



In the Trail of Nemesis: Colonial Investments and Leadership Deficit in Nigeria

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Abstract

Capitalism and socialism are the two economic systems that dominate the contemporary world. The integration of Nigeria into global capitalism through British colonialism is the event which has had the most impact on shaping modern Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, issues that many development policies attempt to ameliorate in the country have their roots, partly, in colonialism. Less obvious are the colonial legacies that have shaped the country's post-colonial super-structure. This paper, therefore, seeks to critically examine the haunting effects of colonial investments on the perceived leadership deficit in Nigeria. The paper is historical and descriptive in nature, it relied on secondary data sourced from libraries while the Marxian political economy was employed as its theoretical framework. It was demonstrated that the history of capitalism in Nigeria is the story of imperialism/colonialism. During its existence, from 1900 - 1960, the colonial state implemented policies that were largely favourable to the colonizer. It denied the country the possibility of indigenous development; colonial investments did not encourage local industrialization or the emergence/growth of indigenous capitalists which produced a situation of inverted capitalist formation. At independence, what changed was the class in whose dominant interest the state worked; the Nigerian ruling class and foreign economic groups. Consequently, politics/access to state power became the one sure route to capital accumulation by the local dominant class. This has produced a very high level of corruption and fierce/parochial politics. The leadership deficit in Nigeria manifests mainly in the disconnect between the political leadership and the citizenry, institutional decay and the inability of the state to deliver basic services which portrays Nigeria as a "failed" or "weak" state. The paper concludes that there is an urgent need for a major structural overhaul of the economic system towards any meaningful development in the country.

Keywords: Nemesis, Colonial Investment, Leadership Deficit

Introduction

Every socioeconomic formation or society is made up of a base, otherwise known as a sub-structure and a corresponding super-structure. The base or sub-structure is the economic system upon which the super-structure (the political system, legal system, ideological system, belief system and culture) is built. The character of any super-structure reflects the prevailing economic system. In other words, the nature of the economic system determines the character of the super-structure, that is, the extent of its deficiency or efficiency. This is because the sub-structure and super-structure are intricately interwoven, and therefore, re-enforces each other. However, it is the sub-structure that exerts the decisive influence on their interaction (Ake, 1981).



Two economic systems or modes of production dominate the contemporary world. These are capitalism and socialism. However, the global spread and dominance of capitalism (capitalist economy or mode of production) otherwise known as globalization in current general and intellectual discourse have had the most decisive impact on Nigeria's history. The integration of Nigeria into global capitalism by British colonialism is the event that has had the most influence in shaping the economic and political development of modern Nigeria (Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 2009). According to Ake (1981), the capitalist mode of production has two main features. The first is that capitalism polarizes society into a very small group of people who monopolize the available means of production, and the vast majority who essentially have no means of production. The second main feature of the capitalist mode of production is commodity production, which gives a capitalist society some of the characteristics of a market – such as engrossing the society with needless competition, waste, anarchy and gross inequality.

Although British colonial rule in Nigeria ended in 1960, the problems that many of the country's contemporary development policies and programmes seek to improve stem at least in part from colonialism. The founding movement and racial tensions sparked by "divide and rule" policies are both elements of the colonial legacy. Many other issues can be traced more specifically to colonial development policy. For instance, unsustainable and environmentally damaging agricultural systems, polluting industrial sectors and inadequate worker rights, large infrastructure projects that destroy communities and ecosystems, and debates over land deprivation (Craggs, 2014).

Less obvious in this regard are the colonial legacies that have shaped the post-colonial super-structure (the political system, legal system, ideological system, belief system and culture) of Nigeria. The colonial sub-structure (capitalist mode of production) and super-structure that were foisted on contemporary Nigeria by the erstwhile colonialists, which persist to date in some varied forms, have invariably brought to the fore, the leadership deficit of the present ruling class in the country. As Ake (1981) opined, the contradictions of capitalism not only transform it but transplant it. The transplantation of capitalism arises from those contradictions that reduce the rate of profit and prevent the capitalization of surplus value. Faced with these effects, capitalists who are always bent on maximizing profits inevitably seek a new environment in which the accumulation process can continue quickly. Capitalists turned to foreign countries to attack and conquer them, and to integrate their economies into those of Western Europe. The experience of Western imperialism, especially colonization, remains by far the most decisive event in Nigeria's and other African countries history. Ake stressed that the pattern of foreign investments in the colonial African economies reinforced the complementarity between these economies and the Western economies, and the structural dependence of the former on the latter. It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that this paper seeks to critically examine the consequences or haunting effects of colonial investments on the perceived prevailing leadership deficit in Nigeria.

Specifically, is there any connection between colonial investments and the apparent leadership deficit in post-colonial (post-independence) Nigeria? This question may appear too remote given the fact that Nigeria attained independence in 1960. However, the question also appears to be germane considering the nature of the post-colonial character of Nigeria's ruling class and their modernization paradigm which was inherited from colonialism, and which has not made any significant sustainable contribution to development, particularly human development, just like the experience of the colonial era.



Methodology

The paper is historical in nature and descriptive in its analysis. It relied on secondary data from reports (from national and international agencies), Journal articles, textbooks and other printed records sourced from libraries including e-libraries. In general, the content analysis method was employed. The contents of the secondary data collected were analysed to address the variables under study. This method involved the systematic examination of the relevant data to discover the occurrence of meaningful trends and connections between colonial investments and the leadership deficit in Nigeria. This method of analysis is quite appropriate and useful in political economy research as it is used for analysing texts in order to discover recurring trends and how those trends lead to discernible patterns of policy and/or situational outcomes (North, 1963; Obasi, 1999).

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Clarifications

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the effects of colonialism on the country's leadership challenge have prompted myriads of intellectual research interests. Often, the perspectives of these investigations are informed by the investigators' perceptions of the problems. In exploring colonial investments and the leadership deficit in Nigeria, this paper used the Marxian political economy as its theoretical framework. This is because an inquiry of this nature requires a theoretical paradigm that can employ a historical approach to study such social issues that essentially need a scientific technique. It has to encapsulate the nature and essence of political and socio-economic realities thereby satisfactorily explaining the nature of the relationship between colonial investments and the leadership deficit in Nigeria.

In comparison to other contending approaches, this method of analysis is quite useful, especially in a social science inquiry such as this, because Marxian political economy combines the elements of history, class, economy and the state. The primacy of material conditions in the explanation of social life and relations is the root of this variant of political economy (Ake, 1981; Okowa 1996). Besides, it offers predictions alongside explanations of social problems. Thus, as Ekekwe (2015) asserted, apart from the Marxian political economy approach, no better tool of analysis exists for understanding the capitalist mode of production.

The Marxian political economy approach or what is also known as Historical Materialism as a scientific approach to the study of society and social change evolved mainly from the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Ekekwe, 1986 & 2009). Marx and Engels believed that political economy is how the ownership of the means of production influences historical processes; while class was used to refer to a group of individuals in the historical process of society who share similar economic and social status (Weingast & Wittman, 2008; Fadakinte, 2014).

As Ekekwe (1986) observed, Marx and Engels adopted this approach not only as a means of deriving theoretical and objective knowledge of the world but also as a provider of the scientific basis for action that can change the world for the greater good of a greater number of men. If Marx and Engels' vision in this context is to be realisable, Ekekwe (2009) argued that it is imperative to appreciate history and the role it plays in shaping man's present condition.

The Marxian political economy as a science of human history does not only focus on the past. Rather, it sees history as also being in the present and future. This is in the realisation of the general acceptance that the past is in the present, just as the present is pregnant with the future. This paradigm, therefore, helps us to make the linkages between the past, present and future, and this is achieved by analysing the present from its historical or past antecedents. Considering its usefulness



in the explanation of the social change, it helps us to see how we can condition our future towards desirable ends because human beings that work in consonance with nature in the bid to meet their existential needs involve themselves, consciously or inadvertently, with the present actions that form future history. This means that history is not only concerned with a record of past events but also a human development process which has past, present and future dimensions (Ekekwe, 1986 & 2009; Okowa 1996).

As Ake (1981) noted, a distinctive feature of the Marxian political economy method of analysis is that it encourages the student to take a systematic account of the interactions between different elements of social life, especially economic, social and political structure as well as the belief system. This method absolutely recognises the interrelationship of these structures, with particular emphasis that the economic factor is the determining element of society and greatly affects the character of the other aspects of the society. That is to say that the availability of knowledge of the economy fosters the knowledge of the general character of the other systems – social, political, belief, etc. The interest here is mainly in the interrelatedness and interdependence of the various social structures, and how they are historically determined.

Ake (1981) further posited that this approach to the study of society and social change emphasizes the dynamic character of reality. It is a method which refuses to look at aspects of the world as simple identities, discrete elements or as being static. Rather, this framework encourages us to think of the world in terms of continuity and relatedness and with a keen awareness that this conformity is essentially very complex and also problematic. In other words, it treats the world as something full of movement and dynamism, the movement and dynamism being provided by the contradictions which pervade existence. He further shared the view that central to this approach is the primacy of material conditions. In other words, Marxian political economy is based on the key assumption that social relationships and political processes are defined and driven by economic factors.

Thus, this framework gives adequate attention to economic factors in the explanation of social issues. The justification for this primacy status is that economic need is man's most fundamental existential necessity. Man cannot exist if he is not able to meet his economic need. Man must eat before engaging in socio-political, cultural and religious activities. Just as economic need is the primary need, so is economic activity man's primary pursuit. The importance of economic activity is the logical result of the importance of the economic need to man. The methodological effect of this position for the social sciences is that the student of society must pay particular attention to the economic history and structure of society and use it as the point of departure for studying, analysing and understanding other aspects of society. An understanding of what the material assets and constraints of society are (productive forces), how the society produces goods to meet its material needs (mode of production or economic system), how the goods are distributed and what types of social relations arise from the organisation of production (social relations of production), takes us a long way into the understanding of the culture of that society, its laws, religious and political systems, including the character of its state, and even its modes of thought (Ake, 1981).

Nemesis

The term "nemesis" as employed in this paper connotes its grammatical usage. Therefore, nemesis here simply means an effect or a consequence or a result or an outcome or an upshot of a cause or an event that cannot be avoided. In this sense, an effect which is the nemesis is an unavoidable natural creation or manifestation of a cause or an event that occurred in the past



(Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus). Nemesis can also mean the arch-enemy or challenger or downfall, or undoing or ruin of someone or something. In this wise, nemesis means the inescapable agent of someone's or something's downfall. Nemesis is the *ultimate* enemy, the arch-foe that overshadows all the others in power or importance (Merriam-Webster). It is believed that nemesis does not always "punish" an offender immediately but might wait for generations to avenge a crime.

In sum, someone's nemesis is a person or thing that is very difficult for them to defeat. In other words, it is an opponent that cannot be beaten or overcome. It is a result of a cause of punishment or defeat that is deserved and cannot be avoided. In this connection, the prevailing leadership deficit in contemporary Nigeria is regarded as the nemesis of Nigeria's conquest, forceful integration into worldwide capitalism and the subsequent colonial investments by the British.

Colonialism and Colonial Investments

It seems generally, if not universally, agreed that, colonialism is a form of domination that refers to the control of a territory and/or the actions of other individuals or groups by an individual or group. It is a form of exploitation that emphasizes economic and political variables and cultural change. Colonialism is not a modern phenomenon. World history is full of examples of a society that gradually expanded by merging adjacent territories and settling its people in newly conquered territories.

In the 16th century, colonialism changed decisively as the development of seafaring began to connect more remote parts of the world. The modern European colonial program emerged because it was possible to move large populations across the ocean and maintain political control while geographically dispersed (Horvath, 1972; Ake, 1981; Ekeke, 2009; Kohn & Kavita, 2022).

However, a common difficulty in defining colonialism is that the term is often used as a synonym for imperialism. Both colonialism and imperialism were forms of conquest expected to benefit Europe economically and strategically. The term colonialism is often used to describe settlements in North America, Australia, New Zealand, Algeria, and Brazil, which were controlled by large numbers of European permanent residents. The term imperialism often describes a situation in which a foreign government administers territory without significant settlements. Classic examples include the scramble for Africa in the late 19th century and the US domination of the Philippines and Puerto Rico. However, the distinction between the two is not entirely consistent in the literature. Some scholars distinguish between colonies used for settlement and those used for economic exploitation. Others use the term colonialism to describe a dependent state governed directly by a foreign country and contrast it with imperialism, which involves indirect forms of domination. (Kohn & Kavita, 2022).

The confusion over the meaning of the term imperialism reflects the way the concept has changed over time. Although the term "imperialism" in English was not commonly used before the 19th century, the Elizabethan era already described Britain as "the British Empire". As Britain began to acquire overseas possessions, the concept of empire was used more. Imperialism is understood as a system of military domination and sovereignty over the territory. The day-to-day work of government may be exercised indirectly through local councils or by indigenous rulers who pay tribute (as is the case with the indirect rule in Nigeria), but sovereignty belongs to the British. This shift in the traditional understanding of empire is influenced by the Leninist analysis of imperialism as a system geared towards economic exploitation. Lenin believed that imperialism was the



inevitable and inevitable consequence of the logic of late capitalist accumulation. Thus, for Lenin and later Marxists, imperialism describes the historical stages of capitalism, not the transhistorical practice of political and military domination. The lasting impact of the Marxist approach is evident in contemporary debates about U.S. imperialism, a term that often means U.S. economic hegemony, whether or not that power is exercised indirectly or directly (Young, 2001).

Given the difficulty of consistently distinguishing the two terms, this article uses colonialism as a broad concept to refer to the European program of political domination that began in the early 16th century. Hence, the term colonialism is used here to describe the process of European settlement, violent dispossession, and economic and political domination of other parts of the world, including the Americas, Australia, and parts of Africa and Asia. Generally speaking, as in most of Africa including Nigeria, colonialism or its driving force, imperialism refers to economic, military, and political domination in the absence of significant permanent European (British) settlements (Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 2009; Kohn & Kavita, 2022). Thus, this paper tends to marry the two concepts of colonial imperialism.

Following from the above, colonial investments are simply capital outlays, technologies, institutions, policies and programmes that were invested in the economy, political and ideological systems of the colony. These investments were regarded as the minimal requirements needed for the effective occupation and subsequent subjugation and exploitation of the colonized people and territory. They were not in any way intended to improve the living standard of the people or better the conditions of the territory (Rodney, 1973; Ake, 1981).

The so-called benefits that accrued from colonial investments were very infinitesimal. Some argue that they are good for African economies, while others such as Rodney (1973) argue that colonisation is bad for third-world countries. Some scholars who believe that colonialism was beneficial to African countries believe that colonization introduced formal education, modern sanitation, modern markets, modern transportation and communication, etc. These writers also claimed that colonialism brought peace and attracted European capital to Africa and that African farmers were helped by European capital and scientific knowledge that helped to promote agricultural and economic development (Fadeyiye, 2005). However, it is undeniable that colonialism greatly contributed to Africa's underdevelopment. For example, Rodney (1973) demonstrated that colonialism was synonymous with robbery. He believed that European colonists stole Africa's land, labour and national resources through various cunning or treacherous means. Furthermore, as pointed out by Ake (1981), British penetration of African economies created some basic similarities between African economies and colonial powers. They controlled economic development to safeguard the interests of the metropolis, which accompanied the expansion of colonial trade and created the structural linkages and dependence of the African economy on the metropolis.

African countries suffered huge losses under the colonial economy because the economic policies of the colonies were for the benefit and benefit of the colonial powers. The economic activities of the colonies were subordinated to the interests of the colonial powers that were not trying to develop the African economy. African countries like their own. Unequal terms of trade under colonial rule were largely unfavourable to Africa (Ake, 1981; Adeyeri & Adejuwon, 2012). Ake (1981) clearly depicts how Africa has been successfully thrown into the orbit of the world capitalist system. According to him, the first step is to monetize the African economy, providing a modern banking and credit system in line with global capitalism. As trade between colonies and metropolises grew, complementarity and interdependence along manufacturing and primary production lines were strengthened. First, Colonial Trade Monetary income from colonies is mainly used to consume manufactured goods imported from the metropolis. Second, Europe's self-



interested way of regulating African demand for primary commodities has led to a form of development that makes African economies heavily dependent on metropolitan economies. Thirdly, Colonial trade often destroys traditional African crafts and crafts. This is because it is flooded with alternatives on the market that are inexpensive but considered by Africans to be exotic, more desirable or practical than traditional alternatives. Finally, colonial powers in Africa ensured the specialization of colonies in primary production by adopting a system of quotas and tariffs that discouraged manufactured goods but strongly favoured unprocessed primary commodities from the colonies.

Consequently, most African countries including Nigeria achieved paper (flag or political) independence without economic independence. After achieving political independence, the economies of countries that experienced colonialism remained tied to the apron of their former colonial masters. Post-independence Nigeria, for example, suffered from neocolonialism, as her economy was and is dominated by her former colonial master (which is Britain). Transnational or multinational corporations still have a significant impact on the Nigerian economy, thus determining the speed of Nigeria's economic development (Adeyeri & Adejuwon, 2012). This as observed by Ekekwe (2009 & 2015) is still felt today through dependency syndrome. Economic dependence is the most obvious punitive legacy of colonization to all African nations. The effect of this as observed is still being felt today through the syndrome of dependency. Economic dependency is the most telling punitive legacy that colonization bequeathed to all countries in Africa.

Leadership and Leadership Deficit

Discussions about leadership are everywhere. A quick glance at the Internet yields a myriad of material—some academic, some from the business world, and some from various companies that aim to help organizations improve their leadership skills. Professional development programs and degree programs can also help people become effective leaders. Anyone who has studied leadership knows that there is no shortage of information available on what it means to be a good leader. Despite all the resources available for leadership, we seem to be experiencing a leadership vacuum (Plecas, Squires & Garis, 2018).

There are several theories and approaches to the subject of leadership (Amadi, 2014). Some approaches to leadership problems involve the analysis of one guru after another, usually referring to some of the magical qualities a person needs to be a good leader. However, these lists are usually drawn up concerning private sector leaders. The theoretical framework of this paper is aimed at people working in the public sector (government). It can be argued that for these individuals leadership is often more historical and complicated, and thus requires an appropriate discussion in line with the Marxian political economy employed in this work.

Looking closely at various definitions and ideas about leadership, it is not difficult to conclude that the concept of leadership is everywhere. For example, some followers adhere to the concept of servant leadership. Others talk about visionary leaders. Other terms, such as transformational leadership, also appear in the literature. There are more. Some definitions differentiate between leadership and management, some of which show a sense of being a leader is superior compare to being a manager. In fact, most leaders engage in some form of management, and all managers are expected to demonstrate leadership. Even employees not in management show leadership among their colleagues and teams (Plecas, Squires & Garis, 2018).

Basically, one of the ways to distinguish between leadership and management is this: We *lead* people, but we *manage* tasks. Management is concerned with the processes of keeping an



organization running, such as planning, budgeting, defining roles, allocating resources and measuring performance. Leadership is about aligning people with a vision, motivating them, motivating them, and providing (Chalmers, 2016). Leadership is also about influence. As one leadership guide (MTD Training, 2010:19) notes:

When your management hat is on, you are focusing on how you are going to complete the tasks that are necessary to get the job done. You see the deadline looming, and you organize yourself to meet it. When your leadership hat is on, you are influencing the others on your team to do their part to meet—or exceed—that deadline or any other performance expectations you might have.

In this paper, the concept of good leadership includes both leadership and management as expressed above. Leadership is nothing but a means to achieve national interests. Fundamentals of leadership are missing somewhere, subject to small state interests (Amadi, 2014). Today, countries spend a lot of time and money to correct past mistakes, not future development. When the past outweighs the future, leadership loses its essential meaning. Some lead authors roam freely, coming up with their ideas as they please. Leadership is not a game of the mind, nor is it a game that begins with a thought and ends with a sentence. It's not a belief either. It is the most practical field and goes far beyond the concept of religion, politics or ideology. Unfortunately, our current leadership practices are religiously, politically and ideologically entangled. Leadership deficit was first coined as a single leadership term by John Kotter in the 1990s. For individuals, insufficient leadership occurs when negative behaviours (those that undermine your effective leadership) outweigh positive behaviours (those that promote or demonstrate effective leadership). For example, you can have the eloquence of an orator (very positive behaviour), but if the rest of you had a terrible performance, then you have got a leadership deficit (The Black Sheep, 2022).

According to Rotberg (2022), African leadership has been characterized by the scandalous role models of Idi Amin and Robert Mugabe rather than positive ones like Nelson Mandela and Seretse Khama. Other regions of the developing world, such as Southeast Asia or Latin America, show huge differences in leadership quality, but none are as extreme. Over the past 60 years, roughly 90 percent of sub-Saharan African leaders have behaved bossily and poorly, denying people human and civil rights, sparking or exacerbating existing civil conflicts, slowing economic growth per capita, and proving to be corrupt.

To this end, some contending questions are: Why do many nation-states in sub-Saharan Africa have such a huge gap between the poorly led past and present and the few that have consistently led well? Are these differences especially African? Are they products of colonial tyranny? Do they reflect common problems in transitioning from dependent to independent? Are they rooted in deep-rooted poverty and lack of economic growth? In other words, is Sub-Saharan Africa's deplorable leadership record due to exogenous variables beyond its control, or is Africa less responsive to the same leadership challenges as elsewhere? (Rotberg, 2022).

Positive role models of African leadership stand out for their clarity of character, their adherence to the principles of participatory democracy, and their rarity. By contrast, negative examples include so many variants—predatory thieves; dictators, whether democratically elected or military; simple-minded predators; economic illiteracy; and expansive posturing. These single-minded, often narcissistic leaders are many and share common characteristics: they are concerned with power itself, rather than using it for good; they are indifferent to the well-being of their citizens but eager to accept their flattery; Countries and regions wreak havoc, with the exception of their



own regions; as reason is out of reach, they quickly exploit social or racial ideologies for political and personal ends; they favour scapegoating, blame-shifting, as well as hypocrisy (Rotberg, 2022).

With the exception of one or two national leaders, Nigeria's leadership since independence in 1960 largely falls within the category of negative examples enumerated above. Also, in spite of the number of questions raised in this section in connection with the possible reason(s) for the leadership deficit in sub-Saharan Africa (including Nigeria), the contention of this paper is that Nigeria's leadership deficit is rooted in colonial misrule – whose shadow seems to be haunting the present crop of the country's ruling class.

An overview of Colonialism, the Emergence of Capitalism and the Ruling Class at Independence in Nigeria

Scholars (Rodney, 1973; Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 1986, 2009 & 2015) have noted that the capitalist system has now become global and, to a lesser or greater degree, depending on conditions in specific regions has dominated all other modes of production (from slave to feudal modes of productions). According to Ekekwe (2009), the history of capitalism in Nigeria is the story of imperialism and colonialism. It was imperialism that spurred the Europeans to descend onto the African continent in search of raw materials and new markets for their goods and capital. The rivalry between European countries, for example, Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, and Holland made it necessary for each to want to protect from the other's preferred 'areas of influence'. This was the scramble and partitioning of Africa between 1885-1886 and constitute the root of colonialism.

When the British arrived and occupied the area now called Nigeria, the people who lived here were not producing exchange value or commodities in any significant magnitude, which is what the colonialists wanted. The people were mainly producing what they needed or using values. What exchange value was being produced and directed to trade was minimal. This situation was not good enough for capitalism. The British, therefore, had to find a way to make the indigenes go into the production of commodities so that there would be something to sell or exchange for the goods imported from Europe (Ekekwe, 2009).

To achieve some of their purposes in this regard, the British did several things. One of them was to portray the indigenes as uncivilized and therefore as inferior to them. This was an ideological ploy which disposed the indigenes to obey and be generally subservient to the colonial agents. The idea was to manoeuvre the indigenes into seeing why they should start producing what the "master" wanted to buy. To back up this ideology, the British built schools as arenas to acquire major elements of "civilization" and Western education. Through this medium, the indigenes were being taught some of the values needed to support the new economic system. Subjects such as English Language and Arithmetic, Reading and Writing, History and Religion were taught with a view to producing indigenes who would agree with the new system. This was the so-called "civilizing mission" of the colonialists. Certainly, this education was not meant to impart knowledge to help the indigenes solve their problems but was geared towards promoting capitalism in the colony. This is basically why science and technical education were given very low priorities (Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 2009).

In the spirit of imperialism, the British imposed political and military, and administrative measures that backed up their educational weapon for promoting the values of the new economic system in the colony. Taxation was one of the tools used. The colonial logic was simple: to pay taxes you have to have money. To have money you have to sell something. There were two things people in those days could sell: these were either agricultural produce (cocoa, cotton, palm produce,



groundnuts, etc.) or labour-power. If you were not selling agricultural produce you were forced to sell your labour power to generate money to pay your tax (Ekekwe, 2009).

Meanwhile, the role of the colonial government was to maintain law and order to assist European trading and mining companies to operate in a peaceful environment and thus to make a profit in Nigeria. Intrinsic in these roles was that of helping to “convert” Nigerians to capitalism. All the investments (education, health system, railways, roads, etc.) the colonial state made is easily seen in this light as their trickle-down effects were merely incidental to the objectives of the colonial government. Thus, it can be rightly said that the colonial government was the political expression of the interests of European or global capitalism. Under colonial capitalism, a competition which is a key component of capitalism was virtually dead. In every sense, colonialism did great harm to the colonized. By forcing their local economies into the capitalist groove, it denied them the possible option of possibly following another path; it certainly denied them the possibility of indigenous development. In fact, colonial investment neither encouraged local industrialization nor supported the emergence or growth of indigenous capitalists (Ekekwe, 2009). This is just an outline of British incursion into the area now called Nigeria. The following is a synopsis of colonial capitalism and Nigeria’s ruling class at independence in 1960.

The foregoing narration forestalls doubts about the importance of economic conditions in understanding any socio-economic formation or (human) society, hence, the importance of colonial history in understanding the character and colouration of Nigeria’s post-independence state. This, in part, is because the peculiar method of colonial penetration of Nigeria provided the enablement for integration of the Nigerian economy into the advanced world (capitalist) system that resulted in an “organic relationship”. As earlier mentioned, this was achieved through the monetisation of the Nigerian economy; imperialism of colonial trade; metropolitan investment and infrastructure development for evacuating agricultural produce from the point of production to the seaports (Ake, 1981). This integration, according to Ekekwe (1986), toed the line of articulating Nigeria’s pre-colonial mode of production (peasant economy) with the world capitalist mode which, predictably, distorted the indigenous mode. This mode could neither be referred to as pre-capitalist nor capitalist because only certain elements of the capitalist mode were seen in the colonial economy which was largely dependent (Ekekwe, 1986; 2009; 2015). It was simply a branch economy (Ekekwe, 1986) circumscribed by uncouth deformed capitalism (Ekekwe, 2015).

The colonial state and its foreign capitalist enterprises did not make visibly conscious efforts to industrialise the colonial economy. Rather, the peasant mode of production was prevalently the mainstay of the economy. A distinction could be made between this mode, which was highly subsistent by its nature of merely meeting the rudimentary needs of reproduction and the capitalist mode known for its features of appropriation of surplus value and accumulation of capital. The point Ekekwe (1986) made here is that the peasant, as well as other immature and simple modes of production, did not exist in mutual exclusiveness. They were linked with each other and existed with the alien capitalist mode in a relationship that could be best described as the “articulation of modes of production”. This articulation mystified the social classes in both colonial and post-colonial Nigeria because the social classes that emerged were not necessarily products of the indigenous productive activities but came into existence through colonial activities in Nigeria.

The colonial activities of trade were skewed towards creating more foreign than the local bourgeoisie. Only a few Nigerians made enough profit from the trading activities in the colonial era to become the bourgeoisie because they were merely involved in commerce without much interest in manufacturing. Occasioned by the absence of a strong local bourgeoisie, the emerging petit bourgeoisie class, under the colonial state, acquired political relevance unequal to its economic



disposition (Ekekwe, 1986). This is the decisive feature of the colonial and post-colonial petit bourgeoisie which coloured (and still colours) the ruling class of Nigeria. That is to say that, this disarticulated and disoriented colonial structure was not destroyed by political independence (Ake, 1996). Rather, it was inherited, thus, characterising the post-colonial Nigerian state. This point earns proof in the intense class struggle between the dominant indigenous social class and the bourgeoisie of the metropole in the nationalist movement in Nigeria over the control of state apparatuses, not necessarily to end the injustice and miserable conditions characteristic of colonialism but to replace the latter in their exalted positions and capital relations. It, therefore, followed that shortly after independence when political positions of authority were relinquished to the nationals, their actions and activities began to reflect class characteristics. More so, these few petit-bourgeoisies, who had found themselves wielding political power and influence, paid more attention to relations of distribution and desired more to absorb the lifestyle and benefits of colonialism (Ekekwe, 1986; Fadakinte, 2013).

The governing (ruling) class that emerged at independence in Nigeria in 1960 was consequently composed of those who replaced the hierarchy of the colonial state and were nothing more than human agents of Western capital. Colonialism, therefore, created a post-colonial Nigerian political class whose staggered development was foisted by the superior forces of capital (Drake, 2010; Fadakinte, 2013). A dominant class without a commensurate economic base was foisted on post-colonial Nigeria colonialism. This produced a situation of inverted capitalist formation because post-colonial Nigeria grappled with the problem of building a capitalist state without capitalists. This is why it is common to see in Nigeria, people with political power but lack economic power (that is, having processing or manufacturing industries or factories), making it almost impossible to produce real capitalists, ruling class and the type of authority needed to build a worthwhile functionally stable state (Fadakinte, 2014).

From the foregoing, the interconnection and interrelationship that exist between economy and politics is quite obvious, such that this relationship poses an overwhelming influence on the development of social classes, as well as on other socio-political forces that give the state its nature and character (Fadakinte, 2014). The political economy of the post-colonial Nigerian state vis-à-vis its constitutional roles to its citizens is indeed a pointer to grasp the characterisation of social classes in Nigeria, and critically highlights the class character of the state and the effects of the prevailing leadership deficit in the country. An insight into the economic disposition of the ruling class in Nigeria's post-colonial state is instructive in understanding the dynamics of the nature of colonial investments and the quality the contemporary leadership in Nigeria, bearing in mind that the ruling class functionally define and characterises the state and by extension, ensures the security and welfare of its people.

The ruling class, for this paper, comprises the capitalist group (Western commercial agents) that emerges from a balance of different social forces and imposes its political cliché to rule the masses and ultimately manage their common patrimony. They are the few individuals who are strategically positioned to rule the majority of people and essentially manage the commonwealth, by virtue of their advantaged access to state apparatus and relationship to the means of production. This small number of people who control state power as well as possess and control the means of production (economic/commercial power) such as land, tools, machines, raw materials and money with which they exploit and alienate the workers (masses) who are in the vast majority - by appropriating the surplus products resulting from their surplus labour comprises the ruling class. This exploitation, as well as appropriation, is facilitated and further enhance with the apparatus of the state. It can thus, be argued that the state is indeed a tool in the hand of the ruling class to



suppress the resistance of its opposing and antagonising class from the colonial to the post-colonial era (Mills, 1962; Draper, 1978).

The question may be asked whether the state changed with the coming of independence. The answer is yes, however... yes, the state changed into a post-colonial form in which it could be said to have become a little more responsive to the needs of the local population. Nevertheless, its essence, the class character remained. What actually changed was the class in whose dominant interest it worked. It is however instructive to mention here that, while on the one hand, a Nigerian ruling class enjoys the protection and support of the state; on the other hand, foreign economic groups such as the oil companies and other transnational corporations for instance, with business interest in Nigeria, also enjoy the protection and support of the post-colonial state. More so, it is also the advantage of these foreign companies that the Nigerian post-colonial state makes and enforces laws that regulate the relationship between workers and employers. The Nigerian government also invites foreign investors and assists them to set up shops in Nigeria from where they earn and expatriate profits (Ekekwe, 2009).

In connection to the above, Ake (1996) lamented that Nigeria like most of Africa appears to be reproducing a unique historical experience of a self-absorbed political elite with no national project whatever, not even an inadequate one. The ruling class of Nigeria's post-colonial state is totally absorbed in the quest for absolute and eternal power. Members of this class know only their interests. It is the only morality they have and their only religion. They hear only echoes of their voices and see only images of themselves looming to fill every space and every consciousness.

Ake (1996) further asserted that, since independence in 1960, the form and function of the state in Nigeria have not changed. Just like in the colonial era, state power remains the same: immense, arbitrary, often violent, and always threatening. Politics remains a zero-sum contest (the winner takes it all); so, power is sought by all means and maintained by all means, in a legacy of lawless political competition amidst an ideological void. This power struggle within and among members of the ruling class is so totally absorbing that the pursuit of development is all but impossible. It is therefore not surprising that what has been developing in post-colonial Nigeria is underdevelopment.

Indeed, the colonial carryovers by the ruling class of post-independent Nigeria have often left many a Nigerian to wonder if the present crop of leaders are actually Nigerians or foreigners. Most citizens even see members of the ruling class in Nigeria as indigenous agents of global capitalism who eat from both hands – on the one hand, siphoning the commonwealth of Nigeria, and on the other hand, receiving fat commissions from transnational corporations (especially those in the oil and gas sector) operating in Nigeria, by helping these corporations to control and subjugate their own citizens for neo-colonial exploitations. The following section, briefly, examines the character of Nigeria's ruling class in the light of the Nigerian brand of capitalism.

Capitalism and the Leadership Deficit in Nigeria

It can be rightly said that the colonial government was the political expression (a major pillar of the super-structure) of the interests of European capitalism (the base or sub-structure). The colonial government used its military force to maintain law and order so that the large foreign trading companies could do their business with little distraction. By conniving with and encouraging these European companies to make their profits in Nigeria and invest same in overseas, the colonial state did not primarily have the best interests of the colonized at heart. By discouraging local industrialization, the colonial state and the foreign firms want Nigeria to remain a producer of raw



materials (cocoa, cotton, palm oil, etc.) for European industries and a ready market for their processed (manufactured) goods (Ake, 1981; Ekekwe, 2009).

Essentially, the colonial state deliberately refused to create or assist indigenous capitalists in Nigeria for its Eurocentric interests. It was only a few years before the country's independence in 1960 that the departing colonial government began to make a conscious effort to create and support Nigerian capitalists. Since attaining independence, successive Nigerian Governments both at the Regional (State) and Federal levels have worked very hard to create Nigerian capitalists who colonialism failed to create – but with only marginal success. However, because of the dependent nature of Nigeria's capitalism on the global North and its commercial orientation (buying and selling instead of processing raw materials), it could not sustain the emergence and stability of a virile dominant capitalist class in the country. Consequently, the one sure route to capital accumulation by the local dominant class and those who want to enter this class remains, ironically, politics – such as the search for access or attachment to the state, through which apparatus substantial oil revenues are received. This increases the competition for access to the state and in turn creates instability which has the effect of further weakening the prospects of economic growth and development. One of the inevitable economic results is the existence of a disproportionate large informal sector (one-man businesses and small-scale enterprises) which is neither pre-capitalist nor capitalist in nature and over which the state has little or no control – except to extort them through all manner of levies (Ake, 1996; Ekekwe, 2009 & 2015).

Though there hardly exists any capitalist economy that is free from corruption, Ake (1981 & 1996) and Ekekwe (2009 & 2015) noted that capitalism in Nigeria has been accompanied by a very high level of corruption. The extremely high-level misappropriation of public funds as well as bribery, kick-backs, ten per cent syndrome, embezzlement, etc., by both public and private officials and agencies, has, over the years, placed Nigeria as a “top” corrupt country based on the indices used by Transparency International. On his part, Ekekwe (2009 & 2015) observed that Nigerian capitalism is going to be in terrible routes for quite a while yet. This is not just because of the problem posed by the high-level corruption in the country. Something more fundamental is the matter: the leadership of state affairs and the economy have been contaminated by parochial politics and have become highly questionable. There is apparently no seriousness attached to achieving economic and political goals that are stipulated by the constitution or announced by this set of leaders.

Since the 1980s, successive governments (both civilian administrations and military regimes) have made statements about the diversification of the economy but with every passing year, dependence on revenues from oil and gas just seems to grow. Very critically, just like the colonial state, post-colonial Nigeria has neglected science and technology and has given education and research only lip service. As the world economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based, a largely illiterate population cannot be as productive as its material resources might suggest because qualitative human capital is critical for competitive productiveness in a globalized economy. It does not appear that Nigerian leaders are in any way seriously committed to dealing with the situation at hand, partly because Nigerian capitalism is dependent on Europe and North America, and essentially because of the inherited colonial state structures and character which can rightly be referred to as the bottom-line or crux of the leadership deficit of the country (Ekekwe, 2009 & 2015; Nwaorgu, 2014; Amadi, 2014; Alapiki, 2015; Prince, 2015; Ndu, 2016; Ohale, 2018).

For the period in which it was in existence, 1900 – 1960, the colonial state implemented policies and programmes that were largely favourable to the colonizer. These policies and programmes included taxation, the building of communications systems, and education and health



systems. On the other hand, from independence in 1960 to date (July 2022), the post-colonial state in Nigeria has promoted and protected foreign companies operating in the country, and has so far, pursued policies and agendas that essentially benefit and reproduce members of the ruling class and their allies. Members of the ruling class and their clientele groups and supporters now appear to be the “colonizers” in post-independence Nigeria. This class character of the post-colonial state in Nigeria is fundamentally derived from colonial investments and compounded by internal factors embedded in the leadership deficit of the post-independence Nigerian ruling class. These internal factors of Nigeria’s leadership deficit are manifested in several ways.

First, the Nigerian ruling class is incoherent and disorganized. No ideology or vision is holding it together. It is not guided by any minimum of indices and criteria that define the national interest that would ensure the continued existence and promotion of the unity of the state and the continuous growth of the economy. Second, following from the first, there is no unity among members of the ruling class. Every crisis exposes this lack of unity as it invariably breaks up into ethnic and regional factions. Other manifest problems of the leadership deficit in Nigeria include the disconnect between the political leadership and the citizenry; a disarticulated, dependent and stunted economy; institutional decay; high-level corruption; fierce competition for political offices; lack of legitimacy for the basic foundation of the state itself in the constitution; policy somersault (inconsistent and discontinuity in policy implementation); apparent low level of patriotism amongst the citizenry (Ake, 1996; Ekekwe, 2009).

The foregoing leadership deficit of Nigeria’s ruling class translates largely to the inability of the state to deliver common (basic) services with any degree of efficiency and regularity. There is thus no material basis for growing patriotic zeal because citizens cannot point out what the Nigerian state has done for them. The totality of these effects yields what is variously referred to as the “failed” or “weak” state syndrome. Generally speaking, the unsteady movement of the economy and state affairs due to the leadership deficit in the country gives the impression of a state that is at war with itself (Ekekwe, 2009; Nwaorgu, 2014; Amadi, 2014; Alapiki, 2015). We, therefore, agree with Rufus (2022) who noted that “I couldn’t agree less with ‘how Europe underdeveloped Africa’...however, it is now how few Africans underdeveloped Africa.” This he mentioned when he decried the pitiable level of leadership in Africa and Nigeria in particular. He reiterated that unless politics is devalued monetarily and seen no more as an enterprise, this leadership quagmire will continue to be a challenge.

Conclusion

The central proposition of this paper has been that the leadership deficit which is being experienced in Nigeria since her independence in 1960 is intricately rooted in the manner in which the country was integrated into the worldwide capitalist system as well as the subsequent investments (economic, political, administrative, educational, etc.) made by the colonial government. There is no doubt that other factors such as personality and low educational qualification issues may also have contributed to the leadership deficit in the country, the fundamental problem, however, is easily traceable to the nature of capitalism that was fashioned and bequeathed to the country at independence by the British; which still chains the economic system and correspondingly influences the political and ideological systems of the country. Nigeria’s capitalism during the colonial era and since independence is not supported by local industrialization, rather, it is a commercially dependent capitalism only producing mainly raw



materials and exporting same to European and other foreign industries and importing the finished (manufactured) goods made from these raw materials.

Since the base or sub-structure is weak, dependent and thus deformed, the economic system can only necessarily produce a corresponding superstructure (political system, ideological system, legal system, etc.) that is deficient. In this connection, the Nigerian ruling class is just an elitist group wielding only political power by virtue of its access and control of state apparatus without any economic base or structure. The so-called self-acclaimed capitalists in this group are merely exporters of raw materials and importers of manufactured goods or those agents who use state power to facilitate and collaborate with foreign capitalists to set up supermarkets and the like in the country.

The ruling class in Nigeria is incoherent and disunited. It is visionless and without any ideology for the country's national interests. Its leadership deficit is keenly seen in the disconnect between the political leadership and the welfare/security of citizens as is evidenced in the rising costs of living and the falling standard of living in a well-endowed country. Meanwhile, now and then, with non-concrete statistics, the government will announce that the economy is growing, but in reality, it is extreme poverty that is seen everywhere.

Nigeria is still a mono-cultural economy producing only raw materials which is a fundamental structural inheritance from colonial investments. During the colonial era, Nigeria was producing raw materials which were mainly agricultural produce (cocoa, cotton, groundnuts, palm oil, etc.); and since her independence in 1960 to date (July 2022), Nigeria is still producing only raw materials, this time, exporting crude oil (which has caused colossal environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods in the oil-producing areas) and importing products made from this raw material – petrol, diesel, kerosine, etc. The implication of this is that, unless there is a major structural overhaul of the economic system such as giving top priority to education and research, local industrialization and diversification, Nigeria's leadership deficit might become the greatest bane of the country's human and sustainable development.

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