

UNDERSTANDING NIGERIAN DEVELOPMENT CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Development crisis in Nigeria is traceable to the colonial era. Devastating colonial legacies were inherited by the emerging Nigerian elites. The seed of development crisis which has today spread like wildfire in Nigeria was laid during the period of colonialism, the period that was characterized by different crises such as marriage of inconvenience (Amalgamation of 1914), disarticulation of the economy, the colonial economic structure also created a fertile ground for public corruption through the imposition of tax system as well as exploitative scheme of the European that was highly institutionalized, and leadership question in the country. However, Nigeria is one of the countries that has been experiencing violence of various magnitudes such as civil war; coups and counter coups as well as political instability that characterized Nigerian political system since independence. Development crisis in Nigeria has become a recurring phenomenon and despite the atmosphere of crisis created during the colonial era, the leadership problem has become a major issue in the post-colonial Nigeria. The fundamental question is this, since Nigeria's predicament cannot be attributed to colonialism alone, what are the other factors responsible for the country's development crisis? In line with this question, this paper examines different development crisis in Nigeria ranging from colonial period to post colonial era. Nigeria's predicament cannot be absolutely attributed to colonialism alone, the leadership problem and corruption of the highest order that have become Nigerian political culture in the post colonial era will continue to fuel the fire of development crisis and even the recent Boko-Haram insurgency that marked the new phase of development crisis in the country is one of the justification for leadership failure.

Keywords: Corruption; Colonialism; Crisis; Decolonization; Development; Nigeria.

Introduction

Development crisis has become a reoccurring issue in Nigeria coupled with the series of contradiction inherent in every epoch of Nigerian society; the country has passed through different stages ranging from primitive to slave society, colonialism, decolonization and neo-colonialism. Presently, the crisis of development is the most serious problem facing Nigeria. This is because the continent remained largely underdeveloped despite the huge mineral and human resources, several decades after the end of colonialism, most parts of Africa is still fighting with the problems such as basic infrastructure facilities, insecurity of live and property. (Alumona; 2009:1)For example, Nigeria is the most populous African country and the country reflects most of activities in Africa.

Nigeria earned around US\$500 billion in Oil revenue since the 1970 yet remains mired in poverty, unemployment, burgeoning domestic debt, and infrastructural squalor, abysmal health and educational services and attendant social frustration and unrest (Suberu; 2007:21) Nigeria reflects most parts of Africa in that it inherited arbitrary state boundaries from its colonial age and was under military authoritarianism for most part of its existence as a nation, said of Nigeria that “it earned around US\$500 billion in oil revenues since the 1970s, yet remains mired in poverty”(Alumona, 2009:2)Barely, some years after independence, hope and expectations were high on the new emerging state that has been under the stranglehold of colonialism for many decades given its huge resource endowment-human and material resources

In buttressing the above analysis, Omotola (2001) asserts that of these are not heady days for Nigeria, heralded at independence in 1960 as a missing giant at both regional and global levels, given its huge resource endowment- human and material, the country has not only failed to actualize its potentials, but also appears to have effectively squandered its opportunities for greatness, ignominiously seated at the very nadir of development. The quest for stability and development is, without doubt, the Holy Grail for many third world countries, a never ending, tedious, yet elusive, search for that condition under which these countries would be able to

develop institutions and structures with the capacity to ensure economic growth, equitable distribution of national wealth, political stability and accountability.

As daunting as these may appear, still it is possible to argue that there is certain level which all countries, developing and even those that are de-developing, aspire to reach. Each country aspires to high quality of life for its citizenry, strong and diversified economic base, internal cohesion and political stability. How and to what level these aspirations are attained depend on a number of factors, mostly internal. For one, resources, both natural and human are critical but the ability to harness these and to utilize them for the common good is principally the domain of technological expertise, administrative capacity as well as political leadership.

Consequently, a strong accountable leadership is necessary. Nigeria is a practical example of a country with abundant human and natural resources yet her citizens wallow in abject poverty, the problem is multidimensional, encompassing a variety of issues that have been generally codenamed the national question. There is growing increase in population explosion and a corresponding decrease in economic productivity and the country has turned into veritable incubation center for the emergence of violent anti- state groups and their ideology, to a greater part, is fuelled by years of the state's neglect and failure to transfer the aspiration of its people for meaningful, purposeful and qualitative life. (Alkanda; 2002:3)

Basically, Nigeria cannot be explained outside the impact of colonialism, neocolonialism and dependency .The present condition of the third world countries are not in least analogous to the condition of the industrialized countries in the earlier stages of their economic development. These present condition of the third world countries is the effect of the slave trade, pillage, colonialism and unequal exchange (Ake, 1982 : 153) African development is possible only on the bases of radical break with the international capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of the underdevelopment of Africa. (Rodney, 1987:298)

Nigeria development crisis can be explained from threes perspective, colonial legacy, corrupt leadership and democracy leads to economic growth, the colonial legacy perspective argues that the problem of underdevelopment is traceable to the origin of colonial authority and the

exploitative nature of Nigerian colonial and post colonial experience. Similarly, the concept of leadership believes that corrupt and mismanagement on the part of leadership has been the bane of development in Nigeria. Achebe (1983) analysis of the leadership problem in Nigeria is located within this framework, lack of effective management of human and material resource as a result of leadership problem in the country. This paper examines the etymology of Nigerian development crisis ranging from colonialism to post colonial Nigeria.

Understanding Development

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well – being (Rodney; 1982:1) Development is a relative and mostly contested concept (Hettne, 2010) Nevertheless, it is possible to arrive at some specific indicators of development that are widely acceptable. For instance, it is easy to argue that every human society aspires to strong, efficient and dynamic economic and political institutions that anticipate the yearnings of their people and respond to them accordingly and promptly. It is also possible to argue that in every society there are minimum expectations which all members share. These include access to functional health facilities, access to safe drinking water, universal qualitative education, and equal opportunity for all members in public affairs where competition based on merit is upheld over and above other considerations. All these are universal values that transcend cultural and political boundaries (Aliyu, 2013:4)

Thus, if there is anything actually relative about our conception of development that may largely be because of perspectives from which one chooses to understand it. This is why students so often try to isolate the elements of national development and talk of them as individual topics. Thus, one hears about cultural, social, economic, political, and even religious development as if it is possible to provide a proper analysis of development without integrating these and considering development from a holistic perspective. For instance, Gopinath (2008:91) argues that development can only be measured in monetary terms, and consequently, a developing country is one in which “there is a significant potential to raise the per capita standard of living” of its people. This, no doubt, is the hangover from the intellectual segregation that dominates

developmental literature in the 1960s and 1970s when most models of development drew their theoretical sustenance from classical economics.

However, economic growth was equated with development and was generally considered as the fundamental objective of the decolonized states of Asia and Africa (Peshkin & Cohen, 1967:23) Salmen, (1991) even in these isolationist conceptions, it is possible to discern an overriding understanding in which the notion of a qualitative transformation occurs in space and time through the trickle-down effect. Therefore, development is no more than a description of a particular state or physical condition in which there is a corresponding progress in both the physical growth and maturity of a particular object. Applied to human societies, development simply refers to a state, condition or stage, which entails positive transformation in both quantity and quality of life for all members of a particular society.

Where there is corresponding decline or retrogression in the quality of life for a significant portion of the population, we describe that as the state of under-development (Rodney, 1972). In effect, development and under-development connotes a relational state in which one mirrors the exact absence of the other. Mirakhor and Askari (2010:21) write that development means “quantitative growth, qualitative improvement, and expansion in the capabilities, capacities, and choices of individuals, groups or states”. Similarly, Tisdell (1988) writes that development is “the modification of the bio-sphere and the application of human, financial, living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of life”. A distinct thread that permeates these conceptions of development concerns the recognition that improvement on the quality of life of all members of human society is the fundamental objective as well as the primary goal of development.

The point here is the emphasis on empowerment and skill building among members of the society to be able to transform their living conditions. The best, succinct, and analytical conception on development remains that given by Dudley Seers who raises fundamental socio-economic and political questions in his definition and seeks to relate them to human development. According to Seers (1972:23) The questions to ask about a country’s development are... What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from

higher levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development,’ even, if per capita income doubled. (Aliyu, 2013:5)

The Era of Colonialism in Nigeria

It is not possible for us as Nigerians to have a proper grasp of the nature of religious and communal clashes, riots, conflicts and violence in Nigeria today, without understanding our primordial, religious, cultural and colonial past, what we were before the arrival of Islam, the colonial masters and Christian missions, and what we became during and after the Islamic, colonial and Christian, and post-colonial eras. It is not possible for us to solve contemporary religious and communal clashes, riots, conflicts and violence in Nigeria without correcting the inherited primordial, religious and cultural, and colonial structures and negative values and redressing these legacies.

Nigeria is a country in Africa that has experienced colonial rule and the present situation in the country can only be examined from historical antecedent and prior to the period of colonialism in Nigeria there were different system of governments based on culture and values of Nigerian society. As a result of industrial revolution in Europe and perhaps the outward expansion of capitalism beyond the border of Europe that led to economic subjugation of African countries as well as political subjugation, colonialism took place in Africa and the foundation of development crisis was successfully put in place (Blanda; 2001:12) The history of Nigerian development crisis started from colonial period as many scholars are of the opinion that African predicament can only be attributed to colonialism and base on comparative standards, Africa today is underdeveloped in relation to western Europe and a few other parts of the world; and that the present position has been arrived at, not by the separate evolution of Africa on the one hand and Europe on the other (Rodney;1983:37)

The economic relevance of the country was used as veritable tool to push development in Europe. The exploitative scheme of the Europeans became deeply institutionalized and efficient

administrative system was established for the purpose of economic exploitation and this largely explains many of the problems faced by African nations after independence. The root of Nigerian predicament is traceable to colonial era, in fact the seed of development crisis was sown during the colonial era, there were various exploitative scheme designed, the traditional order was disrupted and there were imposition of money tax on peasants which was paid in European currencies. It will be misleading to analyze Nigerian development crisis outside colonialism and even the amalgamation of 1914 that took place under the colonial rule has been regarded as a marriage of inconvenience (Bennis, 2003:14)

In the words of Ajayi & Oshewolo there are diverse historical factors that have impacted and still impacting on the crisis. Under colonialism, the exploitative scheme of European deeply institutionalized. The colonial rule was characterized by disarticulation or incoherence. A disarticulated economy is one whose parts or sectors are not complementary. In a coherent economy, there is regional and sectoral complementary and reciprocity (Ajayi & Oshewolo, 2013:5) unfortunately, the reverse was the case under colonialism in Africa. The economic structure that emerged from the dismantled local structure did not only shape, it also lacked focus and the effort of colonizer was not to promote coherent development (Ake, 1982; 13)

Colonialism served as a deterrent to development not only in Nigeria but Africa as a whole and looking at all the factors inherent in colonialism, it will be discovered that Nigeria has been put on the path of reoccurring crisis. The African continent reveals very fully the working of the law of uneven development of societies and because of the impact of colonialism and cultural imperialism, Europeans and Africans themselves in the colonial period lacked due regard for unique features of African culture (Rodney; 1983; 12) The relation between the degree of destitution of people of Africa and the length and nature of exploitation they had to endure is evident. African remains marked by the crimes of the slave (Ahmed; 1962:27)

Moreso, Colonial economic structures created a fertile ground for public corruption, the seed of corruption which has today spread like hurricane across Africa was laid during colonialism (Ajayi & Oshewolo;20013:9) This was demonstrated through the introduction of taxation, and divide and rule. Because of the impact of colonialism and cultural imperialism, Europeans and

Africans themselves in the colonial period lacked due regard for the unique feature of Nigerian culture, not only that, during the era of colonialism Nigeria fell within that part of the international capitalist economy from which surplus was drawn to feed the metropolitan sector, colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so called mother country (Rodney,1983:177) Ake, asserts that, it was colonialism which monetized African economies, monetization of an economy does not simply mean the presence of money as a means of exchange, monetisation implies the pervasiveness of money as a medium of exchange in the economy at large, the development of the attributes of what we now call the modern monetary system, including the credit system. The pre-colonial economies were only marginally monetized, large sector of the economy still depended on barter in some form or the another, and there was hardly any wage labour (Ake, 1982: 33) With pre-colonial economy currencies displaced, and the European currencies firmly installed in the country, the real task of monetization began, and this was mainly the task of making the new medium of exchange thoroughly pervasive in the economy.

Not only that, colonial trade tended to destroy the tradition craft in Nigeria, because it flooded the market with the substitutes which were cheaply produced but considered exotic. In the other hand, foreign investments increased the integration of the Africa economies into the western capitalist mode of production. As Western capital flowed into the colony, capitalism spread. And as capitalism spread and capitalist- related institutions took root, the economies of the colony became more compatible with Western economies and this aided integration (Panter, 2014:12)

Basically, the era of colonialism was characterized by different hurdles and the foundation of modern development crisis was laid during the period as Ake puts it, the period was characterized by disarticulation or incoherence, disarticulation of economy implies one whose parts or sectors are not complementary and in a coherent economy there is regional and / or sectoral complementary and reciprocity(Ake, 1982:13) Both neo colonialism and dependency are product of imperialism, dependency was created during the colonial era by making sure that Nigeria were made to be the producer of raw material needed by the colonial masters without making any effort to be self dependent.

There were various contradiction inherent in colonialism such as disarticulation of economy, institutionalization of corruption, integration of colonies to global capitalist system, financial dependence, disarticulation of transport system .The problem in Nigeria today is not a new phenomenon, the recurring crisis of various magnitude started during the colonial era and when Nigeria attained its political independence in 1960, devastating colonial legacies were inherited by Nigerian elites and after the independence, hope and expectations of Nigerians were so high that the emerging country will enhance the living standard of its people but only to be disappointed coupled with various crises in the country right from 1960.

Both Neocolonialism and dependency are product of imperialism, dependency was created during the colonial era by making sure that African were made to be the producer of raw materials needed by the colonial masters without making any effort to be self dependent, colonialism occurred to maintain and sustain imperialism. It is on this note that dependency theorist argued that the world economy has created unequal relationship, dependency is a situation whereby the policies that are carried out in a particular country are those imported from the western countries. A situation where local initiative are not applied in the policy formulation and this is a category where Nigeria belong (Haderson; 2008:12)

Post Colonial experience

The period of decolonization in Nigeria was greeted with much optimism. Therefore, Nigeria march to sovereign state was a conquered one, marked by anti- colonial struggles, crises, coups, counter- coups and a thirty- month agonizing civil war between 1967 and 1970. According to Nwabueze, Nigeria has passed through five different phases, era of colonial autocracy and absolutism, that is , period of formal colonialism till October 1 1960, when the country gained ‘flag’ independence (b) emergence of constitutional democracy- (1960-1966) (c) the return of military autocracy and absolutism- (1966-1979); (d) restoration of constitutional democracy- (1979- 1983) and (e) second coming of military and absolutism- (1983-1989) (Cited in Ojo; 2006:2)

The period between 1950 and 1960 was regarded as golden age in Africa .Most of African countries attained their political independence during the period and it was surprising that after colonial masters departed from the continent most of African countries emerged as trouble zone, most especially Nigeria. The post colonial era in the country has been characterized with different crises, ranging from civil war, coups and counter coups, the annulment of June 12 presidential election as well as failure of Nigerian leaders to enhance the living standard of its people makes the struggle for development to be an endless one and Nigerian predicament can be analyzed from different perspectives.

Nigeria is not just one country in Africa. She is also not just one country in the global setting. She is the most populous country in Africa as well as one of the best resource- endowed countries in the world. Her affairs are a concern to others continentally and globally. Nigeria's journey to the wilderness started on January 15, 1966.Nigerians applauded the departure because they were unsuspecting that the worst democratic government would be more citizen-friendly than the best military government. They experienced a wide variety of dictatorships. Some were tolerable; some administered sweetened poison, which resulted in systemic decay. Others were flagrantly uncaring and dismissive of citizen rights. It later became necessary to fight the messiahs of 15, 1966. (Ayoade, 2006)

The Nigerian economy since the post independent era could be described as neo- colonial economy, which served the interest of the ruling elites at the expense of the majority. The state, foreign entrepreneurs and few wealthy Nigerians such as politicians, business tycoons, military officers, top echelons of the Nigerian police and contractors dominate the economy which has been ossified by years of rigid control and inflexibility (Adesina, 1997) The Nigerian entrepreneurs could develop only within the narrow limits defined by the state. Such limits are characterized by inadequate infrastructures, high taxation, lack of funding of private initiatives, and threats to lives and properties. The traditional socio- economy system dwindled as the state led economy came to limelight. Arising from this cultural lag is underdevelopment of labour with low skills and incomplete knowledge of productions. Basically, the colonial and neo- colonial political economy set in motion for socio- economic conditions, which make human

development a mirage (Lawal, 1997) Obviously, socio- economic hardships in Nigeria remain despite different regimes of development programs (Akeem,2013:3)

Nigeria experienced consistently sharp socio- economic depression since the oil boom era partly due to corruption and mismanagement of public funds (Oladele,2002) Despite the oil boom of the 1970s, the crash of agricultural productivity in the 1980 adversely affected Nigerians (Chege,2004) The deteriorated economy threatened many Nigerians and imposed greater responsibilities on them on a daily basis. During the petrol crises, young entrepreneurs provided black market fuel and often marked up high premium over the official cost. With this trend almost all segments of the Nigerian society were touched with suffering and frustration. Children labored to survive and augment family income. Experiences of unfortunate children produced Development crises and social –Economic Hardship in Nigeria (Akeem, 2013:12)

The socio economic indicators of development in Nigeria were ranked below average for developing countries. Over 50 % of the population lived in absolute poverty with 52 years life expectancy and high infant mortality. Nigeria economy stop flourishing since the 1980s partly due to poor implementation of extant developmental policies .This trend generated development crises that rendered Nigerians vulnerable to socio- economic hardships. As a result of this government has embarked on different developmental policies without any impact on Nigerians. The developmental policy of the 1960s and 1970s failed to yield a desired results as well as the National Development Planning (NDP) that was designed to make Nigeria a united, strong and self reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society: a land full of bright and full opportunities for all citizens and a free and democratic society.Socio-economic situations of Nigerians clearly showed that the second NDP produced unintended consequences that diminished their living standards. There were many programmes that recorded huge failure in Nigeria as a result of political instability, corruption, and exclusion of majority of poor farmers in Nigeria. The Operation Feed the Nation and other agricultural programs similarly suffered defeats, the government additionally set out the Green Revolution plan in 1980.This plan aimed to achieve self-sufficiency in food provision by 1985 when the fourth National Development Plan terminated, this plan emphasized the need for comprehensive development of

the rural areas and other project while Green Revolution had a much more comprehensive character than the OFN (Akeem,2013;12) Consequently, the adoption of the structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria was followed by high incidence of poverty and inefficient infrastructure such as irregular power supply, inadequate water provision, erratic telecommunication services and poor transportation networks (Essein;2000)

The establishment of the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) in 1972 was necessary to cushion the effect of food development Crises and Socio-Economic Hardships in Nigeria but there was shortage of food, which became apparent during and after the Civil War in Nigeria (1967-1970). The civil war resulted in colossal loss of lives and properties as well as failure of the first development plan in post – colonial Nigeria. All these policies have not been able to produce a desired result as the country battle with crises of various magnitudes. With the political transformation from military autocracy and absolutism in 1999, the citizens were so optimistic that the new system will uphold their expectations. President Olusegun Obasanjo was the first president of the fourth republic and he recognized the socio-economic malady in the country while he also embarked in different reforms to enhance the living standard of people in the country.

Prior to 1999, Nigeria has also appeared among the top most corrupt countries in the world for many consecutive years and this made the task of development to be a mirage, . As a result of this the president established Economic and Financial Crime Commission as well as Independence Corrupt Practice Commission. Worse still, the restoration of democracy in 1999 has led to an unpardonable height of kleptocracy. Funds intended for developments have been diverted into private use by political office holders. (Oshewolo and Olanrewaju, 2011:13). Not only that, the government also embarked on different reforms in banking sector to enhance the living standard of the people also, the pregnancy of debt accumulation with the Paris Club was also aborted during Obasanjo’s regime through various economic policies.

President Yar’adua did not live long in the office to actualize his seven point agenda, he also recognized the crisis in the Niger Delta through the establishment of Amnesty Progrmme as well

as Ministry of Niger Delta to install peace in the oil producing states. The death of Yar'adua led to the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan who is currently confronting security challenges and crises of various magnitudes in the Northern part of the country. This country is experiencing various terrorist attacks and activities making Nigeria ungracefully popular among the comity of nations. Boko -Haram is a made in Nigeria terrorist group that has become a menace that everyone dread and fears because of the dimensions its activities have taken ;from just an ordinary religious sect to notorious terrorist group and despite the effort of the government and strategies, the Islamic sect continue to attack in different forms.

Concluding Remarks

The frequency of religious and communal clashes, riots, conflicts and violence since 1980 to the present has reached endemic proportions. This is a reflection of a national crisis, a nation at the brink of collapse, and a nation in search of its own soul. Nigerians are deeply concerned and worried about this and have begun to device ways and means of addressing the problem. Some Nigerians believe that Nigeria's current crises, conflicts and violence are politically, ethnically and economically induced and its solution must be rooted in these same social factors.

More so, the political culture of Nigeria is still primitive and undeveloped. Nigeria seems not at the present to have any national political solution. No political agenda for creating a *New Nigeria*. So they waste their time with irrelevant political theories. Again, the economy of Nigeria is so underdeveloped that Nigeria seems not to have any economic solution. No economic agenda for creating a *New Nigeria*. The cry for jobs, ruined education, unemployment, infrastructural decay and national unity cannot be realized by any means so long as Nigerians are still being chained, psyched and hypnotized by the evil and destructive forces of ethnocentrism and primordialism. Similarly, hypocrisy, corruption and religious bigotry have all conspired to rob Nigeria of any hope of being cured of its ethnic and regional leprosy. Hence, no amount of political, economic, or educational solution will re-create and re-make Nigeria, unless the dark and evil forces of ethnocentrism and primordialism are severely dealt with and routed

Nigerians need policies with practical manifestations not the policies that only exist on the pages of papers. Most of the policies in Nigeria always record failure than success, the structural Adjustment Programme brought more failure than success and it was a celebration of poverty and unemployment after the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme. The regime of Obasanjo also embarked on various policies with huge failure and lack of institutional framework. The Seven Point Agenda of Late President Yar'adua has become unrealistic proposal because of his sudden death and the failure of his successor to continue the legacy.

Yusufu (2013) rightly observed, Nigerians by and large have not had a proper diagnosis of their national crises, conflicts and violence and the need to finding their enduring historical social roots. All Nigerians, the ethnic, religious and regional groups have their own core values, their hidden authority codes that motivate, shape, mold and define the moral character, attitudes, behaviours and social and spiritual practices. Nigeria's core values are primary to understanding the reasons and/or the motivating factors for social crises, conflicts and violence.

In the final analysis, development crisis in Nigeria has become a reoccurring phenomenon and it is traceable to the colonial era but the problem that characterized the post colonial era in the country has become a subject of concern. Immediately after the departure of colonial master in Nigeria, the country emerged as the troubled zone; there were crises of various magnitudes such civil war, coups and counter coups, Niger Delta Crisis. Basically, Nigerian predicament cannot be attributed to colonialism alone, there are contemporary challenges facing the country as a result of leadership failure, corruption and the inability of the government to improve the living standard of its citizen. Not only that, considering the multiplicity nature of Nigerian society, there must be true reflection of federal character principle that will improve the economic condition of all Nigerians and the need for legitimate government that will promote the culture and value of Nigerian society.

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