

The Challenges of Individualism and Nation-Building in Nigeria -An Analysis from Social History

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Abstract

Introduction -The question of which comes first, - the society or the individual has been quixotic to scholars. Whether we view it from historical perspective, or from the perspective of studies in logic or even in governance, it has always been argumentative. We may liken the argument to the question of which comes first, the 'hen or the egg'? As soon as we come into the world our society gets to work to mould and socialize us from a mere biological being into the culture of our society, thereby we become, social beings. Anthropologists (commonly) believe that primitive man is more completely moulded by his society than the civilized man. He is thus less individualistic than the civilized man. There is an element of truth in this assertion. This is because nonsophisticated traditional communities are more homogenous and they provide for more opportunities for a far smaller diversity of individual occupations and skills than the advanced modern societies (Carr E.A. 1985 : 33).

Index terms— Anthropologists, Argumentative, Opportunities, Homogenous, Socialize.

1 Introduction

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Increasing individualism or individualization is a product of the advanced modern societies. However, it would be an error to assume that there is an antithesis between the process of individualization and the growing strength and cohesion of the society ??Carr, Ibid).

2 Carr rightly observes that:

The development of the society and the development of the individual go hand in hand, and condition each other. Indeed what we mean by a complex or advanced society is a society in which the inter-dependence of individual on one another has assumed advanced and complex forms. ??Carr, E.H. 1985 : 33).

It would be dangerous to assume that modern national communities have less power to mould the thought and character of its individual members and to create uniformity and conformity than the primitive tribal communities.

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3 Conceptual Framework

Individualism as a component part of an ideology has in practical terms been a driving force behind the growth, development and globalization of the capitalist economic system. In this work, I have attempted to examine how individualism have affected nation-building in Nigeria, especially, through the colonial and neo-colonial structures, policies and the enthronement of a dominant class that served as local partners to global capitalist hegemonic powers.

Laissezfaire, utilitarianism and individualism are products of the development of the capitalist economy in Europe. This is in turn linked with the growth of industrial revolution in Europe. Individualism began with the renaissance, reformation and restoration that took place in Europe. This culminated into the rise of Protestantism, the spirit of which assisted the development of the philosophy of capitalism, such as free trade, utilitarianism and human rights doctrines.

The rights of man and the citizen proclaimed by the French revolution were the rights of the individual. Individualism was the basis of the great nineteenth century philosophy of utilitarianism ??Carr, 1985 : 33) Montley refers to individualism and Utilitarianism as 'the religion of human happiness and well being' (quoted in Carr). He sees 'Rugged individualism' as the keynote of human progress. This idea is characteristic of scholars of his age and the stage of capitalist development of that epoch of history. What is important is to note that increased rate of individualization accompanied the rise of modern capitalist nations.

The capitalist revolution brought new social groups or elites to position of power. By the nineteenth century the growth and development of global capitalist economy had led to the incorporation and sup sumption of African economy under the global capitalist system.

4 III.

5 Colonial Rule

Colonial rule in Africa led to many far reaching consequences such as the disruption of the African economy, its incorporation into the global capitalist system. African nations became dependent and peripheral capitalist systems, and so on but we are concerned in this essay about the effect of colonial rule Colonial rule resulted in the creation of a new elite. Laissezfaire economics, African enterprise, coupled with opportunities for university and professional education were factors that contributed to the rise of the new social group, those we often refer to as the western educated elite.

This social group were bounded together by the provision of the liberal democratic tenets which is the political offshoot of the capitalist system. They are often referred to as the nationalists, political leaders etc. Their policies and programmes were tailored along the lines of the colonial masters.

6 IV. ation -uilding

After the attainment of political independence, these elites continued to use the divide-and-rule tactics of the colonial masters in their intra-class rivalry for power and control of resources. Thus it led to bitter politics using ethnic, religious and geographical diversities as weapons.

The members of this social group use all these natural diversities as weapons in achieving their individual interests, which is mainly to occupy positions of power and to control state resources.

In this, race for power is intertwined with the race for the control of wealth of the nation. Consequently every government programme and policies are geared towards the 'development' of individual and to enhance the wealth of the few privileged individuals within this class.

As I have observed elsewhere (Tijani, A. 2010), dependent capitalist economies are characterized by dialectical relations which make capitalist economies to have inherent contradictions. Capitalism inherently produces class structures within the economy. This class structures inherently have conflictual relations which are mainly intra and inter-class conflicts. It is also inherent for the system to have a dominant class, which forms a small proportion of the populace. This class controls the wealth of the land through their political power or through the large enterprises they own as individuals. As I said, all government policies and programmes are tailored to increase the opportunities of this class to increase their wealth, especially at the expense of the national wealth.

However, this class are also serving the interest of global capitalist system with headquarters at the metropolitan cities of Europe and America. They are thus local partners to global/international/multinational corporations. They are thus often referred to as Comprador Bourgeoisie.

The question that is germane to this discourse concerns the extent to which this system enhances nation-building or otherwise. To start with nation-building involves the development of state of harmony where ethnic, religious and other natural diversities do not lead to violent conflicts, and where the citizen view themselves first as a citizen rather than belonging to primordial units. It is where the distribution of national wealth is largely done with equity, social justice and common good. This shall invariably enhance high degree of national integration.

For Schermerhon (1970), integration is seen as a continuous process rather than a state of being, relative rather than all embracing corrective rather than self-subsistent, a matter of degree rather than an all or non-phenomenon, and correlative with conflict rather than a displacement of conflict.

In other words there is no system that is completely free of conflict as well as integrative elements. Therefore, nation-building problems in modern African nations cannot be divorced from the consequences of tenets of the capitalist economic system, colonial rule, the manipulative activities of the ruling elites and as far as this discourse is concerned we cannot divorce it from the effects of Laissezfaire economic system which goes along with individualism .

V.

7 Prospects and Set-Back of Individualism

The capitalist system in dependent capitalist countries like Nigeria, as said above has the elites in position of power. The units of production and distribution are largely in the hands of single individuals, 'the ideology of the new social order strongly emphasized the role of individual initiative in the social order' ??Carr 1961 : 35).

Many signs nowadays suggests that this ideology has run into various crises even in the western world, which was the focus of this ideology. For instance, the current debt crises in the European countries and the 'occupy movement' whereby the masses of Europe and America since last year have been protesting against the social evils of the ideology such as massive under-employment, unemployment and immiserazation.

When we speak in abstract terms, we may talk about the struggle between individual liberty and social justice, but in reality this is not a struggle between individual and the society, but between individuals that have formed a dominant powerful group and the rest of the society. The group using social and economic policies to promote their class/group interests at the expense of the society. They were interested not only in replacing the Europeans in leading positions of power and privilege, they were more interested in taking advantage of the inherent social disorder from the colonial era rather than transforming it. ??bijiwa, (1997 :195).

8 VI. he igeria xample a) Mixed Economy

For about thirty years after independence in 1960, Nigeria practised mixed economic system. That is, public enterprises existed side by side with privately owned enterprises. There was direct government investment in production and provision of public services such as the oil sector, Energy supply, Water supply, education, communication industry etc. In the seventies, there was the indigenisation of some foreign owned companies. This was done in order to provide services to the citizens, to control the economy of the nation; for national pride and for national security. Therefore by 1991, public enterprises proliferated and rose up to 1,500 throughout the country. Of this, the Federal Government owned about 600. ??Obasanjo, 1999).

These public enterprises owned by the states and central government were sources of finance for such governments during the First Republic, for example, the group of companies now known as the Odu'a Group of Companies were successfully established to finance the Action Group Government in the Western Region during the First Republic (Tijani, A.). By the early 1980s, these enterprises had become white elephant projects, consuming millions of naira without accruing profits and they became inefficient. The question is, what are the socio-economic factors that led to this situation?

The socio-economic situations that prevailed in the early 1980s is succinctly described in December, 1983 in the coup broadcast by Sanni Abacha.

I am referring to the hash intolerable condition under which we are now living. Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged, we have become a debtor and beggar nation. There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people. Health services are in shambles as our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics, without drugs, water and equipment. Our educational system is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Unemployment figures including graduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions. In some states, workers are being owed salary arrears of eight to twelve months. (The Guardian Newspaper, 1984)

The introduction of the 'Structural Adjustment Programme by the Babangida Administration in the second half of the 1980s worsened the economic situation. "Unemployment reached unprecedented levels with the continued retrenchment of workers resulting from rationalization of the public sector, privatization and commercialization of companies and parastatals" (Ayila, 2005 : 93).

The aftermath of the Structural Adjustment Programme introduced in September, 1986 by the Babangida administration led to mass loss of jobs, mass poverty and untold hardship and misery. All these led the people to become willing tools of the bourgeois class in their intra-class conflict which they portrayed as ethnic interests. Adedeji, (1999) observes:

The harsh economic realities of the nation often lead citizens to seek economic and social fulfilments within their primordial groupings, especially of ethnic and religions grouping. This would then make it possible to understand why citizens opt for their kinsmen and women to occupy political posts. That was why the location of local government headquarters and the election of local government Chairperson would lead to serious incessant crises such as Jos and Modakeke/Ife crises, the former took on ethnic and religious clothing. These ethnic and religious colouration almost eclipsed the fundamental cause which is the search for social and economic security by citizens. Why then did we have inefficiency in the public service? VII.

9 Privatization and Commercialisation Programme in Nigeria

The programme was adopted in Nigeria in the 1980s due to the inefficiency of the public corporations. An important question is why we had such gross inefficiency in the public sector of the Nigerian economy. We view this programme essentially been necessitated by the attempt to maximize economic benefits for the individually owned enterprises at the expense of the society. This is because as the chief executive of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces certainly has under his control, legal powers, instruments, institutions and machinery to curb inefficiency and effect sustainable growth and development of the entire economy.

The President, through his ministers controls the live wire of the Nigeria economy such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Nigerian Airways, the Customs Department, the Iron and Steel Industry, the Federal Ministries, Agencies and Parastatals. Others are the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Nigerian Telecommunication Services (NITEL) etc. Therefore, both directly and indirectly, the President has the power, the machinery and the instruments to arrest the inefficiency in public services and also to maintain sustainable growth and development.

In addition to all these, for the purpose of planning and monitoring the growth and development of the economy, the president has directly working with

10 Year

Mass poverty experienced by Nigerians over the years has also been identified as one of the potential factors responsible for the general high level of instability in the country. Invariably, this has found expression in ethnic and religious conflagration ??Adedeji, 1991).

him in the Presidency, Economic Advisers. In the presidential cabinet, there are giants in various academic fields, among whom are Professors and others with Doctorate degree with years of experience in public administration.

Similarly within the Federal and State government boards and boards of government companies and parastatals and in the ranks of the party leadership are quantum of expertise and experience in government and business, which they had gained as military administrators, tycoons, professionals, ministers, commissioners, traditional rulers, etc. Many of these have private businesses which they run at great profit, while others are shareholders in lucrative businesses in the banking industry, mining, construction companies and commercial companies. The question is, with all these cream of experts and experienced men in governments, why should public enterprises become inefficient and white elephant projects. And why should the government fail or refuse to put all these potentialities in use to strengthen the performance of the public enterprises.

The answer to these questions will take us beyond the smokescreen of the imperativeness of privatisation and commercialisation in Nigeria. Privatisation programme in the dependent capitalist national such as Nigeria, is the latest or highest stage in the imperialistic drives of the capitalist metropolitan nations. This shall be achieved through the new market nationality of the IMF and World Bank and through the purchase and control of the economies of these dependent capitalist nations.

In the privatisation programme of the dependent capitalist countries, the assistance of the International Monetary Agencies and Western Powers were sought, this is not in the least in the interest of such countries. The IMF and World Bank propagate the new idea of market nationality to such countries that are considering privatisation. These propaganda take the form of seminars which betrayed the rather naïve belief that the privatisation programme of the metropolitan capitalist countries could be transplanted to the dependent capitalist countries. ??Peter and Catherine, 1994 : 240).

Nigeria and other dependent capitalist countries have found themselves in the trap of privatisation set by the international monetary agencies and the capitalist metropolis due to the fact that their economies are entangled in the web of obligations with International Monetary Agencies in the form of debt burden. In fact privatisation in these countries may be done in order to meet the demands of the International Monetary Agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank who requests for the 'Opening Up' of the economy for foreign investment. This was in addition to the need to stabilise budget and exchange rate.

In addition to this, the economies of these countries are:

Often heavily dependent on a few exports, usually of primary products, and have experienced severe external shocks in the last decades. Indeed the destabilisation caused by these shocks often spanned their privatisation programmes. However their experience of government control and protection has not been without it problems, and excessive bureaucracy and corruption is common (Ibid : 246) Through corruption and the looting of the resources of these public enterprises (Obasanjo : 1999), the ruling class became millionaires and billionaires. Privatisation programme shall be appealing to them as an opportunity to invest their loot and 'legitimise' their wealth. In the process they serve as Comprador Bourgeoisie for the International Monetary Agencies and companies. It is in this line of thought that one can understand and answer the questions on the imperativeness of privatisation and commercialization in Nigeria and why in spite of the experienced experts found in government the 'inefficiency' of public enterprises cannot be arrested.

It is important for the dependent capitalist countries to consider whether privatisation would increase welfare of citizens; whether it would lead to the loss of control over the nation's economy to foreign companies, and the International Monetary Agencies. And whether it shall lead to the sacrifice of National pride and security.

VIII. Socio-Economic Realities of Privatisation and Commercialization in Nigeria

The main argument of the apostles of privation is the belief that privatisation shall enhance efficiency. We need to understand what is referred to as 'efficiency' usually it is claimed that privatisation would "provide greater incentives for cost minimization; encourage more effective managerial supervision and stimulate greater employee effort (Peter and Catherine : 7).

In order to maximise profit, the capitalist would rather cut down the labour strength and improve his technology to enhance the provision of better services and increase production with minimum financial cost (Lemin, V.I., 1984 : 32-34). Hence, success of the economy in this situation is not judged in terms of the social effects but in terms of the growth and improvement of technology and maximization of profits.

This leads to the increase in what Marxists call the

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Consequently, the efficiency of privatised enterprises is judged in terms of the increase in profits and the return on the capital. This negates other socioeconomic realities such as the level of employment in the country, the rate of the growth in the unemployed and under employed population.

'reserve army of labour' (Ibid : 32). That is, the population of the unemployed and the under employed. Such people would readily accept low wages and miserable conditions of service under a privatised economy. This would further worsen the living standard of the citizens.

Privatisation programme in the capitalist peripheries or dependent capitalist countries such as Nigeria and other African countries differs significantly from that of the capitalist metropolitan countries such as Britain. The British privatisation is:

A reasonably coherent and integrated policy, even it owned its genesis more to expedient financial and political forces than to a well thought-out philosophy. ??Peter & Catherine).

When the economy becomes privatised, it is not likely that the problem of inefficiency could be solved, with rising prices and fares by the privatised enterprises in order to meet up the demand for quality product and efficient services. This becomes difficult in the developing countries where already the purchasing power is generally low, and where unlike the developed economies there is no system of income support to reduce the harshness of the new economic realities for the masses of the labour class (Ibid: 243), for instance, inflation in these countries is rampant, when attempts were made to hold down public wages during the Babangida and Abacha regimes in Nigeria, i.e. 1985 -1993), and 1993 -1998) respectively the effects was much injurious. Consequently, in the words of Catherine, this type of situation often lead to the condition whereby: Public servants could no longer earn a living wage in their official employment, and were forced to take second private sector jobs, or where pressures were transmitted through shortages rather than price rises, to take time from work to acquire necessities. This had an inevitable effect on the standard of public services and created an obvious private market for such employees to satisfy demand which they were unable to do in their official work time. Thus the unofficial economy took over from official services, exacerbating the inefficiencies (Ibid : 242).

Public school teachers became part time traders, taxi and bus drivers in order to augment the inadequate wages.

Due to the underdeveloped condition of the dependent capitalist countries, market failure is more likely to be experienced than the capitalist metropolis. This is because the size of the effective market is smaller, the economies are at their early stage of development with long years of protectionism. The economy are usually heavily dependent on few exports goods these are mainly primarily goods such as oil and agricultural goods. These products have experienced serious external shocks over the years (Ibid : 241). Therefore, privatisation programme in Nigeria which is a dependent capitalist country with all the indices of an underdeveloped economy shall have no human face.

Because of the under-development of the capital market the government would sell many of their enterprises to foreign investors. For example, NEPA was billed for lease to Eskom , the South African Electricity Corporation in collaboration with Shell Company. (Nigerian Tribune, ??pril 9, 2002). This would have caused a lot of damage to our National pride because Eskom is owned by the government of South Africa, the Corporation supplies about 40,000 megawatts daily in South Africa, while NEPA was still struggling to supply 4,000 megawatts (Ibid). NEPA is an example of public enterprises that had gulped billions of Naira without result ??Obasanjo, 1999).

Similarly, the plan to privatise the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company Limited (NSPMC) was most unpatriotic. The company is responsible for the production of the Nigerian Currencies, Nigerian Passports, ballot papers, bank cheques, certificates, examination papers and other security documents; moreso, as the sale was billed for foreign investors this has been rightly described as 'throwing the sovereignty and integrity of the country to the winds all in an attempt to maximize profit' (Saturday Tribune, April 6, 2002).

In the same vein, the privatisation of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is tantamount to putting the Nigerian economic live wire into the hands of few individuals and their foreign partners. It amounts

to selling the economic freedom of Nigeria and a worse stage in the Neo-Colonial Status of Nigeria. The sale of the refineries, petrochemicals company, the pipelines and depot, the Nigerian Gas Company and other NNPC subsidiaries (the Guardian, 2002), shall effectively lead to price increase in petroleum products which shall have direct effects in raising the cost of living in a country where there is no workable policies to cushion the effects of inflation.

The conditions of sale could also lead to serious loss in revenue for the government. This is because, as rightly captured by Peter M. and Catherine P.M.

Underdevelopd capital markets often result in direct sales of assets rather than floating shares on stock markets. Assets are therefore, often underprised resulting in loss in revenue for the government. ??Peter & Catherine : 24) However, those who stand to benefit from the exercise are the comprador bourgeoisie class, the ruling elite who had become millionaires and billionaires while 'serving' the government in one capacity of the other. The loot shall thus be legitimised by privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprise. In the exercise, they shall effectively serve as local partners to the transnational companies and International Monetary Studies have shown that not all public enterprises are inefficient, and inefficiency indicates a lot of disabilities in government control mechanisms which is largely due to corruption, indiscipline and acquisition of undue foreign loans and the debt burden. It has been observed that in some countries public enterprises were efficient and highly profitable. For instance it has been observed that:

The most efficient steel company in the world is the Korean Posco (Pohang Steel Company) which is state owned. Other examples of high-performance public enterprises include the Kenyan Tea Development Authority; the Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority; the Tanzanian Electric Supply Company and the Guma Valley Water Company of Sierra-Leone (Ibid : 24).

Similarly, petro nas of Malaysia is a government owned oil company which declares huge profits every year. So also petrobras of Brazil declares huge profits on yearly basis. (Nigerian Tribune, April 6, 2002).

14 IX.

15 Conclusion and Recommendation

Therefore, by and large the history of the economic relationship between the capitalist metropolitan cities and Nigeria and other dependent capitalist nations made it imperative that the economy of such countries shall be exploited by these metropolis, through such means as unbalanced and unfavourable terms and conditions of trade such as buying manufactured goods in exchange for primary products; through exploitative monetary relationship such as IMF and World Bank Loans and recently through the purchase of the economic live wires of such dependent capitalist countries as a new form of foreign domination otherwise known as privatisation and commercialisation.

The inefficiency of these public enterprises in Nigeria is largely due to the culture of looting of public enterprise which goes hand in hand with the inefficiency and inability of government in arresting this problem.

Therefore, rather than privatise and sacrifice national pride, security and economic independent and welfare of 'citizens, Nigeria should solve the problems of inefficiency and unprofitability of public enterprises by enforcing discipline and curbing corruption and mismanagement of public funds. The managerial stratum of public enterprises may be employed on new terms, even if the personnel remain the same, such as attaching the conditions of service to the performance of the enterprise. The arrangements may require finding solutions to political pressures that may lead to revisal to status quo, this is left for economist to explore.

To achieve economic development, political stability and to reduce insecurity through ethnic conflicts, the necessary conditions of equity, and justice must be established. Segun (1994), rightly observes stability which has eluded Nigeria, some 28 years after the civil war ended, because the necessary structures of equity, justice and democracy have not been put in place".

Insecurity as engendered by incessant violent, ethnic conflicts in modern African nations has been put within the context of colonial and neo-colonial dependent capitalist economic system. The colonial system had implanted structures, institutions and policies that inevitably would pitch the various primordial groupings against one another. The National Petite and Comprador Bourgeoisie continued the line of colonial policies after independence.

X.

16 Recommendations

It is a fact that History is made by the interaction of individuals and of groups in human societies, but the role of individual in human history should not be overemphasised over that of the society. When we study an individual we are at the same time studying the society that produced him. We cannot limit history to the activities of man as an individual. Rather we should view the social forces that determined such activities of man as an individual. This can be summed up in the words of V.I. Lenin:

?. the idea of historical necessity does not in the least undermine the role of the individual in history; all history is made up of the actions of individuals, who are undoubtedly active figures. The real question that arises in appraising the social activity of an individual is what conditions ensure the success of his actions, what guarantee is there that these actions will not remain an isolated act lost in the welter of contrary acts?

No matter the greatness or the political significance of an individual, he can neither suspend nor reverse the objective process of history. The recognition gained by a political leader is determined by the accuracy with which he seizes up any situation within the country or beyond it borders. Besides, this is also due to his ability to work out the right strategies and tactics for political struggle and by his links with the masses.

The problem of unemployment, underemployment should be addressed adequately. This would reduce the industrial reserve army that constitute the bulk of political thugs, kidnappers and ethnic militia. This is because National Security cannot be attained without improving economic security. Dialogue and Rehabilitation of people that pose threat to National security should be employed rather than military action and high-handedness.^{1 2}



Figure 1:

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