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WHICH WAY IS NIGERIA HEADING? THE POST-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM AND DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

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Abstract

This article explores development challenges in Nigeria through a qualitative methodological approach. In explaining the challenges pitting Nigerian economy and development, the objectives adopt modernization and dependency theories for analysis. The information gathered from the field suggests that there is the need for the blend of the Nigerian pre-colonial traditional systems with the post-colonial political system in addressing developmental issues. An overhaul of the existing political systems to accommodate Nigerian traditional and democratic punitive measures in addressing the country developmental challenges is prescribed. The ingenuity in pre-colonial traditional system cannot be overemphasized hence, the paper concludes that, for Nigeria to achieve the status quo of developed nations, a lot of works and review needs to be done internally in the Nigerian political systems and institutional structures to eschew the external forces and pressures causing backwardness in our political and economy development in Nigeria.

Keywords

Pre-Colonial, Political System, Traditional System, Development Issues, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Since Nigeria attained independence from Britain, the country is still experiencing stunted growth and there have been scholarly argument and debates on the underdevelopment of Nigerian state. Over the years, Nigerian scholars have worked out strategies and policies on the trend and dimension that explains underdevelopment in the country and suggested way forward in developing Nigerian state. Traditionally, the effects of colonialism are always blamed for the woes and problems of Nigeria. Acknowledging that colonialism contributed to some of the problems and challenges ravaging Nigeria such as the amalgamation (Northern Protectorate, Southern Protectorate and Colony of Lagos) in 1914 and cultural inheritance of Nigeria is important in assessing whether or not Nigerians have any commonalities. Kwarteng (2012) stated that ‘whatever Nigerians share, we do not have a common traditional culture, common languages, a common religious or conceptual vocabulary and we do not even belong to a common race’.

Religion has, of course, served to separate groups: ‘the role of religion as a symbolic medium of contact and conflict is striking in the colonial history of Nigeria’ Lalude and Omitola (2001). Lalude and Omitola (2001) maintained that the two monotheistic religions, that is Christianity and Islam, have both had ‘long experience of accommodation with Nigeria, who have cohabited peacefully from time immemorial, the forceful fusion of ethnic tribes in Nigeria which majority points as indication of underdevelopment and the civil war to other problems observed in the state. Olaniyan and Alao (2003) also argued when they discussed about colonialism as an episode and epoch. For these scholars, they blamed the colonial masters for the woes which Nigerian witnessed but they forgets that for colonialism to hold or had it grasp, there was an agreement between these colonialists and the indigenous leaders who agreed they should be colonized (Olaniyan and Alao, 2003). In other words, they supported colonialism through trade-offs.

From other view, some scholars on this issue have stated that, the colonial masters deceived them (Aghahowa and Ukpebor (1999). There is the need to move away from the blame game to solving the problems the country is facing in attaining the status quo of developed countries. Lots of questions contradicting the blames on colonialism can be generated in this study. Therefore, the study focuses on the contemporary issues that are inhibiting the country from attaining the status of developed nation. As a matter of fact, while Nigeria is still debating

on attaining the status of developed nation her contemporaries are debating animal rights, environment and climate change. This paper tries to identify and discuss the challenges of development in Nigeria. It is salient as a wakeup call on why little progress or growth have been achieved since the country attained independence over a period of 56 years ago. Nigeria is used to explicate and point out salient issues concerning development because this country is important and central to the course and advocacy of developmental programs in Africa amongst other things. This paper seeks to investigate the problems of development in Nigeria through the following highlighted objectives;

- i. The challenges of Nigerian development in this present democratic era;
- ii. The unsupportive institutional role of Nigeria;
- iii. Proffering an alternative framework for a developed Nigeria.

This paper is significant because Nigerian state is yet to attain the level of developed states while her counterpart nations such as India, Singapore, South Africa and Malaysia who were also colonized have attained developed status. In other words, it is under-developed.

2. Methodology

This paper adopts historical approach to investigate the dynamics of the contemporary issues of underdevelopment with a focus on Nigeria. Data for this study involves published historical documents and government records. With the qualitative approach, modernization theory is adopted to investigate factors undermining development in Nigeria. For the data analysis, the information gotten from literatures and tenets of the theory adopted for clarification of objectives in this chapter. The scope of the chapter is limited to Nigeria. The country is instrumental to the study because Nigeria is the most populous black nation and one of the countries in OPEC producing large quantity of crude oil that generates 70% revenue for Nigerian economy; yet the country still lag in attaining developed status quo.

3. Nigeria on the premise of Walter Rodney Postulation: Conceptual Overview

To understand the present situation in Nigeria, there is the need to be knowledgeable about its pre-colonial period. Based on this, Rodney (1973) defined 'development in human society as a many-sided process, thus moral categories of development are difficult to evaluate such as (the level of individual in increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-

discipline, responsibility and material well-being), depending on the age or era which one lives, class origins, and one's personal code of what is right and what is wrong. However, what is indisputable is that development takes the form of personal development tied with the state of the society as a whole on the other hand, he explained underdevelopment as not the absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or the other and to a greater or lesser extent, but noted that underdevelopment is comparing levels of development and it is much tied to the fact that human social development has been uneven and from a strictly economic view-point some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming more wealthy'(Rodney, 1973). On the dialectical relationship of development and underdevelopment, Nigeria had a relationship that ensured the transfer of wealth to western countries. However, during these transfers of wealth, Nigeria helped to develop western countries in the same proportion as western helped to underdeveloped Nigeria. Thus, the internationalization of trade was and is still the extension overseas of European interests (Rodney 1973).

In Agagu (2004), who theorized that 'indicators of economic development were higher in democratic countries than the authoritarian ones, which suggest that development is a condition to democracy'? Contrarily, after reviewing economic obstacles to democratization in Nigeria, Akorede (2010) concluded that democratic development is not a yardstick for growth and development. He further argued and pinpointed corruption as the core reason for Nigerian underdevelopment which is also evident in the country. He thus recommended that for Nigeria to break the impasse of underdevelopment there should be good governance and establishment of special agencies to monitor all development projects undertaking by the government' (Akorede, 2010).

Thus, according to Akpan (2003), 'development is seen as an increase of production and efficiency and measured primarily by comparing the per capita income'. Babawale, (2007) stated that, understanding the political leaders in Nigeria on how they think about the problems of underdevelopment will serve as 'theoretical and empirical foundations for domestic measures designed to rectify the relatively backward conditions. These conditioned leaders attitudes and policies toward the capitalist and communist countries and the comprehension of Nigerian leaders' views will provide an opportunity to assess their current ideological tendencies to discuss future Western policy alternatives'.

As mentioned earlier that colonialism is the main fulcrum of accusation, Chikendu (2004) noted that, 'the leaders in Nigeria still aggravated that their backwardness is a direct product of western colonialist exploitation, and the other hand, there is less denunciatory criticism of colonial rule as expressed by the political leaders in Nigeria. From another perspective, Nnoli (1981) pointed out triple evils of underdevelopment in colonial capitalism, corruption and ethnic insurgency of different forms resisting Nigerians the search of pathways of implementing universal human rights laws and right of people. The country implicated as the European colonial powers with Nigerian collaborators on the extermination, abuse and misused indigenous Nigerians from the 16th to the first half of the 19th centuries who underdeveloped and impoverished Nigerian populations. Against all colonial blames, Tamuno (1980) taking from Rodney's book on 'How Europe Under-developed Africa' noted that, it is no longer tenable and affirms that, the main culprits of the destruction of Nigeria in contemporary period are Nigerians themselves.

4. The Place and Problem of Globalization in Nigeria

Abdulrahman (2004) based its own argument on the traditional society that entails the pre-capitalist, technological constrained, traditional value and beliefs, stagnant and unchanging. Thus, the reason for the "backwardness" or underdevelopment of the society is attributed to the (traditional societies) and thus there was nothing about the global system and the colonial past, etc. On another view, the contemporary society is endowed with the West as the paragon of globalization and rapid economic growth, contemporary way of life with capitalism and democracy. Thus, the process of development from undeveloped society is to emulate the first world by breaking away from the fetters of tradition (Tamuno, 1980).

Moreover, globalization is an economy movement that is rooted in capitalism in the 1990s. The concept of globalization incorporates the full spectrum of the transition and drastic transformation that a traditional society must undergo to become globalised (Ukwu, 1988). Though, Abutudu, (2000) has been criticized based on the issue and challenges of globalization in relation to traditional and contemporary period. This is given credence in explaining developmental problems in Nigeria. Therefore, what this chapter seeks to analyze using the part of globalization, with the presence of (era of entrepreneurship, industrial diversification, consumer goods and services, rise in per capital income, welfare and social security systems and increase in technological skills), are indicators that the country have what it needs to be

developed nation, yet there are huge gaps. These gaps are caused by the dependence programmes from globalization and schemes of the colonialist in the form of western neo-colonialism through “financial aids” and “foreign policies” among others.

Furthermore, considering the development as a result of globalization effects, it creates big concern on what is the problem of Nigerian state in terms of development? One of the problems of the country as identified by Edgadju (2007) is that ‘when a new government was achieved in the face of the colonial power, the traditional society, or both in combination - its political leaders were tempted to go on with the familiar game of politics and power rather than to turn promptly to the domestic tasks of globalization’. Lawal (2006) stated, that ‘corruption is the core reason behind Nigerian underdevelopment’. Nigeria underdevelopment by Lawal (2006) is the siphoning off natural resources into foreign banks. Continuously, corruption is still holding the nations development to a standstill. Apart from the recovery of stolen funds, another problem of underdevelopment in the contemporary times associated with the recession the country faces manifesting in the Nigerian foreign exchange. Even with the creation of two anti-corrupt agencies, political corruption has been blamed for the continued underdevelopment of Nigeria (Lawal, 2006).

5. Colonialism Vs Nigeria: Political Institutional Role

Dependency in form of globalization is a role enjoyed mostly by the financial organizations who give out finances and states who borrow based on the profits of capitalism. As Oni, Gupta, Omoniyi, Adegbija and Awonusi (2004) noted, underdeveloped of Nigeria is largely a product of the western foreign policies. Nwolise (1998) made this known through the colonial historical aspect and the contemporary globalization-dependence instituted by the policies and financial institutions of the colonial rulers. The colonial historical aspect showcases the traditional form of globalization through colonialism, trade export, commercial and financial capital in alliance with the state, colonialist state dominated the economic relations of the Europeans and the colonies by the means of trade monopoly with colonial monopoly of land, mines, and manpower based on feudalism. At the post-war period, Iwara (2004) noted that, technology in globalization consolidated based on multinational corporations who invest in industries geared to the internal market of underdeveloped Nigeria. Thus, globalization limits the underdeveloped because, a great part of accumulated surplus was sent abroad in the form of profits, which limits internal consumption and possibilities of reinvestment. For Iwara (2004),

the globalization of underdeveloped Nigeria was upgraded to existence of financial resources in foreign currency for the purchase of machinery and processed raw materials not produced domestically which limits the export sector and service relations.

This globalization conditioned the international relations, internal structures, orientation of production, and forms of capital accumulation, reproduction of the economy with the social and political structure of the state. The key differentiation among the colonial historical dependence with globalization is that, foreign exchange on foreign currency is the neo-colonialization mechanism and structures the dominant countries or world powers subjugate and exploit underdeveloped countries while preserving the traditional export sector. For everything regarding production and export for the growth of the economy is largely dependent on western financial policies.

When Nigerian state borrows loans, several policies are in places to know if the finances are used appropriately for what they are meant for. If that is the case, and the international communities with "so much financial aid" assisting Nigeria should also take the initiative in making sure such things like refineries in Nigeria is built to reduce globalization-dependency, but capitalism by the West will not want to align with such. Building these refineries will enable and increase the country's gross domestic product. Eschewing this idea based on avoidance of meddling with state sovereignty's affairs is encouraging more dependency on western financial institutions which informs that underdevelopment is also directly or indirectly supported by the powers controlling the financial organizations.

Iwara (2004) further stated that 'the unequal and combined character of capitalist development at the international level is reproduced internally in an acute form; the productive system in the underdeveloped Nigeria is essentially determined by the western internal relations. The industrial and technological structure responds more closely to the interest of the multinational corporations than to internal developmental needs. Attempts to analyze backwardness as a failure to assimilate more advanced models of production or to modernize are nothing than ideology disguised as science...Thus, alleged backwardness of underdeveloped Nigerian economies is not because of integration with capitalism but that the most powerful obstacles to their full development comes from the ways in which it is joined to this international system and its laws of development' Iwara (2004).

Omoweh (2000) sums it up that, Nigeria has lost power due to illusions which are: that-self-government is independence, and that colonialism is over, in other words, colonialism is still very much functional in different dimensions as wolves in a sheep skin and Nigeria is not economically independent. In other words, the 'world market' of the imperialists dictates what we sell and what we buy and at what price; which is championed by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank; through their dictate, of economic and social policies, their corporations dominate our production, commerce and subordinate our economic activities to serve the imperialists.

6. The Case Study: Nigeria

Some of the reasons mostly bandied around for Nigeria underdevelopment have run their course. The reasons, adduced for colonialism, have since expired. Like Nigeria, China, Korea, India, Malaysia, and Brazil were colonized but after their independence, by genuine patriotism, sheer determination, forthrightness and selflessness they have grown a shade better (Ejiogu, 2011). Some of the problem undermining Nigerian problems is primordial. These problems are enshrined in tribalism, ethnocentrism and corruption. Contrarily to these views, Aghahowa and Ukpebor (1999) opined and identified the political economy system as the cause of Nigeria underdevelopment. In their opinion, politics is a product of the social life and therefore the social consciousness of a society, state and nation is paramount to the political decisions.

For example, in Nigerian society whatever decision that is made at the local level extends to the state level and consequently manifest at choices that are made at the national level. In the Nigerian issue the problem of tribalism and ethnocentrism plays out at the national level. This is based on the heterogeneous nature of the country. Therefore, can one then rightfully conclude that the heterogeneous nature and diversification of the country is a curse to the country? What then can we talk about nations that are heterogeneous in nature and yet successful with their level of development? According to Ukwu (1988) the problems ravaging Nigeria as a state in terms of its politics, economy, education, unstable situations, religions, cultural settings, etc. are all indices of backwardness in the country. In other words, these problems are expected to manifest as the state is transforming itself. Ukwu (1988) stated that in Nigeria, there are certain problems that are inimical to the growth of the country and looks like it can never be addressed, even if it can, it will take longer years to achieve.

This position Nigeria on the status quo of underdevelopment and it is these underdevelopment issues that inhibit the growth of the country. The government officials in Nigeria revealed that most of the workers in the public and civil services are idle and lots of paper works are done with little developmental project implementation in the society; the few projects that are implemented are stifled up by the people (high cadres) in charge of funds dispensation to run the projects smoothly. This is also done by patronage in forms of (tribalism, classism, god-fatherism, son of the soil, regionalism and political partyism). These trends and patterns bedevil the country development. Intelligent, patriotic, selfless and well-meaning Nigerians need to take back the country from thieves and corrupt political leaders whose only interest in joining politics is to give dubious and ill-gotten wealth some form of legitimacy. This charge is not as simple as it is written but it is necessary though and worth the sacrifice for the growth of the country. Many politicians were former thugs and they kill to remain in corridor of power. Arguing on the precept of Usoro (1997) traditional period of globalization one could link his expression on traditional period of development but again, in Nigerian societies, traditionalism is *sine qua non*-to development. Thus, it serves as an arbiter for state development and “No country in this global world can develop outside its culture,” and indigenous religion is one of them (Yunusa, 2009).

Another cause of Nigerian underdevelopment is the presence of bad institutions on political, social and economic spheres. Institutions provide the incentive structure of an economy; as that structure evolves, it shapes the direction of economic change towards growth, stagnation, or decline (Okonkwo, 2007). Without effective institutions, capitalism through investment and profit that increases the economy of a state will not be encouraged. Okonkwo (2007) submits that bad institutions generate high transactions costs. For there to be good institutions, political stability and rule of contracts must be present in the state (Okonkwo, 2007). For Nigeria, the institutions are not effective as it should; they have been compromised at different levels such as their dependency on external aids to function.

Buttressing this, Nnamdi (2012) explicates further, that through the open veins of its still-colonial economies, Nigeria is being robbed of billions every year by the multinationals. The Global Financial Integrity (GFI) (2016) informs that, multinational companies removed more than \$854 Billion from Nigeria by Illicit Financial Flows from 1970 to 2016. GFI (2016), estimates that the loss could be as high as \$1.8 trillion. This loss is a principal reason why

Nigerian society has remained poor. Thus, the result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world (Akorede 2010). Also, Akpan, (2003) noted that, bad leadership and governance experienced in Nigeria is blamed on the colonial institutions where the leaders received their education and training. In other words, you cannot blame an individual for bad leadership or governance without equally blaming the institutions that shaped their consciousness in address problems in the society. Thus, colonial rule set the precedence for political oppression and sowed the seed of corruption in Nigeria (Chikendu, 2004).

Moreover, there are some ethnic groups associated with extravagance spending. These ethnic groups spend so much on unnecessary things even when they have little or no means of income. For example, large numbers of cultural groups are known for throwing expensive ceremonies even when they do not have the finances for such ceremonies. Some go borrow money from the banks for ceremonies and spend some good years of their life paying debt. This trend is found in some ethnic groups within the country where the contemporary society has copied such extravagant spending. At the political sector, politicians in Nigeria pride and stock themselves with exotic and expensive cars while the developmental projects are suffering. This is unconnected with their huge salaries, allowances and monumental benefits. A typical example is the procurement and debate of the type of cars the Nigerian senators want in the senate, when there are other developmental projects the money could be channeled to. In addition, in the western world, development is largely owed to research output, but in Nigeria, the case is different. There is a huge gap between governance and academics. Research output are barely encouraged and used. Most of the political leaders in governance do not reckon with the academician. They play the game of politics. Thus, all the research been done with advocacies and policies, on how to develop the country rest in the literature and are used only for academic purpose.

Finally, the young leaders' orientation is very low. It has been observed that, contemporary Nigerian youths do not contribute intellectually to development. This problem is largely owed to the kind of political education system provided by the government. National Orientation Agencies in Nigeria are poorly equipped with research instruments. Having observed the kind of political education system over the years, it is notable to see Nigerian future leaders

contributing nothing to the development of the society. In other words, very few young leaders engage in practical situations with what is learnt during their years as emerging youth due to lack of rigorous and challenging resources. The few ones, who out of their own struggle attain the level critical reasoning and application in addressing issues in the societies, do not get the required support to broaden and apply strategies for development. Due to this, youths are then driven by materialism and religion. The core problems of underdevelopment in Nigeria are not religion or ethnicity/culture but the Nigerian politics as it is practiced by her political leaders. Though, religion and culture is double edge sword depending on its application on the society, yet, the country's underdevelopment is largely, a direct causal effect of the actions of the political leaders. These actions manifest in looting and embezzlement from the country's resources meant to address underdevelopment in the country. In other words, corruption has always been the order of the day.

For example, one vital factor which can move the country's economy in aiding development is the purposeful denial of the availability of crude oil refineries in Nigeria. There is no sense in depending on external funds from the international communities' organizations, such as the World Bank and the IMF when these refineries can be built to reduce dependency from funding organizations. No better name suits its well than corruption. As a matter of fact, corruption is the religion of most political leaders in Nigeria.

7. Alternative Framework for the Country

Building on the intelligentsia developmental structures in Nigeria, there is the need to re-evaluate and reconstitute governmental political constitutions for inclusiveness. There are structures of inclusiveness in place in the government such as the Federal Character system in Nigeria, but the question is how effective are these systems in addressing developmental problems at the grass root level and not mere allocation of portfolios to politicians at national levels? For there to be a meaningful development, the issue of development should start at the grass root level, a bottom-top approach is very necessary. When people are carried along in societies by their leaders, resentments and agitations will not be a main problem among the people, as these variables are the motivating factors of violent conflict in societies.

In mitigating these effects, realistic and developmental ideologies should be encouraged for the young leaders who are the base of the country development. This can be done in several ways, ranging from vast supportive youth empowerment programmes, the overhaul of existing

multi-track diplomacy to address issues in the country. The problems of internet fraud in Nigeria are a direct consequence of unemployment. The young leaders find solace in such practices to fend for themselves and their families with back up statement/expressions. In other words, you must know someone at the top hierarchy or a politician to get a job. This then undermines the quality of the job that is carried out, the good ones with good qualifications and skills for the positions who can make changes in the society through their jobs are then alienated and some of them leave the continent to advanced countries in search of places that they can earn a living and become useful to the society resulting in brain drain. Internal and external problems causing underdevelopment should be mapped out and addressed simultaneously.

Concurrently, industrialization is still low in Nigeria, as a matter of fact; Nigeria is more consumers than producers. This kind of attitude towards state development should be revisited. The investors are scared away by the unfriendly and unstable business environment with poor infrastructures. According to Charles Soludo the UNCTAD report released in Geneva on January 17, 2011 says that “foreign direct investment (FDI) into Nigeria dropped by 62% in 2010 (from \$6 billion in 2009 to \$2.3 billion in 2010) again the worst in many years, and even worse than during the global crisis. While developing and transition economies increased their FDI inflows by 10% in 2010, Nigeria’s FDI fell by a whopping 62 %” (Soludo, 2011). This problem ought to be solved in order for the country to join the comity of developed nations. Much has been described in the literature on ways to address corruption with little or no significant result in Nigeria. To reduce or eliminate corruption in Nigerian society for development, there are two prescriptive strategies that can be adopted. These prescriptions are traditional and democratic prescription.

Traditional prescription: is reverting to Nigerian’s Old Testament tradition of addressing corruption and theft. This will be successful if the Nigerian traditional institutional deities such as ‘*Amadioha*’ (Igbos) and ‘*Ayelala*’, ‘*Ogun*’, and ‘*Sango*’, (Yoruba) in Nigeria, have its potency and power as claimed to be. Where the western institutions have failed to address corruption in Nigeria, then traditional means should be employed. Though, Westerner’s may not understand or believe in this kind of prescription and seen as fictitious and paganism, but this prescription is for Nigerians only, for they understand their tradition and society better.

For democratic prescription: the fact that some people will be against traditional punitive measures based on claims that it is 'barbaric' and democracy supports, freedom of religious

practice, then, heavy punitive measures like China should be imposed. The elimination of corruption and corrupt individuals is the key to Nigerian development but for these prescriptions to work, Nigerians must come to a consensus on what they want.

8. Conclusion

The Nigerian state is not the problem; it is the people who run it. For there to be meaningful steps in addressing the problems of underdevelopment in Nigeria, Nigerians must give up “clientelism”, the demonization and diminution of the Nigerian state, Rents, patronage in forms of (tribalism, classism, son of the soil, god-fatherism, regionalism, political partyism, immunity syndrome etc.), nepotism, and policy inconsistency. Nigeria experience in this study has shown few problems of underdevelopment. Nigeria can work out its greatness with lesser complication if they want to. In attempt to deal with the problems of underdevelopment, true Nigerism is important. This involves addressing the power illusion questions such as, independence of self-government that colonialism is over; Nigerian Unity is the solution to our problems.

Nigerians need to start investing seriously on the resources they have been made to abandon in the pursuit of development based on dependence on Westerners. The Nigerian political systems need a total overhaul, create and institute systems that works for the good will of the Nigerians. This is a herculean task which needs to be addressed bearing in mind that the bourgeoisie and ‘powers that be’ will not stand aloof to watch Nigerians slip away from their grasp. The colonialist network and agenda is intrinsically crafted in a way that makes untangling and disengagement difficult, yet, it can be done. Whatever, method or principle needed to achieve this agenda, there is the need of Nigerian’s reorientation starting with their, attitudes, perceptions and changes within for Nigerian’s development. If the internal problems are solved, the problems of underdevelopment and dependency will be half solved. Weakness compels strength. In other words, the weakness of Nigeria needs as all the strength it can afford to address underdevelopment.

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