-gratia award for the retiring president. When the details of the law were made public in January 2009, Ghanaians described it as unacceptably extravagant. While it remains to be seen if the new government will repeal that law and revise the package, I have compared the benefits of Ghana's retiring President, John Kufuor, with that of his American counterpart, George Bush Jr., as both left office in the same month and year after eight years of service.

*Table 1. Comparing Retirement Packages for Ghanaian and American Presidents*[2]

| Retirement Benefits | Ghana (per capita income USD 1,400) | United States of America (per capital income USD 46,000 |
|---|---|---|
| Pension | 400,000.00 non-taxable lump sum | USD 191,000.00 taxable |
| No. Of cars | 6 fully maintained, comprehensively insured fleet to be renewed every 4 years | No car |
| Official residence | Two fully furnished houses | No house |
| End of service gratuity | 1.2 million USD | No End of service gratuity |
| Support for Widow | Retains ownership of houses. No pension | Lifetime pension of USD20,000.00 |
| Medical and dental | Free family coverage | Free family coverage |
| Entertainment | Unspecified but to be provided for by Office of State Protocol | Not provided for |
| Foreign Travel | Paid for by the state with 3 supporting staff. Can travel for up to 60 days in a year | Paid for by the state with 2 supporting staff |
| Foundation/Presidential Library | State provides One Million USD seed money to help start a private foundation | Private funds (tax exempt) for presidential Library |

What makes the Ghanaian postcolonial state act so lavishly for itself and not for development projects? How is it possible that Ghana can contemplate such a package for its ex-president – one that surpasses that the package provided by the United States? This is possible because much of the Ghanaian national budget is underwritten by external donor support in the form of development assistance, while the state has no incentive to be accountable to the needs of civil society. In such a disjuncture, the postcolonial state becomes a good instrument for external control as part of its payment for the debt of the gift of development assistance.

This postcolonial state's loyalty and fealty to external agencies is well illustrated by the story of Ghanaian farmers and their battle against unfair competition. Imported chicken and rice are cheaper in Ghana than are locally produced products. So poultry producers were able to convince the Ministry of Finance to impose special levies on imported chicken products to give local produce an edge in the competition. When this was incorporated into the national budget for 2003 and passed in parliament, the government revenue collection agency at the nation's ports refused to enforce it. The consequence of this rare situation of government refusing to collect legitimate tariffs was that it was losing revenue, deliberately, while local farmers continued to be disadvantaged in an unfair competition with imported and subsidized products from Europe. Next, the local poultry producers took the government to court to legally compel it to implement the tariffs on imported chicken and rice. When it won judgment in 2005, the President sent his Finance Minister to parliament to read a bill under "a rarely-used emergency measures" (Christian Aid 2005: 31) to overturn the 2003 act that compelled government to collect tariffs on imported chicken and rice, and ultimately, to make the court decision irrelevant. What the local poultry farmers did not know was that Ghana had committed in a previous "Letter of Intent" to the IMF and World Bank promising that it would not impose tariffs on goods like imported chicken and rice. In addition, in a previous 2000 agreement with the IMF, Ghana had committed not to impose tariffs on agricultural inputs and in return get a 35.1 million USD loan from the Fund to support its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (IMF 2000). According to a Christian Aid report, both the IMF and the World Bank used their top most officials, including the then president of the Bank, James Wolfensohn, to personally put pressure on the Ghanaian president and his senior ministers to repeal the law requiring the state to collect import duties on imported agricultural goods (Christian Aid 2005).

Torn between civil society and the donor institutions led by the IMF and the World Bank, the government demonstrated accountability to the latter institutions by acting unilaterally against the very economic interest of Ghanaian businesses. Under WTO rules, Ghana can levy tariffs on imported agricultural products. But the Ghanaian state will have none of that. Even if local businesses organized to defend their interest against international competitors using legitimate means, like lobbying to have the national budget statement reflect their needs and going to court to get a judgment, the state, in an afterthought, demonstrated its loyalty to external donors. This is the true cost of international development assistance. Local entrepreneurs and labour in Ghana do not stand any chance of competing against imported chicken from Europe, because European farmers enjoy state subsidies on grains use as feeds. The IMF and World Bank were instrumental in pressurizing Ghana to remove subsidies to farmers under its structural adjustment program. Now they have to unfairly compete with European farmers in their own domestic market. And the Ghanaian democratically elected government is supervising this unfair treatment of its farmers by actively working to perpetuate it.

Andrew Mwenda (2007) Ugandan Journalist, puts it aptly:

> If the government's fiscal survival depends on it having to raise money from its own people, such a government is driven by self interest to govern in a more enlightened fashion. It will sit with those who create wealth, talk to them about the kind of policies and institutions that are necessary for them to expand the scale and scope of business so that it can collect more tax revenue from them. The problem with the African continent and the problem with the aid industry is that it has distorted the structure of incentives facing governments in Africa.

The state has literally become an institution-for-itself and in that dispensation, it becomes available to external interest rather than local demands as part of the payment for the debt of the gift of aid. External agencies have leveraged the power of giving into appropriating the instrumentality of the state. This is an effect of the gift, which Derrida says does everything, except what it promises. Donor support has resulted in the transformation of the postcolonial state into an instrument of tutelary governance. It is from this perspective that I think development communication theorists can inquire into the discursive functions of donor support in international development.

## Conclusion

I want to conclude with a reference to African writer Aminata Sow Fall's novel the *Beggars' Strike*. I read that novel as an allegory of the African condition of aid dependence. As an allegory, it tells us how we can end this global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, or philanthropists and recipients of aid. The *Beggars' Strike* is a remarkable story of street panhandlers, despised as the jetsam and flotsam of Senegalese society, who could not take the abuse and physical assault from city officials who wanted to clear them from the street corners. The difficult circumstance of one of them being killed in an act of terror against the beggars produced its hero in the person of Nguirane, who philosophized, and rightly so, that alms giving and alms collecting are relations of exchange that mutually benefit both parties. So the city officials are mistaken in assuming that only beggars benefit from alms-giving. I wish to quote the character Nguirane here:

> Our Hunger doesn't worry them. They need to give in order to survive, and if we didn't exist, who would they give to? How could they ensure their own peace of mind? They don't give for our sake; they give for their own sake! They need us so they can live in peace (Fall 1981: 38)

So when the beggars decided to move out of the city to live at a distant fringe, alms givers started travelling the long distance just to give alms. In the end, the city officials wanted them back at the street corners, but the beggars declined. This discovery of the power relations between alms givers and beggars reminds us of the specular economy that masquerades as philanthropy. And this is what development communication theory needs to open up.

### Notes

1. Real name omitted for confidentiality.
2. Table constructed from three sources: Danso (2009); Reuters Report (2009) and Smith (2008).

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