

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF COLONIALISM IN THE UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF POST NIGERIAN STATE

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Abstract: *The paper examines the role of colonialism in the underdevelopment of post Nigerian State. The role of colonialism in Africa and Nigeria in particular cannot be fully understood and appreciated without recourse to historical development in the continent over the years. During the pre colonial era, there was a pattern of development that characterized the African socio political institutions and economic system. Nigeria pre colonial era had a pattern that ensued organized institution which preserved the cultural heritage, promote communality with limited competition over ownership of means of resources. Colonialism played a significant role on the political history and economic system of post colonial state of Nigeria with far reaching effects. The causes of underdevelopment in post Nigeria state is multi dimensional ranging from colonialism, corruption, leadership failure and many others. To juxtapose the causes mentioned, the paper looked at the underdevelopment of post Nigerian state from colonial perspective and this could be traced to the neo colonialist, imperialist and capitalist tendencies regarded as colonial extension. The paper argued that colonialism led to the fragmentation of socio economic system of Nigerian state which has undermined its capacity to develop. This was achieved through the integration of Nigerian economy into a capitalist world which has created gaps in self sufficiency, over dependence and unequal exchange rate in trade relations. The paper relied on secondary sourced materials. However, it concludes that there is need to review our historical ties. It is instructive that the conditions of western ties are lopsided and exploitative. This relationship seriously undermines the domestic potentials of post Nigerian state, especially with the current emphasis on foreign investment which translates into foreign capital domination. There is need to reconstruct our part and reinvent Pan African personality, integration and self confidence.*

Key words: Colonialism, Post Nigerian State and Underdevelopment

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INTRODUCTION

Colonialism occurred as a major political transformation with implications that are very central to the African economy. It was introduced as a system of government that systematically dominated the political and economic values of Africa. Industrial revolutions in Western Europe triggered the quest for unlimited expansionism in search of market opportunities. This period informed the aggressive scramble for partition of Africa which ultimately gave rise to the penetration of the African coast by the colonialist. Colonialism came into existence as a result of abolition of slave trade which was intensified during 17th and 18th century, emergence of industrial revolution which brought in higher demand of raw materials for the industries which the local agriculture was incapable to meet, urbanization and necessity of finding markets for the European countries factory productions.

Nigeria came into being in 1914 when the British imperialists amalgamated the southern and the Northern protectorates which they acquired beginning from 1885. This amalgamation brought the different communities into one political entity. Before the boundaries of Nigeria were drawn, soon after the Berlin conference of 1884, the newly created state contained a multiplicity of tribes with a number of great kingdoms that had evolved complex political systems, independent of contact with Europe. Crowther (1996:21). The Nigerian economy during colonial and post colonial era could be described as an economy which served the interest of the colonist and neo colonial elites at the expense of the majority. These form of political economy set in motion for socio economic conditions which make human development a mirage. (Lawal, 1997). Nigerian State is a deliberate creation and extension of the western capitalist and imperialist powers whose models were vehicle through colonialism with great economic significance and implications. The phenomenon systematically entrenched its structures as effective channels

for exploitation, domination and corruption which is predominantly seen in the post Nigerian state. The amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 midwives the transformation that gave rise to the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production through the activities of multinational corporations like the Royal Niger trading company, UACN and a host of others who were established as vehicles for sustaining colonialism. Though, the underdevelopment of post Nigeria State are perceived to be multi dimensional , the historical antecedents of colonialism contributed significantly to the underdevelopment with its extension of neo colonialism, imperialism and capitalist tendencies at present.

However, the integration of Nigerian economy into the global and dominant western capitalist system, disarticulation of domestic values in order to encourage monopoly in the economy has further stalled the potentials of Nigeria's greatness by arresting the free flow of technological discoveries and possible breakthrough in the economy. Consequence of this systematic integration, the post Nigerian state has manifested a weak and paralyzed economy that is wholly dependent on foreign capital. Furthermore, some of the roles of colonial economy have contributed to the development of post Nigerian state such as the introduction of western educational system, taxation, discovery and exploration of natural resources and cash crop production but with so far reaching effects. Hence, the colonial economy has great implications on the post Nigerian state. The culture of dependence that persists in the Nigerian economy is a manifestation of the historical ties of colonialism and the western capitalism. Thus, the paper is divided into the following sub-headings; introduction, conceptual clarification of colonialism, underdevelopment, nature of colonial political economy, theoretical approaches to the study, overview of colonialism and underdevelopment of Post Nigerian state, and conclusion.

Conceptualizing Colonialism

Colonialism occurred as a major political transformation with implications that are very central to Africa and Nigeria economy respectively. It was introduced as a system of government that systematically subjugated, substituted and dominated the political and economic values of people. European powers pursued this goal by encouraging the development of a commodity based trading system, a cash crop agriculture system, and by

building a trade network linking the total economic output of a region to the demands of the colonizing state.

Colonialism involves the establishment and maintenance of foreign rule over a set of people for the purpose of getting maximum economic benefit by the colonizing power. (Fadaiye,2005:161). In understanding colonialism and its super imposed models, we must also secure the motives of colonialism and its legitimization. To begin with, industrial revolutions in Western Europe triggered the quest for unlimited expansionism in search of market opportunities. This period informed the aggressive scramble for partition of Africa which ultimately gave rise to the penetration of the African coast by the colonialist.

According to Aderibigbe (2006:164), colonialism is the extension of political control by one powerful nation over a weaker nation. These foreign immigrants dominate the countries where they settled not only politically, but also socially and economically. In the same vein, Akorede (2010:158) opines that colonialism can be seen as one country's domination of another country or people. This is often achieved through aggressive military actions. Elaigwu (1998), posits that the military interventions in the political system is a bizarre phenomena that is necessitated by the dictates and heritage of colonialism. Ake (1981) rightly sums the unfolding scenario of instability which he attributes to the attendance effect of colonialism as a system that promotes capital accumulation, deprivation and domination. Colonialism means the control or domination of the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of one group of the people or nation by another. This is manifested in colonial rule which is guided by the colonial policy of colonizing nation (Akpan,2003:40). More so, colonialism referred to as the rule of a group of people by a foreign power. The people and their land make up a colony. Colonialism had its roots in the greed which European countries exhibited towards Africa's untapped natural resources (Mapuva and Chari,2010)

Thus, colonial expansion is economic in aim, monopolistic in orientation, political in justification and military in method. The relationship between the colonizing country and the colonized is asymmetrical. It disarticulated the domestic values in order to encourage monopoly in the economy. This disarticulation further stored the potentials of African greatness to

development and possible breakthrough in the economy. Colonialism gave African economy a character of underdevelopment and dependency which stemmed from the integration of developing economies into the global and dominant western capitalist system. However, it is of great importance to note that colonialism implies "formal political control" involving territorial annexation and loss of sovereignty.

The Concept of Underdevelopment

The concept underdevelopment is shrouded with controversy arising from scholars seeing it in different ways. It is seen by some scholars as the direct opposite of development that is absence of development while to others, they perceived it by comparing the levels of development of two or more societies.

Using Goulet's concept of development, development implies a situation where:

There has been improvement in the basic needs, when economic progress has contributed to a greater sense of self esteem for the country and individuals within it, and when material advancement has expanded the range of choice for individuals (Goulet, 1971)

From this stand point, underdevelopment is viewed as those manifestation and capacity that cannot induce social change by the use of labour power and available resources to improve the living standard of the citizens. According to Frank (1996) underdevelopment involves imperialism and exploitation. Third world societies have been prevented from developing because their economies serve the interest of the west. Alanana (2006:5), states that underdevelopment is a process in which a country has not sufficiently developed. This status of insufficient development he added was acquired under certain historical circumstances. These historical conditions includes centuries of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Meier and Rauch (2000) maintained that in an underdeveloped countries, resources are underdeveloped and people are economically backward. Existence of market imperfection prevent optimum allocation and utilization of natural resources and the result is underdevelopment and this, in turn leads to economic backwardness. Underdevelopment can be seen as absence

of development indicators such as low literacy rate, equitable distribution of income, good medical health care, gainful employment and many others. According to Frank(1969), underdevelopment refers to an active process of distortion, characteristic of the relatively modern state of the third world, and hence in no way to be equated with tradition or any sort of original state. However, underdevelopment can be seen as a process which is synonymous with exploitation and plunder of one country by another under historical circumstances of capitalist expansion, imperialism and colonialism and has continued in this neo-colonial stage. He further reiterated that the outcome of this process is the gross inequality in wealth distribution and lack of development at the local, national and international levels. However, the above definition implies that; economic links between the advanced capitalist countries and the third world countries are structurally and historically developed and has conditioned the third world countries to be perpetually dependent on the advanced countries. Also, that there exist a link or relationship between the capitalist industrialized countries and the third world countries.

Nature of Colonial Political Economy in Nigeria

The advent of colonialism brought in major political and economic transformation. Prior to colonialism, most pre-colonial societies were governed by traditional values that differed in terms of peculiarities in beliefs, cultural imperatives and customs. They were operated on the basis of consultation and consensus of the people within the polity. Sovereignty resided in the people within the society and power and authority derived from them. Governance were clearly articulated and understood by all. The economic mode of production was primordial in nature. Colonial political economy in Nigeria is the interplay between the colonial mode of production and the development of social relations of production. This development created complexities and discontinuities of the social relations of production in the colonial Nigeria arising mainly from the impact of western imperialism, particularly the penetration of the capitalist mode of production. The introduction of monetary system in the colonial economy in Nigeria was invariably an extension of that of the metropole. Such control was justified by arguing that it gave the colony monetary stability and international status and helped its trade. However, monetary dependence was essentially a means of exploitation. The colonial economy introduced

taxation system and cash crop production in the Nigerian economy. Since Nigeria lacked the technological know-how to transform this agricultural product into finished products, they were compelled to produce for export in the international market and this transcended into an unequal trade relation and dependency which is noticeable today in the post colonial economy. Taxation system was used as exploit instead of using it to develop infrastructures that affects lives of the colonies. Tax monies collected from Nigerians were used to build infrastructure seen as convenience for the Europeans such as railways. Little was done to industrialized Nigeria. The economy was characterized by disarticulation and incoherence. A disarticulated economy is one whose parts or sectors are not complimentary. In a coherent economy, there is regional, sectoral complementarity and reciprocity. The colonial economy lacked these linkages, complementarity and reciprocity.

Also, the British colonial power administered Nigeria by indirect rule and direct rule in different areas at different time. According to Okafor(1981), the social contradictions that arose from this style of administration had a negative toll on the myths and sacredness surrounding the traditional rulers in the context of African society. For instance, in the Yoruba land, Obas were rarely seen in public except when occasionally, they sat in judgement or had to perform traditional rites or declare annual festivals open. With the indirect rule system, these traditional conventions became a thing of the past as obas, emirs, obi's became ubiquitous in the sense that they were seen everywhere in the community. Also, the system created unhealthy relationship between the educated elites and the traditional rulers. The sum total nature of colonial political economy brought about underdevelopment and dependence in Nigeria economy.

Theoretical Understanding to the Underdevelopment of Nigeria Post Colonial State

The paper discusses the theoretical approach to underdevelopment of post Nigerian state using Marxian perspective. Various theories have been propounded to explain the challenges of development and underdevelopment of Africa. These theories include the developmentalist, classical and the Marxist theories. The developmentalist theorist believed that underdevelopment arises from market failure, unbalanced growth, poor

linkages and inability to reach the "take off" stage for development and the classical hold the view that underdevelopment arise from rapid population growth, lack of comparative advantage, low savings and investment and low income growth. However, Scholars of Marxist paradigm include Lenin, Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Kwame Nkrumah, Claude Ake and many others. They have vehemently criticized the modernization school of thought in view of its woeful failure, its ethnocentrism and incompatibility in Africa societies and other developing economies. The approach believed that underdevelopment is as result of slavery, colonization, neo colonization and imperialism that have created an unequal socio economy and political relation popularly called asymmetrical relation. The theory further argued that underdevelopment come from exploitation by external and internal collaborators with negative impact from World Bank, International monetary fund, general dependence of Africa on the developed world. To them, development can occur when countries can break this unequal relations and also redefining her mode of production, overhauling the environment and investing in the development of human psychology. The explanation for the origins of African severe underdevelopment is explained by history and much of Africa's poor performance can be characterized by over four hundred years of slave raiding (Nunn:2007).

The impact of the issue of slave trade on underdevelopment of Africa cannot be over looked. During the period when African countries were colonized, slave trade was at high level. Slavery has resulted in regional communities and many nations to be both politically and ethnically fragmented. It fostered ethnic fractionalization and undermined effective states. Nevertheless, colonialism systematically entrenched its structures as effective channels for exploitation and domination. It disarticulated the domestic values in order to encourage monopoly in the economy. This disarticulation further stored the potentials of post Nigeria's state greatness by arresting the free flow of technological discoveries. Also, stemmed from colonialism is the integration of developing economies into the global and dominant western capitalist system. This has led to a weak and paralyzed economy that is wholly dependent on foreign capital. Hence, Nigeria Post colonial state are dominated by the activities of the petit bourgeois class who are a creation of colonialism (neo-colonial tendencies) and by extension serve as agents for sustaining colonial practices characterized by economic exploitation. They

are found in all sectors of the economy and mostly shareholders in Multinational Corporations and financial markets companies.

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Post Nigerian State: An Overview

Indeed, the history of Nigeria as a nation is replete with colonial regime that have direct impact on the economic mode of production and the inherent contradictions that are generally manifest in the economy. Colonialism was introduced as a system of government that systematically subjugated, substituted and dominated the political and economic values of Nigeria. According to Shokpeka and Nwaokocha (2009:57), the colonial economy in most African states including Nigeria was structured to improve the economies of the colonizing or metropolitan power. However, the ending of colonial rule in Nigeria and most of African countries has not resulted in a complete control of their economic and political affairs. In reality, the post Nigerian state is independent but the integration of her economy into the capitalist world has continued to create uncertainty in the development of her economy.

Post colonial state is referred to a state which is said to have become independent either through sustained arm or constitutional struggles, but whose independent is in name only. (Barkindo, 1994). It is also one which at one time experienced colonialism in one form or another, and even after independence has continued to suffer the effect of colonialism in its socio economic and political developments. The many years of colonialism in the history of Nigeria distorted and disarticulated the economy which has contributed to the underdevelopment of post Nigerian state. This was achieved through the disarticulation of domestic values thereby encouraging monopoly in the economy and further stalled the potentials of Nigeria's greatness by arresting the free flow of technological discoveries, dominance in market capitalization and trade. For example JP Morgan which is a financial enterprise controlled by the west has continued to gain dominance and enjoy monopoly of regulating market and financial capitalization. They conditioned the financial and growth index of less developed economies including Nigeria. The implication of this is that the economies of the third world are tied to the apron of the west and there is no way this dominance will permit even equalization in financial market capitalization and stability.

Though, there are other internal factors responsible to the underdevelopment of post Nigerian state such as corruption, leadership failure and many others, but the historical antecedent of colonialism which created a foundation to the understanding of asymmetrical relationship between the third world countries and the developed economies would not be disregarded. With a weak infrastructural and technological base, Nigeria cannot afford to industrialize in order to guarantee sufficient employment opportunities for her citizens. The implications are indeed grave for a highly populated country like Nigeria, the steady growth in crime and the massive poverty situation in Nigeria readily comes to mind. Also, to address issues with regard to Nigeria's dependency and underdevelopment which ostensibly is an offshoot of colonialism, the Nigerian economy is trapped by the mindless borrowing from western agencies like world bank, IMF and Paris Club. Nigeria's underdevelopment is tied to the debt burden which places stiff conditions of endless service obligations to debtor nations. The annual servicing of this debt is tied to stiff conditionalities that consume investable resources that could be used for infrastructural development.

There has been a steady decline in productivity due to debt crisis which is an inherent factor and indeed a contradiction of capitalist expansion. In contemporary tides, the debt crisis is a major cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment. It is a platform for western domination and internationalization of capital by agents of the western capitalist system. For example, as Nigeria recently faced with economic recession, she also involved in debt servicing. Nevertheless, the pronounced debt cancellation during president Obasanjo government is tied to the implementation of policy support instruments (PSI) which entails rationalization and privatization which is an extension of colonialism through capitalist and imperialistic design. The introduction and implementation of these policies so far, has not yielded much desired result in benefitting the populace. Reforms and concessions are being used in post Nigerian state to enrich fractions of the political class and their foreign collaborators at the expense of national development. For example, this is noticeable in the concession of the Nigerian Ports Authority, which translated into the sales of Nigerian sea ports to foreign firms. This resulted in thousand of job loss. Though, the government claimed that the sale was in the best interest of the nation, the fact is that most foreign firms are agent of underdevelopment and they are

offshoot of colonialism through neo colonialism and imperialism. Their mode of operation and the way they repatriate profit to their foreign land is similar to that of colonial practices in the past. However, underdevelopment and dependency are manifestations of the political instability that characterized the evolution of the Nigerian nation. According to Elaigwu (1989), the military intervention in the political system is a Bizarre phenomena that is necessitated by the dictates and heritage of colonialism. It was an instrument for suppression and coercion for effective entrenchment of colonialism. Ake (1981) rightly sums the unfolding scenario of instability which he attributes to the attendant effect of colonialism as a system that promotes capital accumulation, deprivation and domination. He argues from the point of exclusivity in political power which he stated that political power is tied to primitive accumulation and domination in a world of political competition.

He further reiterated that:

the struggle for political power is intensified by the use of murderous and violent thugs to such an extent that those who win political contest are guaranteed all the material things of life including security, while those who lost are virtually endangered and are forfeited of their safety and liberties.

This scenario rightly captures the political struggles that characterized the post colonial era as it explains the necessity of military intervention. Furthermore, the post Nigerian state is dominated by the activities of what is referred to as the petit bourgeois class or internal colonies. This form of class is a creation of colonialism. Their motives undermine the concept of independence as they were mainly prepared as agents for sustaining colonialism which translate into economic exploitation. They are largely seen as collaborators to multinational cooperation to exploit resources and determine marketing processes. According to Ake (1985), they manipulate the direction of state policies which are usually detrimental to auto centric development. Consequently, the underdevelopment of the post Nigerian state is deeply rooted in the historical antecedents of colonialism in the sense that the social contradictions that arose from this style of administration

brought about social concentration of producers, the incremental consciousness of their solidarity, the antagonism between labour and capital, and relations of domination and subordination between labour and capital, corruption and other negative vices that affect development. No doubt, integration and capitalist penetration of Nigeria economy brought about underdevelopment and dependency.

CONCLUSION

The advent of colonialism in Nigeria played a significant role in the development and underdevelopment of post colonial state. Prior to colonialism, the pre colonial Nigeria was governed by traditional values that differed in terms of peculiarities in beliefs, cultural imperatives and customs. The era was based on communal orientation which also sustained the primitive mode of production in the economy. Colonialism disarticulated the domestic values in order to encourage monopoly in the economy. Its introduction of the economy into the capitalist world succinctly led us to the world of dependence and contributed to the underdevelopment which is presently found in the post colonial state of Nigeria. It is obvious from the analysis that attempt has been made to establish that some of the causes of underdevelopment of Nigeria post colonial state are multi dimensional with the factors mentioned such as corruption, leadership failure and many others. The paper argued that underdevelopment of post Nigerian state has a historical antecedents of colonialism and this has contributed in creating a fragmented society that permeates inequalities in social and class relation, asymmetric relation that reproduce dependency and underdevelopment.

Colonialism not only arrested and obstructed development, it also undermined African's capacity to develop. Neo colonialism and imperialism which is an offshoot of colonialism has continued to sustain the objectives of international capitalism through the modern policies and programmes of capitalist world such as privatization, commercialization and globalization.

The paper conclude that we should review our historical ties, reconstruct our part and reinvent pan African personality, integrity and self confidence in building our economy. Disarticulation and dependency have completely vitiating the domestic economic potentials, particularly in the area of agriculture and domestic industrialization. We must intensify an aggressive strategy of diversification to widen our resource base that is monoculture.

These measures will address the imbalances in international trade which are consequences of a trapped, stagnated, disarticulated and underdeveloped economy.

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