

Appraisal of the Roles of Metropole and Satellite in the Stunted Development of African Nation State Nigeria

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Abstract

Issues relating to government in post-colonial states in Africa are replete with tales of woes when considered within the ambit of development, especially in this era of globalization. Many orthodox views hold the industrialized western nations of the north culpable. On the other hand, the nascent economic theorists of western origin implicate the fragile economic structures and institutions of governance and leadership as being responsible for Africa's underdevelopment status. While the debate is on, some others view African status as endogenously inherent in her leadership response to the crises of poverty, food security political instability, technological development and other critical malaise. This paper explores the extent to which these views can be relevant explicate the failure of post-colonial states in Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria, in this discourse. The paper implicates the roles played by Nigerian comprador leadership, response to the call for economic political and cultural liberalization as the underlying factors responsible to the failure of the post-colonial Nigerian state.

Keywords: Appraisal, Satellite, Stunted, Development, African.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries in Africa are past colonies of Western Europe powers like England, France and Portugal. It should be noted that Nigeria is a past colony of Britain. The arrival of Portuguese ships on the west of Africa in the 15th century marked the beginning of countries of European colonization of the Africa continent that has left in its wake horrendous legacies – social economic, cultural and political – which have helped to keep a potentially virile continent in perpetual stagnation.

Before its contact with the Europeans, Africa was a land that could boast of flourishing kingdoms, trade and commerce with well-developed systems of administration under their kings and their councils (Rodney, 1972: 147).

The colonial era which started with slave trade saw the supply of about 200 million young men and women, on annual basis, to Europe (Rodney, *ibid*:86). This led to massive depletion in human and economic resources with its attendant impoverishment of the continent of Africa. This is so because the human resources that could have been harnessed and crystallized for economic and leadership development in Africa were sold off to Europe and America (Frank,

1966; Rodney, 1972; Eke, 1983; Emeagwahi; 2004 Ogunbamila, 2005 in Iherohanma and Oguoma, 2010:411). In trying to assess the conditions of the post-colonial African States, and Nigeria in particular, it is germane to examine the nature and style of political leadership that the so called colonial masters offered, and also the type of economy that was bequeathed to the African continent by the colonialists on the eve of their departure.

Furthermore, an examination of what the Nigerian nation state attains after over 50 years of flag independence is apposite. Commenting on the situation of post-colonial states of Africa Mawere (2009) lamented thus, the post-colonial Africa experience has not had any material influence on poverty reduction, to the extent that the continent's political system are high up on the global agenda that is dominated by the continents former colonial powers as if to confirm that there was no serious appreciation of the implications of political independence on transformation and economic development by the architects of the decolonization project. There is no doubt that colonialism was underpinned by a clear agenda whose outcome was evident. What is less clear is the agenda of Africa's post-colonial masters.

To date, almost every country in Africa is still haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were bequeathed to the post- colonial leadership. As such, Nigeria is not an exception. This is an aspect which informs the weak institutions of states, flawed legislative system and constant struggle for political power to the detriment of the well-being of many nations, which could have moved on a path of development as part of modern societies.

THOERITICAL INSIGHTS

For the purpose of this study the dependency theory of Henrique Cardoso, A.G. Frank, Samir Amin and Rodney, could best offer an explanation to the situation at hand, as the framework of analysis. Dependency simply states that crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that are being developed but by the foreigners whose interest are safe guarded. The foreigners use their economic power to buy political power in the countries that they penetrate. In another word, it is a political pressure by the imperialist metropolis or even military intervention, (Offion, 1980). This collusion between alien economic and political power distort both the economy and the policy of the dependent countries. Out of this arise political alliances between the domestic and foreign bourgeoisies. The vicious circle of the process is now complete because just as the metropolis exploits the colonies, so does the domestic colonial bourgeoisie class exploit the rest of the population,(Offion *ibid*).

The exploitative and expressive nature of this relationship in disfavor of the satellite countries was very salient in the failure of post-colonial-Africa states. The colonial experience of the post-colonial Africa states which lasted for over a century inevitably led to the alternation of their values, their psyche and consequently their developmental progress (Alanana, 2006).

The dependency theory highlighted in the foregoing is not without its shortcomings or limitations. It seems to have taken and excessively exaggerated the view of the role of external forces in the failure of the post-colonial African states without taking into cognizance the salient internal factors which conspired to aggravate the problem.

For example, indiscipline and corrupt leadership, ethnic squabbles, religious bigotry, etc. all contributed to the failure. Also the dependency theory relied too heavily on economic exploitation of the satellites. It ignored the cultural rape and the unfavorable socio-political and administrative structures bequeathed to the post-colonial leaders which were tailored

towards failure. Despite these however, the theory still provide the platform for understanding the global inequality.

Development of Post-colonial States' Underdevelopment

It is very much clear that post-colonial African state's creation was arbitrary and did not take into cognizance the historical and cultural differences of the people. Their creation is based on the administrative whims of the members of Berlin conference in 1945.

This has created an endemic problem of cohesion in most past colonial states in Africa. This further led to the emergence of ethnic militias who engaged the post-colonial administration in bitter altercation and coups that in consequence crippled the socio economic and political development of those states. In the case of Nigeria, it has witnessed a lot of coups, counter-coups, civil war, ethno-religious violence etc.

Post-colonial African elites failed their peoples because they could not rise to the occasion when it mattered most. They lacked qualities of purposeful leadership. They were content to direction from the elsewhere colonial masters on policy direction. There are evident cases of corruption and administrative ineptitude in Nigeria.

Symptoms of Failure of Post Colonial African States

There abound glaring evidences that support the popular claim that post-colonial African states have failed. The manifest features of acute underdevelopment in most of these states of Africa cannot stand erect in the international arena. In most of the post-colonial African states there are high infant mortality rate and high child mortality state.

All these states are heavily dependent on foreign technology, goods and services, high rate of unemployment, excruciating poverty level; high level of illiteracy among the populace (Rodney, 2009). Also diplomatic failure in post-colonial African states is manifested via the high rate of political instability, electoral violence, and insecurity. All these abound in Nigeria.

Sustained civil war and ethnic religious crises have claimed the lives of many in these post-colonial states. Examples of such states are Nigeria, Liberia, Angola, Sudan, Somalia, Serialeone, Ethiopia, to mention but a few. Other features of these failed states are corruption, failed institutions arising from policy inconsistencies, human rights violation and lack of adherence to the rule of law.

Causes of The Failure of Post-Colonial African States

It appeared that the euphoria of independence and the unanticipated load and pleasure of leadership paraphernalia it bestowed on those involved in the anti-colonial struggle and emergent Africa leaders blurred the vision of these nationalists. This is because, the incipient national consciousness to have derailed soon after independence instead of crystallizing into a limited and strong continent. It was not able to rationalize, galvanize and re-direct the popular resistant movement in terms of the cardinal need for national unity and development. Yet, the continent had the natural endowments human and material resources that were the attractions to the colonial masters. African leaders, at the expiration of the period of relationship and nationalist struggle were overwhelmed by the enormity of legacies that followed the devolution or shift of power at independence (Eke, 1983; Nwabuezw, 1999). It could be interpreted that the development structures and policies by the colonialists never

allowed space for the emergent leaders in Africa to revolt against the structures or still that these leaders did not realized.

The necessity to reform the inherited development structure to the needs of Africa the post-colonial Africa states as a successor to the colonial states was fundamentally a political construction.

POLITICAL FACTORS

Political instability in Africa may own much of its causes to internal factors. However, the interpenetration of external factors especially geo-political and economic interests of the international community constantly play a significant role in undermining the very process and institutions that are expected to nurture democracy and to instill a sense of stability for societal development(Ongayo, 2008). Combination to such factors as unequal development, poverty, disease, violence and the manipulative tendencies of the local elites, political and economic stability in Africa is constantly under threat. This threat is however not emanating from within the continent but from external interests whose thirst for African resources continue to shape the dynamics in areas related to governance.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Resources in Africa if well managed are capable of providing for its entire population, hence the potentials for a more stable environment. However, it is well documented that stolen wealth from Africa often end up in banks abroad (Africa Focus Bulletin, 2006), be it money stolen by the political elite. The case of Mobutu of Zaire, Abacha of Nigeria, and Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya, just to mention a few all end up in banks in the western capitals. A lot of litigations instituted by the anti-graft agencies in Nigeria are receiving the attention of the judiciary at present.

The post-colonial African states experience has not had any material positive influence on poverty reduction to the extent that the continent's political and economic challenges are quite high. Poverty has become a master problem, widely acclaimed internationally as deserving urgent attention, especially in the sub-Sahara Africa countries, which include Nigeria. In these countries, abject poverty has increased, widened, deepened and has become ramified engulfing an overwhelming majority of the population. Poverty anywhere is a threat to peace and security (Adekunle, 1975).

The Neo-colonialist economic policies of most of the post-colonial Africa states only fine-tuned the mode of explanation of these states. The much touted nationalization or indigenization of the economy of the post-colonial African states was mere facade. In most cases the comprador elites still front for the colonial masters as chairmen of companies whose controlling shares were owned.

STATES FACTORS

The African states did not emerge through evolution. That is through gradual grouping of indigenous societies. Despite the existence of institutional frameworks that are supposed to guide processes and delivery of essential services, the continued weakening of these institutions through political mechanization and predatory nature of African elites; working in cohorts with external interests, also contributes further to the undermining of stability in Africa. These tendencies exacerbate resources, ethnic rivalry and more recently the emergence of electoral violence.

LEADERSHIP FACTORS

Leadership implies critical management of critical resources endowments in a country. Africans are endowed with critical indigenous knowledge, traditional technologies and wealth (Gakuru, 2005). Indigenous knowledge encompasses traditional knowledge, innovations, technologies and practices. The question however is; have African leaders and government ensure these technologies and knowledge are harnessed to achieve diversified economy, food security, job and employment generation, entrepreneurship, leadership, capacity building and wealth creation.

According to Iherioha Nma and Oguoma (2010) there is the get-rich-quick mania in Africa, especially among the political leaders. The inordinate ambition for wealth accumulation is an offshoot of corrupt practices which are aspects of underdevelopment. African leaders appear to be ingrained in stealing public money and eventually remitting same to other foreign banks. Yet, the industrialized countries that claim to be corrupt-free accommodate such practices. These acts have no multiplier effects on national economy since the booties are not invested for regeneration.

There are poor human capital development and poor healthy development policies and programmes in almost all countries in Africa. This is attested to by the number of qualified Africans. Insecurity and poverty account for the brain drain (Emaegwali, 2004). A health nation is a wealthy nation.

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

Post-colonial African states are characterized by regional imbalance especially in terms of education. This is due to irresponsible leadership coupled with the faulty band legacy of colonial education. The education sector of African countries is in neglect, unequipped with facilities to provide necessary skills and manpower development for the services of their states. Comrade Samora Michel, President of Frelimo and Peoples Republic of Mozambique, in 1977, in an acceptance speech on the award of Doctorate Degree of Law, stressed the effects of colonial education on the youth of his country. According to Michel, colonial education provided by the imperialists was not intended to prepare the youths for the services of their countries but for perpetuation of the exploitation of the post-colonial states. In the same vein, Rodney's (2009) acknowledged that the colonialists provided education for underdevelopment of Africa. It is unfortunate that, at present, only an insignificant number of Nigerian universities are listed in the league of the top 1000 best universities in the world. Furthermore, Nigerian education is more of theoretical than functional and practical.

LEGITIMACY FACTORS

The legitimacy of the inherited rights/obligations structure becomes an issue that is often used to obscure the abuse of the states by post-colonial African states leaders, Mawere, (2009). The reversal of the right to land, minerals and others resources that often have a colonial and political origin becomes the pre occupation of the post-colonial African states with little or no regard to the consequences on poverty alleviation and economic progress. Yes, we can have rights to our land and minerals, but do we have a plan to meet the obligations inherent in exercising such rights to the benefit of the collective course.

Positive Aspects of Post Colonial African States

Since the aim of this paper is to assess the popular claims that the post-colonial African states are failed states, it is imperative, having examined the area of failure, to look at some of the favourable aspects of these states.

The emergence of the modern African cities has been traced to the advent of colonialism. Smythe and Smythe, (1960) assert that these groups were trained to read and write and then got employed as clerical assistants in colonial administrations. Others were the returns slaves who had acquired western education and valuable skills (Anyandele, 1974). These later became the torch bearers of the struggle for the independence of their various territories. Colonial experience created this political awareness.

It is an undeniable fact that most of the major roads and railways in African states, especially Nigeria are what the colonial regime bequeathed to them. It is lamentable that after fifty years of independence the colonial railway line is what we are still using and we cannot even maintain them.

CONCLUSION

A lot has been written on the role of the metropole in the sordid, underdeveloped state of the satellite. It is the opinion of this paper that this over-trodden path (of pointing accusing fingers) should be jettisoned because it now amount to self-mockery.

The position of this paper is that if the West is responsible for the failure of post-colonial African states then these states owe themselves duty to subscribe to the suggestion of A.G Frank to break away. Before and after independence most of these African states produced and are still producing sizeable numbers of intellectual elites as well as economic elites and technocrats who were and still are, at vantage position to positively shape the destinies of their perspective states and take Africa of the straggle hold of neo-colonial domination and economic improvements.

Sovereign states of Africa can choose to close their doors on the so-called exploiter nations and look inward. Africa has vast fertile land. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. What happened to agriculture? Where are the rubber plantations? Where is the oil palm plantation? Where are the groundnut and cotton pyramid? Malaysia, the world in highest producer of oil palm came to Nigeria to beg for palm seeds about eighteen years ago. Why does Nigeria spend millions to refine crude oil outside their country when we have refineries that should have been maintained with fewer amounts?

Nigeria has many dams and rivers as well as much sunshine why can't she generate enough electricity for industries and other domestic use?

Why does Africa complain of brain drain when it fails to create conducive environment for them to stay and develop their societies? Much money has been spent by the executive arm of government globe trolling in the name of negotiating with those in the Diasporas to come home when there are no infrastructures on ground to attract those in the Diaspora back home. What happened to the result of the researches and inventions that African intellectuals have made especially in science and technology? What of the Ogbunigwe' that the Igbos invented during the civil war?

The failure of the post-colonial African states should be laid at the door step of the African elites who have had all it takes to transform their societies for the best but, in criminal perfidy, have shunned that responsibility. This paper contends and concludes that post-colonial African states are where they are, by CHOICE!

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