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## The Rise and Fall of the Liberation Movements in Africa

Dr. Zamokuhle Mbandlwa<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

**Background:** *Liberation movements in Africa in the past 70 years began to campaign for the liberation of African countries. The liberation of Libya in 1951 gave hope to all liberation movements in the African countries. The liberation movements in all African countries were able to liberate African people from the colonial masters. Nevertheless, the history has shown that liberation movements has failed to sustain power.*

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this article is to show how people blame the liberation movements for government failures to deliver the needs of the people. Others blame economic decline in Africa while others blame corruption amongst African leaders. This study articulates the factors that contributes to the failures of liberation movements to sustain power and to deliver the needs of the people.*

**Theoretical Framework:** *The theoretical framework of this study derive from leadership theories. The aim of this article is to create an awareness of how liberation movements in Africa has failed to remain the only hope to provide better lives for African people.*

**Research Design:** *This study applied secondary research methodology because the information and data was available and accessible to the researcher. Conferences reports, newspaper articles, online material were used to reach findings and conclusions of the study.*

**Research Objectives and Implications:** *The objective of this article is to sensitize the African community on issues of interest that affect the leadership changes in Africa. The secondary objective is to look at the factors that lead to failures of the liberation movements in Africa. Lastly, is to show the trajectory of liberation movements decline and their irrelevance in changing the African economy.*

**Originality and Value:** *This is an original study which has applied the secondary research methodology to cross-check the African information on the sustainability of the liberation movements.*

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<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Department of Public Management and Economics, Durban University of Technology, ML Sultan Durban, South Africa.  
E-mail: ZamokuhleM@dut.ac.za, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7528-3565>

**Findings:** *The researcher found that the liberation movements in Africa prioritize the needs of its members at the expense of the general population.*

**Keywords:** *Liberation Movements, Corruption, Leadership Deficiencies, Service Delivery Decline, Unethical Conduct.*

## **Introduction**

The African National Congress (ANC) is likely to suffer the same fate of the liberation parties in Africa that took over from the colonial powers. South Africa is not excluded on what is happening in the African politics. African history shows that liberation movements in Africa are failing to sustain power and this has been observed in African countries that attained the democracy before South Africa. Egypt for example, is amongst countries that attained the democracy about 70 years ago. In 1951 Libya was also liberated by the liberation movement and the country attained independence. This country has been characterized by public protests directed to the ruling liberation movement. Few years after, Ghana in 1957 also attained its independence when the liberation movement liberated the country. This breakthrough gave hope to other countries. Shortly, many African countries fought against the colonial government and attained democracy. In 1960, Congo became independent from the colonialization. After Congo, few other countries year after year became independent. In 1961, Tanzania became independent, in 1962 Algeria followed. In 1963, Kenya followed and then Zambia in 1964. There was a gap between 1964 and 1974. Most other African countries remained colonies of the European colonizers. Up until 1975 where Mozambique became independent followed by Zimbabwe in 1980, Namibia in 1990 and South Africa became independent in 1994 (Young, 2003: 425).

The freedom in African countries was not attained easily but there were a sacrifice and many people have lost their lives in the fight against colonialization. Many people that played a major role in the liberation of African countries were global figures. Most of them were intellectuals and played a major role in the improvement of their society. Amongst the people that played a role includes Samora Machel, Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, Robert Mugabe and many more others. African leaders were not the only contributors in the liberation of African countries. Intellectuals and scholars played a role in shaping the political ideology that can improve Africa. Intellectuals such as Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon and many more other scholars across Africa. This article therefore, look at how the liberation movement had produced the capable and effective leaders in Africa and the leadership deficiencies in Africa.

## **Failures of the Liberation Movements in Africa**

Some liberation movements in Africa are no longer in government and those who are in government are facing a serious threat from the opposition parties and the general public. Some liberation movements in Africa still enjoy hegemony, countries like South Africa and Algeria,

both countries like in many other countries face a serious threat from opposition parties and the community at large. Communities in both countries have lost confidence and trust in the liberation movements. This view is supported by the decline of voters who participate in the local and national elections. Most African people see their government or liberation movements as kleptocracies because they do not care about their citizens. Many young people in Africa and intellectuals are not participating in political activities. This is caused by a number of factors which includes corrupt electoral processes and unethical behaviour of many politicians. What is more problematic is the political party policies. Leaders and followers of political parties need to comply with the political party constitution. Members cannot freely express themselves about how they feel about their political parties and the impact it has to the society (Duursma, 2020: 297).

The liberation movements in Africa during the time they liberated people in their countries were associated with a single figure. These figures managed to win the minds and hearts of those that were liberated. Colonial government have tried to brainwash the oppressed and tried to wash out the prominent figures but that did not work. In some African countries, the colonial governments managed to destabilize the force of the liberation movement for example, in Congo, Lumumba was killed in 1961. Nkrumah of Ghana was removed through the coup in 1966 and this was caused by the lack of support and trust from the citizens and the prominent stakeholders. Jomo Kenyatta, the former president of Kenya was in the forefront of the liberation of Kenya. His role in the liberation of the people of Kenya was remarkable and memorable. People of Kenya and abroad loved and supported him on his ideas of a democratic Kenya. Like many other African leaders, he had his share of being criticized and painted as a corrupt leader. The liberation movement in Kenya was tainted because of the utterances that was made against Kenyatta by many people in Kenya (Beresford, Berry and Mann, 2018: 1233).

Liberation movements in Africa has failed to effectively provide leadership in government and in society. Most scholars have identified this problem and identified the cause of this problem as the corruption. This article also confirms that the corruption in Africa is partially the reason why liberation movements has failed but various factors are also articulated in this article. The liberation movements in Africa were not ready to govern when they became independent. Leaders of liberation movements in Africa have a sense of entitlement. They believe that their countries and the government owe them something or a better life for them and their family members only. This is entrenched to the minds of former freedom fighters and they feel entitled to leadership positions. They can even kill and some had killed those who were their opponents.

African leaders in the main has failed to understand that running a government is an activity that is different from waging a liberation war. African countries did not have a transition from a liberation agenda to the governing agenda and this transformation was supposed to include what leaders need to do and how to think. African leaders particularly those that are associated with

liberation movements lack the vision, goals and means to attain them. Even those who at least have a vision of the government they want to see, they are compromised by comradeship mentality. Personal, comradeship, and friendship priorities compromise the government and governance policies (Thompson and Wissink, 2018).

Africa is a big continent and it is divided into Southern Africa, Western Africa, East Africa, and North Africa. West Africa has a different story of the reasons why the liberation movements fail to sustain power and to deliver the needs of the people. While other parts of Africa can also share a different stories of liberation movements failures. Most liberation movements leaders in the West Africa were optimistic about changing the situation of their people. They wanted to bring a change and better the lives of their people. The overall plan was to transform their countries to accommodate the general public in the economic activities. They further announced in various platforms that they want to improve the infrastructure and assist each and every citizen of their countries. This was not a success and that frustrated many Western African leaders and some point led to violence and political instability. African countries in the West Africa which is also applicable to all parts of Africa, inherited states that were divided by the colonial masters. Within one country in Africa people are divided in different ethnic groups and they reside according to their ethnic group. The agenda of the national unity presented by the liberation movement leaders became unrealistic because people live according to their ethnicity. Due to this, Western African leaders failed to dismantle the colonial legacy of separating people. Leaders are enjoying this ethnic division because they benefit when it is time for political leaders' elections. People elect leaders based on the turn of a particular ethnic group to lead in the political parties and in government. Ethnic group is more important for leaders and the general public compared to the loyalty to the state (Netshakhuma, 2019).

This problem has been identified by most African leaders and they are working towards finding a solution even though some leaders do not agree. This is mostly linked to political parties that were formed after the African countries were liberated. Liberation movements in the West Africa are still ethnic base and regionalized but they are working towards uniting the regions. The slow pace of uniting the different ethnic group led to political instability and a threat to the national unity. Nigeria for example the ethnic dominance led to a civil war in 1966. Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa are the three main ethnic groups that are dominant in Nigeria. The government leaders centre around these three ethnic groups. This therefore suggest that the leadership positions are not reserved for people because they meet the leadership criteria or they have a vision to transform the country. The ethnic groups were also influenced by their preferred religion. The ethnic and religion preference was used as a strategy to mobilize the general population to gain political support and votes. Igbo used a military force to unseat the Hausa which was dominated by Muslims. They killed the prime minister in 1966 and took over power. The civil war and coup d'état is dominant in Africa (Thompson, 2019).

Côte d'Ivoire also had its own share of failures of the liberation movement to sustain power and to deliver the needs of the people effectively. During the tenure of president Félix Houphouët-Boigny between 1960 to 93, was characterized by many shortfalls. The main shortfall that led to the decline of support of the liberation movement was an economic decline. The liberation movement of corte divorce last led government in 1993 when Henri Konan Bédié was a leader in government representing the liberation movement, Democratic Party of Ivory Coast – African Democratic Rally (PDCI–RDA). President Henri led the government until 1999 and thereafter, the military took over. In the year 2000 things changed and people voted for different political party to lead in government. The public had no confidence in the liberation movement and voted for Ivorian Popular Front (IPF) this political party was led by Laurent Gbagbo and he led until 2010. In 2010, people voted for another political party and not the liberation movement but a different political party. Alassane Ouattara represents Rally of the Republicans (RDR) in government from 2010 to date. This trajectory is a sign that people at some point lose hope in the liberation movements. This trend is not only in few countries but the majority of African countries are experiencing this situation (Grilli, 2018).

In Burkina Faso the liberation movement did not lead the government for many years because of the political conflicts. The country was characterized by many instances of military take over from the democratically elected governments. The people have lost trust and hope in democratically elected political parties. The liberation movement did not have a solution to change the lives of the people and the military takeover was seen as a solution to a non-caring government. The cases of military takeover started in 1966 until 2014 from different leaders over the years. The instances and circumstances are not the same but the most noticeable instances of military takeover are the one that took place in 1983 when Thomas Sankara took over the government and changed the laws of the country and the Constitution to favour the interests of the people. He even changed the name of the country from the original name which was the Republic of Upper Volta to Burkina Faso. The significance of changing the name was to align the name with the general population and the laws of the country also represented the interests of the people. Politicians did not have a room to steal public funds. He led by example and was most loved by the general public because of his vision and plans for the country (Grilli, 2018). After his assassination the country took a different turn and his successor changed most of the laws Sankara has implemented. This scenario is not different from many African countries. If liberation movements are not taken out by a vote, the civilians with the help of the army overthrow the democratically elected liberation movement. This is caused by the failures of the liberation movements to deliver the interests of the people. The case of Burkina Faso is not unique because even as recent as in the year 2022, Mali, Equatorial Guinea still experience instances of coup take over. This therefore tells us that the military takeover in Africa is not going to end any time soon. People are fed-up of the liberation movements who takes advantage of the poor and marginalized people. Those who are against liberation movements in Africa use the

military force to take over power. Military forces are not interested in solving the African problems related to political conflicts, social conflicts, and economic challenges. Their main intention is to take power and advance their own narrow selfish interests and utilize the public funds (Louis and Montiel, 2018).

African liberation movements have failed to develop Africa for many years. Africa is rich on natural resources but the country is still economically poor. The living standards of African people is still very low and people are suffering and do not enjoy basic needs and social services. The African liberation movements after many years of independent still shift the blame to the colonial masters. Leadership failures of the liberation movements compromise the daily lives of the African people. Liberation movements inherited colonial states and introduced the neo colonial system in this system, the liberation movements started oppressing the African people. This is mostly done by creating a system that separated African people.

African liberation movements failed to uphold their ideas they pronounced when campaigned for power. They make unrealistic promises to the people and some promises are realistic but there is no political will to fulfill those promises because politicians themselves would not benefit. Immediately after they have power they resort to autocratic rule and intolerant of opposing political views. They see opposing views as a threat even if the views come from the members of the same governing political party. Failures of liberation movements in Africa are also caused by lack of creating employment opportunities and lack of improving the economy. African countries have a high rate of unemployment and the youth are the main victims. Youth is the majority in all African countries but the youth remain high in the unemployment rate in the continent. The liberation movements do not prioritize challenges faced by the youth including creating employment opportunities for young people. Leadership positions in most African countries are still occupied by elderly people who do not have a plan to change the economic situation. Young people in Africa has lost hope in the liberation movements because the plans of the liberation movements in Africa do not prioritize challenges of young people. This is reflected in the number of young people who participate in national elections in African countries. Nothing excites young people about voting because their economic and social conditions remain the same even after voting. The liberation movements of Africa have laid a foundation of political democracy and freedom of people but the economy still remains in the few and mostly not Africans. Young people are living in slum conditions and in uncondusive conditions (Galadima and Ogbonnaya, 2018: 159).

The population growth in Africa is not in line with the economic development. The population growth is the stumbling block and a barrier to economic development. African people migrate from rural areas to urban areas because they look for better economic opportunities. The population growth in Africa has forced people to migrate to different countries. The population growth has a negative impact in the infrastructure. In the past, Africa was highly affected by

various diseases but recently, the continent has been able to manage this problem effectively (Adenle, 2020).

Another problem is the failure of the African leaders to mitigate disasters in Africa. Disasters have a dire impact on human beings and the economy at large. Droughts for example affect communities and citizens abroad because of the reduction of the agricultural productions. Another example is how the African governments manage the floods. Liberation movements as they have been in government positions in all African countries. Even the liberation movements that are no longer in government had an opportunity to lead the government. Therefore, the liberation movements have a responsibility to give advice to the governing parties.

Africa is unlucky by attracting unethical leaders who portray themselves as ethical leaders in public and do something else when they are in power. Politicians mobilize the public and make promises that are not fulfilled after the elections. Deliberate mismanagements of public funds and corruption in Africa is the order of the day. Those who are in power exploit public funds and those who oppose the governing parties in Africa raise issues of corruption because they need public support. Once they take over power, they also abuse public funds. Politicians and particularly liberation movements feel the poverty when it affects them the most. They implement programmes and projects that first liberate them from poverty and later consider what will benefit the people. Those who are ethical and do not want to be part of the scheme are patronized. Corruption involve government officials, politicians and business people from lower to upper levels of governance. Some are involved in kickbacks and this compromise the service delivery because those who pay kickbacks to corrupt officials and politicians deliver a poor quality of services. This chain of corruption is common in all African countries and the liberation movements have mastered this type of chain. Government officials award contracts to specific companies under the instruction of a specific politicians and they all benefit. It is not easy to end corruption in Africa because it exists in different levels. At the top level, big businesses collaborate and capture the senior politicians in government and influence policies and this is some of the reasons the liberation movements failed to deliver the needs of the people. This escalate to lower levels in government and to people who are not in government. The corruption that is classified as petty corruption is defined as low level abuse of power by government officials, business people and citizens. This goes as far as asking for a payment for citizens to access services that should be free of charge (Fatoki, 2018).

Corruption in Africa has a dire effect which affects the smooth running of government operations. Corruption undermines social values because people think corruption is normal and think it is the way to legitimize unethical behaviour. Corruption limits growth because it reduces the amount of public resources and delays the efficient use of government revenue. Corruption discourages international private investments. Corruption makes it difficult for ordinary people to access effective public service delivery. Corruption do not only affect the current generation

but it also affects the future generation because the government lend money from the global financial agencies which has to be repaid back.

### **Research Methodology**

This study applied secondary research methodology, this is a systematic investigation and the researcher used an existing data to reach findings and conclusions. Secondary research methodology is a research design that involves organizing, collating and analyzing the existing data samples for valid research conclusions. This method encompasses synthesizing existing data that can be sourced from online, textbooks, archives, government libraries. The advantage of this research method is that it gives researchers an opportunity to study already established patterns in previous researches to produce new knowledge. Therefore, this suggests that this research method gives researchers an advantage of properly identifying a gap in knowledge. The assimilation of data using available data was applied (Newman and Gough, 2020).

### **Findings and Recommendations**

Studies has shown that mass trauma such as chronic long-standing poverty, colonialism, apartheid, unemployment, and dictatorship affects the manner in which victims make decisions. This also affect the manner in which people vote and embrace the political leaders. If this trauma is not properly repented, it can be transmitted to various generations. This study focused on the reasons why the liberation movements in Africa lose support. African people are victims of the trauma that has been mentioned above. Because of the failure to address this trauma in Africa, people in Africa still vote for political parties particularly liberation movements that do not change their economic conditions. The poor people, desperate and marginalized still vote for leaders who go against their own economic or personal interests who contribute in their poverty (Shilomboleni, 2020: 1197).

Africa is overwhelmingly poor since the colonialism and the liberation movements are not providing any solution. Africa is dominated by power hungry leaders, cruel leaders who use their populist rhetoric who are charismatic and make fake promises to the people. The economy of Africa is crashing which slowly leads to mass starvation, violence and society breakdown. A classic example that can be used is the case of Zimbabwe. People of Zimbabwe constantly vote for ZANU-PF even though the policy of the party causes a hug suffering. People continue to live under bad economic conditions and in deep poverty. In Uganda, people continued to support Yoweri Museveni despite economic decline and failure to change the national economy. People in this way continue to vote for their poverty without directly realizing this. Liberation movements in Africa recycle their leaders and some liberation movements have leaders who want to permanently lead but they don't bring any change to the lives of the people. Leaders of the liberation movements in Africa still blame the apartheid, colonialism and imperialism for their incompetency (Songwe, 2019: 99).

Africa is at the hands of the colonization of a special type under the liberation movements. Colonization of the mind and the fear of the unknown. Leaders of the liberation movements instill fear into the people, the fear that if they are not voted into power, the opposition parties will take over. They portray opposition parties as former agents and spies of the oppressors and the colonial masters. This fear that is instilled in people make people vote for the liberation movements even if they are not happy about how the liberation movements conduct its affairs. This is slightly changing as the new generation is slowly getting involved in issues of governance. The current generation is slowly asking some questions on how the liberation movements in government do things. Even though there is no upright approach or direct confrontation but change is looming. This has started by holding a power to participate in elections or to vote. People are still testing their power and the more people stop participating in elections the less the liberation movements gain power to govern. Liberation movements in Africa abuse their power when they are in government. The study found that not all leaders of liberation movements in Africa are corrupt or incompetent but the majority is found to be corrupt and incompetent. It is unfair to paint all liberation movements and leaders as corrupt leaders in Africa but those who are ethical are suppressed by the majority which is corrupt and unethical. This has been found to be the cause of the decline in support of the liberation movements in Africa. The study found that liberation movements in Africa are characterized by many challenges and at the centre of these challenges is leadership failures. Liberation movements in African countries have been in power for many years. They have been in control of public and government resources for decades. Blaming the apartheid regime and colonial masters for the economic decline and poverty is disingenuous. Oppressed communities are psychological struggling because they put more value in liberation movements. This is caused by the historical fear of the colonial masters, anger, and resentments. Voters in Africa make decisions based on their past experience the parties that liberated them remain the beacon of hope (Asongu and Le Roux, 2019: 460).

Liberation movements in Africa patronize African people by threatening them that if they are not voted into power other political parties will bring back colonialism. The liberation movements also have elements of oppression for those who have opposing views. African liberation movements have concurred and mastered the tactics of the colonial masters and oppressors. They use these tactics to implement the neocolonialism system to African people. African people are still in deep poverty and suffering and hopeless. This is however, not a one-way responsibility because the corrupt liberation movement leaders do not vote themselves into power but the citizens vote for them. Even though most people in Africa has realized that their votes are powerful in changing the status quo, people still fear the unknown. Abstaining from voting is not a permanent solution to change the status quo. The percentage of people who participate in voting for governments in Africa is declining in all elections. This stance of the people is not sustainable because not voting do not mean everybody will not vote. The solution could be to vote for a different political party based on its manifesto. This could be a solution

because the liberation movements mimic the oppressive behaviour of the former oppressors. African liberation movements have toxic leadership that exploit African people and resources through corrupt activities (Gumede, 2022).

Africa has to deal with two rounds of independence movements. The first wave was founded to liberate Africans from European colonial powers and post-colonial settler states' political, economic, and military dominance. The Front for National Liberation (FNL) of Algeria, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde are just a few examples of political and military movements (PAIGC). Second-wave liberation movements arose from widespread dissatisfaction with the governments that inherited the colonial state infrastructure and failed to deliver on their promises. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Ethiopia's Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), South Sudan's Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA), Rwanda's Patriotic Front (RPF), and Uganda's National Resistance Movement (NRM) are among these movements (Anlesinya, Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey-Baah, 2019).

All African liberation movements played a major role in defeating the oppressive regime and to change the colonial system. The liberation movements during the time of oppression in Africa had an agenda to change the living conditions of the people. The agenda was characterized by an idea to change the political ideology from the capitalist system to a communist system. When liberation movements took over from the colonial regime this idea was changed. African leaders developed too much love for the money and did not want to change the system. The political, economic and sociological challenges remained the same with no political will to change the situation. Liberation movements in Africa represent the few and the elite in the main. Liberation movements in Africa are no longer the vanguards of the people but part of the system that oppress the people. Objectives and wishes of the elite groups are protected and achieved by the liberation movements. The elite driving the economic decline of Africa is secretive and ruthless. The elite are the enemy of progress; this is caused by a fear to have the economy that will balance the economic conditions of the society. An economy that will empower young people and the majority.

The study found that all leaders of liberation movements in Africa uniformly desire for self-righteousness thinking that they will forever be in leadership positions forgetting that they have a term of office. These leaders are only interested in protecting their self-interests and secure money for themselves and their family members and friends. They establish systems that will favour their behaviour and their interests. They mislead people and monopolize the media to single out the news that portray them as bad leaders and expose their opponents. There is a

widespread narrative in Africa that leaders of the liberation movements are owed by their countries because of the role they played or their organizations played during the armed struggles. This therefore means that they can exploit national resources for their own self interests. This narrative and expectations of African leaders is the main cause of economic failures in Africa. These leaders do not want to involve broader sectors or spectrum of the society because they fear criticism and want to involve people that will always agree with them. This is the reason why they only want to work with people who comes from their political parties. Leaders of liberation movements in Africa who are in government appoint government officials in senior positions based on their political preferences. Those who are not politically active but possess required expertise to improve the lives of the people and contribute significantly to the economy are not appointed. They rather appoint people who don't possess necessary qualifications and skills as long as those individuals come from a specific political party (Osborne, Charles-Dominique, Stevens, Bond, Midgley and Lehmann, 2018).

The study therefore, recommend that for liberation movements to sustain power and deliver the needs of the people they do the following:

- Desist appointing their friends and people based on their political alignment in government positions
- Design an electoral system for the political parties that have criteria that is aligned to the needs of the people
- Prioritize education as the first qualification for people to stand for political office and this translate to government leaders from a political party that will have qualifications.
- Emphasize the political awareness and education within the communities. People should not vote based on history but based on what the party they are voting for will do for them and for the future generation.
- Political liberation movements in Africa should and must avoid recycling leaders and start empowering young people and mentor young people properly.
- Liberation movements must stop having talk shows and useless seminar when they are in government but must start implementing their manifestos and deliver the needs of the people as early as possible.
- Liberation movements must stop relying on the western economy and start developing African economy that will sustain the continent for centuries to come.

## **Conclusion**

The liberation movements in Africa have little to show as an achievement because many people still live in bad conditions. African people are still poor and live in absolute poverty and the liberation movements are failing to change the status quo. Liberation movements in Africa has fallen into the trap of their predecessors. Liberation movements accepted the notion that people

cannot be the same and there must be the rich and poor people. They make good promises in public and take unfavorable decisions in boardrooms. The failures by the African liberation movements are mainly caused by the system. They inherited a system that was designed to prioritize the few and oppress the majority. The economy is at the hands of the elite and the majority are in deep poverty. Leaders fear the economic giants and they don't want to upset the colonial masters who are still controlling the African economy. The study therefore presented a view that the liberation movements in Africa are not the solution to change the socioeconomic challenges in Africa. They simple have no idea what to do to change the status quo. The economic and political experts need to step in and device a mechanism or a system that could be a solution or an alternative to substitute the current economic system.

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