



Article

Primitive Capital Accumulation and the Dynamics of African Politics: Focus on Nigeria.

Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of
Political Science (NAJOPS).
2017, Vol. 5(1)
ISSN: 2992-5924
©NAJOPS 2017
Reprints and permissions:
www.najops.org.ng

NWEKE, Anselm C.
Department of Public Administration
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu University,
Igbariam Campus

Abstract

This paper examined the nature and manner in which politics is practised in Africa with emphasis on Nigeria. The ways in which people seek political power has made politics a do-or-die affair in Nigeria. The objective of this paper was to critically examine the major factors that impede free and peaceful political process in Nigeria. The paper argued that capitalism has been embedded and enthroned in African political system. Therefore, people's interest in governance is not formed by what they intend to contribute to society, but on how much wealth they will attain at the end of their tenure in office. The paper's analysis put forth the argument that this has been the cog in the wheel of African development as African leaders siphoned the treasury of the country and turn public money into private money.

Introduction

One of the basic principles of democracy is regular election which is the basis for either re-electing the incumbent or changing him/her with another person. Every electoral period in Nigeria is characterized by intense struggle for electoral positions among the contestants. Each candidate or political party will employ every possible means to outsmart the other contestants or political parties. Thus, in order to outsmart the opponent and seize political power a lot of undemocratic activities are employed such as snatching of ballot boxes and stuffing it with ballot papers by one political party in favour of its candidate. Also, there is an issue of kidnapping and killing of political opponent, bribing of electoral officers and a host of other illegal and unlawful activities. The question is why do Nigerians see the acquisition of political power as do-or-die affair? To answer this question, this paper will X-ray the nature and manner in which the Nigerians play politics. To analyze this, the paper adopts power theory as its analytical model. It critically looks into primitive capital accumulation in the country.

Corresponding Author:

Nweke, Anselm C. Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus.
Email: nwekeanselm@yahoo.com

The introduction of capitalism in greater part of Africa did overhaul a lot of things in Africa, for it has its own values and ideological bent. Capitalist mode of production determines the well-being of people and couple with the fact that it has many distributive networks; it kept everybody on its toes. Here, lies the problem with politics in modern Africa. This suggests in a sense why some principles tend to ground African politics in the modern and contemporary period (Osegbue and Nwokoye, 2006). These principles or philosophies are: materialism and Machiavellian principle of the end justifies the means approach to politics. The accumulation of capital from the state by African political leaders forms the basis for their adoption of the end justifies the means. Ake (1996) argues on the key question regarding the African condition. Why African is not developing over the past three decades. African preoccupation with development has had only marginal success. Most Africans are worse off than they were, health and nutritional problems are widespread and infrastructure is eroding ... the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, the corruption of the leaders, poor labour discipline ... these factors are not irrelevant to the problem or in combination, there could be serious impediments to development... by all indications; political conditions in African are the greatest impediments to development.

Colonialism introduced capitalism in African states. Toyo (2011) argues that capitalism arises from the ownership of money capital with which one can acquire as property tool, land, merchandise, and the labour ability of other people for making money profit leading to the accumulation of more money capital. The acquisition of the sort of wealth or property that makes a person powerful in a class society is its success criterion. Thus, property impacts social power.

Power Theory

This paper adopts power theory as its analytical model. S.P. Varma, in his book, *Modern Political Theory*, notes that the power theory of the state, with its emphasis primarily on the development of effective military power by the state was first advocated in Germany in the nineteenth century by historians like Heinrich Von Treitschke and philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, and was upheld by several writers in the twentieth century. Thus, from the explanation of power theory, it is concerned with the authority of the state to maintain and assert itself.

Here, we are looking at power from the political science perspective in regards to the governance of the state. In the words of Max Weber, politics is 'the struggle of power or the influencing of those in power". The field of political science, according to him, is "the field of study of social controls or more specifically, of the control relationship of human and even animal wills" (Weber in Varms, 2011). Political power is a complex form which always presupposes other forms of power, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion; however, none of them could be regarded as subordinate to any other. Thus, this explains the intense quest for political power by African leaders.

The Nature and Dynamics of Nigerian Politics

The country, Nigeria, was created as a result of West European capitalist imperialism that began in 1870 and 1880 throughout the world. In that imperialism, British, French, German, Italian, and Belgian military men and other adventurers scrambled for territorial in Africa that they could exploit as raw material producers and markets for the leading capitalist firms in their respective countries (Toyo, 2011).

Nigeria started as Northern protectorate and Southern protectorate; they became two sister colonies. Thus, in 1914, the two colonies were amalgamated into one Nigeria by Fredrick Lord Lugard. Nigeria was under the leadership of Britain till 1st October, 1960.

However, by 1953 - 54, the British colonialists themselves started talking about guiding Nigeria to self-government. At the same time, as soon as some of them who were not very patriotic elite, saw that the British colonists were ready to concede a measure of self-rule, they became interested in politics. Hence, they joined the NCNC, AG and NPC. It is imperative to note that their interest was not in what could be done for the masses and the country, but in the power and revenue to be handed over by the colonialists. The, petty-bourgeoisie, therefore, joined the NCNC, AG and NPC. Thus, the petty-bourgeoisie is the group that Nigeria's independence was handed over to.

The Petty-Bourgeoisie

According to Ibeano (2012), the petty-bourgeoisie is sandwiched between the bourgeoisie and the working class. They are small property owners who are not only aspire to be bourgeois status but also have an interest in maintaining the system. The petty-bourgeoisie, like the working class, is also oppressed by the capital and this is particularly clear in phases of capitalist crisis when its members tend to experience a rapid descent to the working class. This also explains why under such conditions, this class has a high tendency of allying with the working class, an alliance which is often marked by revolts against the power bloc (Ibeano, 2011). Therefore, this alliance is formed to help the petty-bourgeoisie achieve its aim, "to acquire power".

Ibeano (2011) notes that in a capitalist situation where the bourgeoisie is yet "underdeveloped" as an economically and politically dominant class, the petty-bourgeoisie develops a specificity in which it is no longer simply an auxiliary class mainly managing class domination for the bourgeoisie, but a politically pertinent (perhaps determinant though not dominant) class. He argues that in such a situation, the intrinsic characteristics of the petty-bourgeoisie came to the fore and become pervasive, particularly at the political and ideological levels of structure, which are the principal sites of functioning of the new petty-bourgeois.

According to Poulantzas in Ibeano (2011), these characteristics include petty-bourgeois- individualism, attraction to the status quo and fear of revolution, the myth of 'social advancement' and aspiration to bourgeois status; belief in the neutral state above classes; political instability and a tendency to support 'strong states' and Bonapartist regimes.

In explaining the nature of politics in Nigeria, Ibeano (2011) summarizes the class instincts of the petty-bourgeois and its effects as follows:

1. **State-Centric:** The petty-bourgeoisie is a state-oriented class and it is oriented to strong states. Given that it is an unproductive class, at best petty commodity producers but mainly salaried work on the margins of capitalism. Thus, this class supports state redistribution of income which puts its members at an advantage over the working people.
2. **Bonapartism:** This is derived from petty-bourgeoisie state-centric character. A Bonapartist technocratic state guarantees a relative autonomy of state institutions from the bourgeoisie, enabling the state-based petty-bourgeoisie to pursue its interests.
3. **Status-quo Orientation:** While they dread proletarianization, the petty-bourgeois at the same time has a morbid fear for a revolutionary transformation of society. Thus, its members prefer the status quo in which the state dispenses patronages.

4. **Aspiration to Bourgeois' Status:** The petty-bourgeois has a strong tendency to use state resources to build an economic base, mainly transforming into a comprador bourgeoisie (contractors, service providers, import-export traders, foreign exchange dealers, etc).
5. **Individualism:** The petty-bourgeoisie is highly characterized by individualism, thus, known with excessive pursuit of narrow (individual, sectional) interests.
6. **Political Unstable:** In terms of political action (praxis), the petty-bourgeoisie is "a swing class". The members swing easily between the bourgeois and the working class since they are sandwiched between the two classes. Worthy of note in this regard is the intellectual petty-bourgeoisie, which is permanently divided between intellectuals of the bourgeoisie or intellectuals of the working people.

This is the situation in which African state found itself. The position of the petty-bourgeois in Africa is detrimental to the development of the state. They anchored on the state in order to amass wealth. The petty-bourgeois class members see access to the state as access to wealth. Thus, they can employ any means to acquire state power. The reason behind their do-or-die approach to political power is because they have strong tendency to use state resources to build an economic base.

Primitive Capital Accumulation: The Cog in the Wheel of African Development

In capitalist societies, the success criterion is the amount of profit that one can make and accumulate in private enterprise in what is called "primitive and capitalist accumulation". The primitive capital - that is the capital which enables a would-be capitalist to have many people as his employees. This capital is accumulated from various sources which include non-capitalist banking, unequal capitalist trade, government revenue, large scale stealing, land rent and the privatization of state property etc. (Toyo, 2011). The acquisition of the sort of wealth or property that makes a person powerful in a class society is the capitalist's success criterion. Thus, wealth impacts on social power. Capitalism has no doubt created a condition where the orientation has become that of exploitation and endless amassing of wealth at the expense of both the state and her citizens by the petty bourgeois in Nigeria. Public policy has been a reflection of the capitalist instincts of the various decision (policy) makers. Ezeh (2008) notes that "it is no longer hidden, the inordinate capitalistic instincts that has been found in almost every Nigerian leadership to the extent that greed, embezzlement and corrupt enrichment have become common sites". It is surprising at the rate at which almost every public office holder is becoming a culprit of corrupt enrichment in Nigeria today.

Thus, public position has been reduced to no other thing than an invitation to partake in the sharing of the national cake even when nothing is done as contribution to its baking. Therefore, what the leaders are interested in is how to share the wealth of the country at the detriment of the masses. People are suffering while the political office holders are busy diverting public fund (money) into their private pocket (purse). The state resources have fallen into wrong hands (petty-bourgeois) and the masses are dying of hunger in the midst of plenty. This is in line with the World Bank report that the Nigerian rich oil money is only been shared by about one per cent of the entire population. This is possible because of corruption and capital accumulation.

Apparently, accountability has been thrown to dustbin and conscience crucified at the expense of inordinate material acquisition born out of primitive capitalism in the country and by her citizens. Thus, Ezeh (2013) notes that "the activities of public administration in states like Nigeria are guided by the class nature of the state". It is imperative, however, to observe that though politics is a universal

phenomenon, there are indeed, differences between politics in Africa and politics in the developed capitalist societies of Europe and America. These differences stem from the way and manner politics is conducted in these societies. In fact, the structure of a society, its prevalent mode of production, external environment, the historical experience of society and its political action affect the conduct and outcome of politics. While the developed capitalists' societies of Europe and America have ensured political stability in their domestic politics, virtually all African states south of the Sahara are facing serious crises that have in many instances threatened to destabilize not only domestic politics but also the entire regional political arrangements.

The Looters of Nigeria's Economy

We will briefly look at some Nigeria's political leaders and the money they alleged to have looted.

Some of the looters

S/N	Name	Post Held	Amount Looted
1	Igbinedo	Former Edo State Governor	N19 billion
2	James Ibori	Former Delta State Governor	Money laundering
3	Rev. Jolly Nyame	Former Taraba State Governor	N2.4 billion
4	Joshua Dariye	Former Plateau State Governor	N700 million
5	Iyabo Bello Obasanjo	Senator	N300 million

Source: Nairaland - copyright 2005-2015 Oluwaseun Osewa

Dada (2013) in his article, How they looted Nigeria dry and a Litany of Abandoned EFCC Corruption Cases, identifies many past political office holders who have been alleged of embezzling state funds. Most of these matters or cases of corruption are still pending with Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The following names were noted:

- Chimaroke Nnamani, former Enugu State Governor 5.3billion
- Chief Onyema Ugochukwu 10.2 billion while serving as the chairman of NDDC
- Sarrtini Furati, former Governor of Jigawa State was alleged to have misappropriated 36 billion state funds.
- Orji Uzo Kalu, former Governor of Abia State, was arraigned on July 27, 2007 before an Abuja High Court on a 107 - charge of money laundering, official corruption and criminal diversion of over 5 billion - funds.
- Dimeji Bankole Usman Natada, Ndudi Elemele Peter Odili and host of others

However, most of these people who have been accused or alleged to have embezzled state funds by EFCC and various courts in Nigeria have not been convicted, except, James Ibori who is currently serving the same jail term in London. Nigeria government has not done much to jail these people who siphoned the state treasury and turned people's fund into private money. Also, considering the huge amount of money that is been amassed by the political office holders, everybody in Nigeria tend to have his or her eyes in government. Thus, everyone wants to have an opportunity to serve in government either as elected executive, a legislature or political appointee so that he or she will equally make his or her own money. No wonder, political process in Nigeria is characterized by do-or-die affairs, because everybody is interested in political power so that he or she will have an opportunity to make money. This explains the reason behind the high incidence of political killing, kidnapping, thuggery, snatching of ballot box, bribing of electoral officers and many more that is prevalence in Nigeria political process. The political

office holders are not interested in what they will do for the people, but on how much wealth they are going to acquire at the end of their tenure in office. The interest of the political office holders in Nigeria is how to ride on private jet, drive the most costly car, live in one of the best buildings in Abuja, have houses all over the developed countries of the world; their children attending the best school in the world and their wives or husbands will be swimming in money.

Conclusion

It is discovered that the developmental problems of Africa and Nigeria in particular is masterminded by Nigeria citizens. Nigeria citizens from the look of things do not like this country and that is why they are not interested in developing it. Instead, their interest is guided by what they will benefit from the country's economy. In other words, our political office holders have a narrow interest that is rested on their private welfare to the detriment of the citizens.

The petty-bourgeoisie who is sandwiched between the working class and the bourgeois class sees the state as the only industry that is established to create wealth. Hence, access to state is access to wealth.

Recommendations

Capital accumulation has made cost of governance very high in Nigeria. The executive appropriate so much money for their office. The appointment of many ministers, special assistants and personal assistants, all performing similar responsibilities, with so much finance attached to these positions. The Nigeria's legislatures, on the other hand, amass so much wealth in the name of allowances and constituency projects. Hence, struggle for political position becomes intense. The paper, therefore, recommends:

- Our political office holders should be prudent in the management of the state's resources.
- All the past and present political office holders that are alleged or accused of mismanagement or embezzlement of public funds should be tried and if found guilty, should face the whole wrath of the law.
- Public money should be used for public good,
- Money laundering should stop. The political office holders should reinvest the looted money of the country back into the country's economy. By so doing, the economy will grow, poverty and unemployment will reduce; kidnapping, prostitution and other social vices will be reduced to the barest minimum.
- The cost of governance should be reduced.

REFERENCES

- Ake, C (1996), Democracy and Development in Africa. Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Dada, S. (2013). How they looted Nigeria Dry and a Literary of Abandon EFCC Corruption Case [www.google. Com.](http://www.google.com)
- Ezeh, C. (2008). Public Administration Issues and Principles. Onitsha: Bookpoint Educational Ltd.
- Ezeh, C. (2013). Background Studies in the Principles and Practice of 'Public Administration. Onitsha: Eagleman.
- Ibeano, O. (2012). From native to citizen to indigene: Reflections on national unity and constitutional review in Nigeria. Ziks Leadership Lecture Series of the Department of Political Science Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Vol 1, No 1.
- Osegbue, C. and Nwokoye, A. (2006). The Dynamics of African Politics. Onitsha: Bookpoint Ltd.
- Oseuta.O. (2015).Names of Nigeria Corrupt Politicians, Party and their Loot. Available @ Nairaland.
- Toyo, E, (2011), Project Nigeria: the Journey so Far. Calabar: Clear Lines Publications.
- Varma, S.P. (2011). Modern Political Theory. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.