

NIGERIAN PEOPLES, CULTURES AND GOVERNMENT



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CHAPTER FOUR

POST COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Post colonial administration in Nigeria is a period of grappling with the rudiments and challenges of administration as it were after total independence from the colonial masters. It is a period inundated with the prospects of a sovereign, independent national state attempting to be in charge of its country politically, economically, culturally among others. It is assumed that over time, the colonial masters under whom we operated upon gave us some semblance of directives concerning administration, particularly when the policy of indirect rule introduced by Lord Frederick Lugard is to be seen and considered as a means by the colonial masters to perfect their plans of colonization and administration. And so, this indirect strategy to formally govern Nigeria with the commencement of colonial administration in Nigeria in 1900 was devised to divide the country into three regions; the North, West and East. The perceived weaknesses of this policy, particularly the reprisal effect in the Eastern region it attracted coupled with the ill treatment meted to some of our brothers and sisters that warranted the Nationalist movement, that saw the birth of Nigeria as a sovereign state on 1st October 1960. Since then post colonial administration has been encumbered with a plethora of administrative challenges and the prospects of wanting to prove to the entire world that religion can stand on its own. And so, the challenge of development was a major problem facing the new Nigeria leaders that were

privileged to assume the mantle of leadership.

According to Ibodje (1999), the problems of meeting the above aspirations and demands by governments of the new and poor nations were staggering, and even more so when considered against the background of existing inadequacies. The point being made here is that for a nation just emerging from the heat of colonial administration, to be confronted with the prospects of total freedom in the midst of very local equipment and inexperienced elites, that know little or nothing about administration, particularly when their supposed teachers (the colonial masters) may not have adequately exposed them to the process of governance, the situation can be very unbearable and cumbersome. In the desperation to cope with the problem of leadership, comes greedy elites whose immediate desire is to grab, accumulate the national cake with little or no desire of those they represent either through a rigged election or by appointment that is borne out of some informal relationship. Consequently, the target of fighting for independence was almost a mirage, particularly at the beginning of the post colonial administration in Nigeria. As Ihonybere (2011) rightly puts it: African elite did everything to bypass the rules of politics, depoliticize the polity, intimidate the people and their communities and divert attention from the realities of underdevelopment and unequal exchange.

The logical extension of this aforementioned fact is that, the Nigeria leaders in the course of managing the Nigeria economy at the threshold of independence were so directionless and puerile in their effort that the economy was left comatose.

This is equally as a result of the degree of corruption that some of these elites were involved in. In the words of Okowa (1996): "when a leader after leader in Black Africa behaves in an incompetent, irresponsible and corrupt manner, the logical conclusion is that the tendency for incompetent, irresponsible and corrupt leadership is a dominant one in our cultural heritage. Blaming the imperialist serves as an emotional balm but does not help us at all". Among other aspects of these inadequacies was that most of these nations lacked strong natural resources base, while most of those that had such base, did not have the needed capacity to exploit the resources, (Ibodje 1999). The indirect rule policy did not encourage the type of leadership and administration that would have helped the ruling elites at the time of independence. This is because of the selfish and the wicked manner the white man went about their administration, particularly when you recall the 'divide and rule' system that pitched the black against the black. And so, you find out that even when they forcefully asked the Whiteman to go, through the nationalist struggle, they were so ill equipped administratively to cope with the squabbles and the challenges that are involved in administration. As Worsely (1978) rightly noted:

Indirect rule thus tended to freeze the social order, inhibiting change in the name of conformity with immemorial custom. Hutu Serfs in Rwanda were kept in bondage to their Tutsi masters by Belgian colonialism, until independence in 1962 provided the opportunity for the Hutu to throw off their Tutsi overlords together with the Belgians.

So, these are very glaring and conscious win efforts by the Whiteman to negatively prevent the Blackman from being in charge of governance, the consequence is what we witnessed in the First Republic. It is only by the grace of God and experience from the world globally that the Nigerian society is stabilizing, even with that there are still some nuances here and there. According to Hugu (1967), "whatever his past achievements, colonized man was made to learn the colonial culture, to study the history of Europe and not his own because he was told that there was no African history to teach, ... only the history of Europeans in Africa". The point being made here is the situation of post independence administration in Nigeria has been very unhealthy and shaky. This is because of the lack of adequate exposure given by the colonial masters.

Nigeria Post Colonial Process of Development Since 1960

The development process vis a vis the administration has always been tilted towards the western style. The pattern of development is centered primarily on the importation of foreign products. Consequently, this made her economy to be seen and regarded as dependent economy. Little or nothing is provided to sustain our economy. Politically, our system of administration is foreign based, even socially we appear western in our relationship with one another. This explains the lack of preparedness by the ill equipped elites who assumed the leadership role at the departure of the white man. Thus, Coleman (1986) opined: As urban Nigerian became increasingly dependent upon their occupational specialties or salaried jobs, they lost the economic and psychological security of the lineage

and the self sufficient rural community. Unfortunately, the white man economy has always assumed this forefront based economy since our independence.

Apart from the indigenization policy of 'Operation Feed the Nation' introduced by former military Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo to make Nigerians look inward towards a self reliant economy. The structural adjustment programme (SAP) introduced by former military Head of State in 1986 Ibrahim Babangida was another policy that tried to put the nation's economy on a pedestal of self-reliance and productive based economy. As rightly observed by Ekekwe (1991), the pattern of economic development into which British Colonialism forced Nigeria was such that the economy had no industrial base and the local class which emerged dominant had neither the material base nor the managerial capacity to embark on any meaningful industrialization.

The Pattern and Method of Nigeria's Post Colonial Administration

Administration in Nigeria since its independence in 1960 was tilted to suit the pattern and style of the ex-white colonial masters. The process of development and administration are purely western, particularly when they require the input economically (in terms of foreign trade) and politically. And as such we are neither here nor there. The relationship with developed countries which by implication incorporated us into the world capitalist economy made us mere producers of raw material with little or no knowledge to manufacture what we have produced. Consequently, some of these products are exported

back to us at very high and exorbitant prices. Central to this analysis is the observation made by Raul Prebisch in Munoz (1998), one of the pioneers of the dependency approach agreed that long time weaknesses in raw materials negated the beneficial results that were supposed to be derived from the principle of comparative advantage. After portraying the world as divided into a developed center and an undeveloped periphery, Prebisch stated that the centers retain the benefits of technological progress and expropriate increases in productivity in exporting sectors of periphery nations through the 'deteriorating terms of trade' mechanism. The negative effects of this relationship of exchange constituted an external dependency that the periphery had to overcome in order to develop'.

The point in emphasis is that because of the forceful incorporation of the Nigeria economy into the world capitalist system which by implication had made her a producer of raw material and not a manufacturer of these raw products, has consequently made her a dependent economy. Unfortunately, this is the situation till date. It was only recently, the present administration of Buhari is trying to reverse the trend through the indigenous economy. This again is only left for time. As noted by Munoz (1981), the analysis of Depending reversal is not a simple task. Specific differences among the countries involved might entreat differences in the road to follow.

This point can be illustrated further. In an attempt to escape this situation of dependent economy, the Nigerian economy since its independence having experimented different strategies to pull itself out of this economic doldrums, courtesy

of the world economic system, attempted the modernization theory. To enter the modern world, undeveloped countries have to overcome the traditional norms and structures opening the way for social, economic and political transformation (Valenzuela, 1981). This is because experience have shown that this unequal relationship or unequal exchange between the core and the periphery no doubt favors the former because of the advantage of technology (the principle of comparative advantage) over the latter in terms of selling or exporting the manufactured goods for sale. As rightly captured by Chinweizu (1975):

As far as prices went, the Euro African market was a buyer's market in raw material and a seller's market in manufacturers. And it was such European control of prices and of what was exchanged for what, that guaranteed that in those four centuries of trade, as in the trade of today, Europe got richer and Africa poorer.

In line with the above, Enemu (1999) observed that "the unequal exchange thesis has been criticized for suggesting that exploitation takes place at the level of exchange rather than production. Due to the underdeveloped nature of most TWCs, they are dependent on the West for virtually everything ranging from technology, and, technical assistance loan, to culture etc. the dependent position of most TWC has made them to be susceptible and vulnerable to the machinations of the Western metropolitan countries and Bretton Woods institutions".

So, the idea here is to get out of this unhealthy relationship of attendant effect of ignorance and underdevelopment through

the modernization theory having seen the existing implication. Even at that, observation and the literature available that has helped to x-ray this theory has found that rather than imitating the Whiteman's culture or copying the Whiteman's style of administration or way of life in order to be transformed, unlocking the forces of colonialism in the eyes of dependency theory however delayed might reposition our economy. The emergence of this theory is often credited to Raul Prebisch whose research found that the wealth of poor nations tended to decrease when the wealth of rich nations increased. The theory quickly divided into diverse schools which all broadly held that for undeveloped nations to develop; they must break their ties with developed nations and pursue internal growth (Igwe, 2010).

But, the reality on ground is that it is not very easy to delink, considering the fact that an old, long relationship has been established. It is therefore pertinent to adjust and look inward to recognize whether we get it wrong and start off from there. And this is where the dependency theory becomes useful as an approach to unlocking the obstacles of colonialism, imperialism among others. According to Ekekwe (2009), in political economy, the movement of history is seen as being spurred fundamentally by the changes which occur at the level of production. New technologies of production lead to changes which occur at the level of production. New techniques of production lead to changes in the social relation of production. At first these changes may be virtually imperceptible but over a period of time, however, their cumulative efforts become discernible and create an impact on society.

Weaknesses of the Post colonial Administration

There were avalanche of challenges and problems faced by the country just emerging from the tutelage and grip of the colonial masters. The onus primarily was how to position the economy on a strong and proper footing. But, again because they (the elite) were not adequately exposed to the rudiments of administration, there was the initial problem of not knowing what to do and how to manage human administration and the economy. The problems of meeting the above aspirations and demands by government of the new and poor nations were staggering and even more so when considered against the background of existing inadequacies among other aspects of these inadequacies, was that most of these nations lacked strong, natural resource base, while most of those that had such base, did not have the needed capacity to exploit the resources. In some of these countries, professional and skilled manpower were not in sufficient supply, and the institutions necessary to produce such needed skills did not exist. Furthermore, the required capital for investments was either at a low level of supply or did not exist at all due to the fact that savings in sufficient amounts were not available (Ibodje, 1999).

The point being made here is that at the threshold of independence the ruling elites hadn't the technology, the needed capital coupled with very low and limited knowledge to confront a situation that was most demanding and challenging. The basic administrative principles of leading and directing were lacking and so administration of the economy was directionless. Thus, Obi (2006) noted: "there is really no doubt that the experience of most LDCs in economic planning has been that of poor

performance and dashed hopes.

Again, the problem of inherited bureaucracy and administrative agencies were incapable to meet the challenges and expectations of the new sovereign independent state. The fact remains that because of the policy of divide and rule established by the colonial masters, there was the problem of inadequate bureaucracy to cope with basic administrative functions. And so to borrow the words of SWE, Ibodje "the emerging tasks of development were thus not only staggering but also unfamiliar to existing institutional infrastructures". In concurrence with the view above, some of the African leaders have laid so much emphasis on financial aids and technical assistance from the developed nations to the extent that they make little or no efforts towards the transformation of their countries. For instance, in the past three decades successive regimes in Ethiopia demand humanitarian assistance as a matter of right (Okafor, 2011). Very often donor agencies are chastised for failing to deliver in time (Tiepoh, 2000). Ordinarily, if they laid a proper foundation for themselves the will to depend on foreign experts as contained above, there wouldn't have been the desire to ask or depend on them in almost all ramifications of human endeavour. So, these were some of the obvious weaknesses and failure to emerging bureaucracy and its elites have to cope with to free itself from the chagrin and economic woes of underdevelopment. Unfortunately, the situation is still as staggering as it was at the early stage of the post colonial administration except with straight modifications.

In concurrence with the view of Ake (1981), "the present

crisis in Africa presents itself to our consciousness as a crisis of the economy or more precisely, a development crisis. Not surprisingly it is in its economic manifestation that we see the crisis in its more concrete and most dramatic form: the long and continuing decline of real income, the swelling tide of unemployment, the chronic and debt problems, the declining productivity and negative growth rates and how the threat of starvation to over 150 million people. In the face of these realities, it is difficult not to see the crisis in economic terms. However, it is not simply an economic crisis. It is at least as much as a crisis of the state as it is a crisis of the economy". The situation mentioned by Ake is not in any way different from the Nigeria scenario since her post independence administration.

Central to the analysis is the point noted by Igwe (2010):

Poverty, a destroyer of character in many circumstances, has led to countless forms of criminal activities among Africans as many live well below poverty line. On yet another note, brain drain which began especially in the 90s has continued unabatedly. As at the present an average 30,000 highly skilled Africans leave the continent each year for the United States and Europe more than 35% of doctors trained in Africa work abroad in developed countries.

Corroborating the above, Ndugane (2006) established that "in the United States alone, Africa immigrants are the highest educated class of all immigrants to that country where there are over 640,000 African professionals, over 360,000 of them hold PhDs.

120,000 of them (from Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan and Uganda) are medical doctors. The rest are professionals in various fields". So, this explains the ugly situation in most African countries, including Nigeria since her post independent colonial administration. The fact remains that the type of leaders we have from that early period till now are such that it will take some genuine and sincere efforts to move this country to an enviable height of laudable achievement. It is getting worse by day because of the increasing desperation for wealth, with little or no regard for those they are leading. Our society is awashed with a high degree of deportees from other countries because of bad leadership that has been our challenge right from independence.

The Way Forward

The following suggestions may help to improve on the Post colonial administration in Nigeria.

- i. An aggressive indigenous agricultural economy should be sustained with total disregard to foreign goods and products.
- ii. High degree of innovation and technology: we must as a country take it upon ourselves to be innovative and creative. The foreign countries we all desire were developed and sustained by people like us, created by the same God. So, the challenge of development is not restricted to only a group of people. It is a process, which can be achieved with time.
- iii. Leadership: The Nigerian leaders must wake up to their responsibilities and duties. The slogan of the Americans "seeing the country first and not the individual must get into

our heads if the administration of this country must be improved upon.

- iv. Genuine and sincere policies must be initiated by our leaders to promote a self reliance economy. The type that will enable citizens not to see abroad as an alternative to survival. The Nigerian leaders have failed the nation, right from independence till date. Any leader worth its sort, make sacrifice for his subjects, no matter what. This is what makes the developed, industrialized countries of the world greater and better.
- v. The cost of governance should and must be cut down. The law makers' jumbo pay should be slashed down so that the difference can be used to develop the other sectors of the economy. For instance, with the citation of industries or companies with such money, applicants can be gainfully employed. Consequently unemployment will be reduced, crime rate will disappear. The desire to travel abroad may dwindle and a lot of other social vices may be curtailed.

Conclusion

The post colonial administration in Nigeria no doubt has been wobbling, and to say the least we have been operating an economy that lacks the basic leadership qualities to transform the country to a position or level of commendation and admiration. When the colonialists were chased away through the nationalist struggle, the expectation was for us to improve on the reasons why they were asked to go. But, the situation as it is presently suggested that we are neither here nor there. Corruption was a major problem that cripples the development and growth of the

economy by our desperate and highly selfish elites. It is therefore not too surprising to see where our so called leaders have us since they assumed the mantle of leadership from the colonial masters. A position that has made many to wonder including the researcher, whether it was actually the Whiteman that was responsible for our underdevelopment or the blackman.

So, the Nigeria leader, must as a matter of urgency and compelling necessity, come up with policies that will not just promote his interest as it is currently seen but one that will enhance the economic and administrative well being of the entire citizens. For when there is peace and stability borne out of genuine and sustainable programmes, that people become less rebellious, hate speeches agitations among many will disappear. The potential for violence is a function of the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agent.

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