Dependency and Nigeria’s Foreign Relations

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Abstract

Dependency is a syndrome that has replicated its ugly head in endless continuum in every sphere of the societal life of Nigeria and other third world countries as this has achieved nothing more than creating an economy whose position and relation with other economics in the international system has made it incapable of autocentric development, an economy that is structurally dependent on foreign powers, an economy that has its forward linkages with those of foreign powers, an economy that lacks regional and sectorial complementarily and reciprocity etc. This paper hold’s therefore that for any meaning progress to be made in terms of autonomy both in foreign and domestic policies every form of dependency should be countered as dependency is a major bane to development and autonomy in every society. Thus, this paper in as much as it holds the incorporation of third world countries into international capitalism, (colonialism & imperialism) as the root cause of dependency, it suggests less reliance on foreign ideas and finance capital, democratic and transparent implementation of economic policies, less reliance on imported goods, good governance amongst others as sine quanon to Nigeria’s emancipation from the bondage of dependency.

Keywords: Dependency, Development and Foreign Relations.

Introduction

The Nigerian state was born into east/west ideologically bi-polar world in 1960 after about ten decades of formal British colonial imperialist domination, her political independency was concretized in 1963 with the attainment of this feat, it then meant that she was therefore going to be independent generally especially autonomous in handling both her internal and external affairs without directives from the west particularly Britain. However, this autonomy was only in principle because in reality, Nigeria was, and is still dependent in her foreign policy. This dependence is mainly a derivative from the legacy of peripheral capitalism inherited from the colonial masters. It is in line with this that Obi (2000, p. 125) says: by the time Nigeria got its independence in 1960, the British laid the foundation for future dependence. Even though independence opened up this global stage to Nigeria, the domestic structures established during colonial rule, particularly, the social, economic, political and strategic, largely gave the British the leverage to pursue and promote their
interest in Nigeria. This view is upheld as constituting dependence in post-independence Nigeria which has further perpetuated and compounded dependency in the social fabrics of the country internally and externally.

From the foregoing, this paper will be divided into endless sections as dependency is a concept with endless discussions as its impact is so grave that articles about it, is an endless process. However, for the purpose of this work, we will try to confine ourselves to the following sections. Introduction which is given above, conceptual clarification, foreign policy and dependency, theoretical framework, origin/causes of dependency, characteristics of dependency, aspects of dependency in the economy, impact/effect of dependency, conclusion and recommendation.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of foreign policy is a multi-faceted one as such, defies a universally accepted definition as various scholars in the field have given various definitions. It is line with this that Aluko (1981, p. 1) assert that nobody has really formulated a universally acceptable definition of foreign policy and probably will never succeed in doing so. This notwithstanding, Tsuwa, (2008) sees foreign policy as the reflection of a countries national interest abroad. Akinboye (1999, p. 365) sees foreign policy as the instrumentality by which states influence or seek to influence the external world and to attain objectives that are in consonance with their perceived national interest.

According to Calvert in Utume (2005) foreign policy refers to a continuous process of decision making and implementation taking place within the organizational structure of states linked to national interest.

According to Utume (2005) assets that, foreign policy categorically speaking can be discern into two ways “the blue prints and a consistent pattern of states behavior”.

That “the blue print” are simply deliberate efforts made to codify the key elements of a country’s foreign policy as proclaimed by its leaders while the consistent pattern of states behavior refers to the consistent actions and inaction of a state vis-à-vis other state in the international system defined in terms of its interest. He opined that the “blue print” can however; particularly those of Nigeria in most cases do not match their words with deeds and actions.

However, a Brazilian sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso developed the concept of dependency. Dependency simply state that the crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that are being developed but by foreigners whose interest are carefully safeguarded. Offiong (1980, p. 15). An economy is dependent to the extent that its position and relation to other economies in the international system and the articulation of its internal structure makes it incapable of auto-centric development Ake (1981, p. 55). Dependency has different brands financial trade technological, ideological and above all dependency in foreign policy/external affairs.
The type of dependency that concerns this paper is known as foreign policy dependency. We shall thus conceive dependency in Nigerian external relations as a situation whereby her foreign policy is pursued under the tutelage of the west, particularly, Britain and the United States of America.

Before going into details on the dependent nature of Nigeria’s external relations/ foreign policy we deem it fit to confine our discussion within a theoretical base, basically to give more light to the origins and ideas of dependency as dependency is not an inherent nature of our economy but a manipulated and implanted syndrome.

**Theoretical Framework**

This paper deem it fit to explain the idea of Nigeria’s dependency in its external relations under the dependency theory which emphasizes the incorporation of third world economies into international capitalism and other external factors such as colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism etc. as the root cause of dependency in all ramification in under developed societies.

The dependency theory has contributed substantially to the appreciation of the economic plight of Africa. The theory is the brain child of scholars of third world origin. Prominent among whom are Emmanuel Wallerstein, Gunder Frank, Claude Ake, Bode Onimode, Elbake, Hermassi, Anthony De Zouza etc.

These scholars are unanimous in saying that the integration of the third world economies into the world capitalist system at a premature stage is the root cause of the economic woes and dependence of Africa and other third world regions. The integration according to them was what opened the gateway for the subjugation and rapacious exploitation of the third world by western powers and thus, dependence of the former on the latter.

It is against this background that Vogler (1980, p. 3) has poured so much venom on the nefarious activities of the western power against the third world. He asserts that this dependency and underdevelopment has been perpetuated and aggravated by generation of western exploitation which have distorted and even twisted the economies of the dependent territories. Similarly, Onimode (1985, p. 246) argues that the development efforts of the third world have been frustrated by the same processes that have enhanced the development of capitalist countries. As he puts it:

> On the contrary, while the advanced capitalist countries have been developing, they have been plundering the third world through slavery, colonial and neo-colonial super profit and simultaneously under-developing third world countries by this same process. Therefore, it is also false to suggest a diffusionist hypothesis by which development will trickle down to the underdeveloped countries without the termination of their imperialist exploitation.
On his part, Wallerstein (1974) opines that the under development of Africa and the rest of the third world can be explained only within the context of the cyclical rhythms and secular trends of the world economy as a whole. He divides the world economy into two (1) the core and the (2) periphery. He explains that, the core, represent the advanced capitalist countries where economic activities such as manufacturing banking and the processing of primary products takes place. The ‘periphery’ according to him represents the poor south where raw materials are produced. In between the core and the periphery, Wallerstein, recognizes semi- peripheral areas that the role of link man between the core and the periphery. In this scheme of things, the periphery remains subservient to the core. Thus, as with Baran and Frank (1980, p. 3), Wallersteins world economy is structured in such a way that surplus flow from periphery to core. Hence the perpetual poverty, dependence and under development of Africa.

Thus, from the dependency schools view point; the under development (Dependency) of Africa and other less developed region of the world can be understood within the context of the forceful integration of their economies into the world capitalist system and the subjugation and exploitation inherent in it. From the foregoing, it therefore pertains that the dependent nature of the Nigerian state in terms of its domestic and external relations has its origin traceable to Western capitalism, colonialism, imperialism etc.

ORIGIN AND CAUSES OF DEPENDENCY:

Dependency as has become a norm in our society today is an inherited factor as it was never part of the nature and character of third world states prior to colonialism. The economies of third world countries with particular reference to what is today known as Nigeria was growing in a natural state and was independent until the advent of the Europeans in the later part of the 19th century.

The coming of the Europeans first as traders and later as colonial powers marked the turning point in the nature and orientation of the political economy of Africa. Precisely, the integration brought about far reaching consequences for the political economy and development of Africa particularly, Nigeria.

- The integration gave rise to economic integration of unequal exchange between two unequal partners. This inequality can be viewed in terms of trade whereby African economies became a dumping ground for the European surplus manufactured goods. This affected the prosperity of the African people to save and invest in the economy thus creating underdevelopment and dependency of African states.
- The economy of the various Africa states became inevitably disarticulated as the African farmers were brainwashed and dissuaded by the Europeans from producing their traditional crops and instead
persuaded to direct their energies and resources into the production of specific cash crops which were clearly meant to serve as raw materials for their industries. This negative impact of this re-orientation has been tremendous on the dependent nature of African states, in that it has put the continent and its economies have lost touch with aspects that can create and enhance socio-economic development and thus, Africa remains the least developed region in the world.

Also the manipulation and eventual conversion of the Africa economic system into a peripheral economy from which economic surplus is perpetually transferred to European cities has a devastating consequence for the economic development of the continent.

Also the imposition of the so-called stabilization measures on the Africa states by the imperial powers has over the decade contributed immensely to the inability of the African state to meet their developmental objectives. Rather than helping to remove the distortion and structural imbalances in the economy, the introduction of IMF guided Structural Adjustment Programme and other mechanistic measures in Africa prevalent most in Nigeria largely to SAP induced currency devaluation and inflation.

Other causes of dependence in Nigeria and in Africa at large that has affected its external relations aside the above discussion includes issues such as.

Brain-drain: Intelligent and able bodied young men and women that are supposed to constitute the labor force to fight against dependency are carted away to foreign lands with attractive incentives thus, dependency on external economies. The above are both origins and causes of dependency in our society today as they have gone a long way to hamper the autonomies of third world countries and their external relations in the international system.

**Dependency and Nigerian Relations**

From all that has been discussed in the preceding sections on dependency, its causes, characteristics etc, in this section, a detailed analysis will be presented here on how the dependent nature of the Nigerian state has affected its external relation and thus its foreign policy. However, a brief look at Nigerian foreign policy thrust will be given attention here.

Nigerian foreign policy objectives and its external relations like those of other nations, is aimed at achieving the dynamics of domestic policy objectives. For a developing nation like Nigeria and indeed nations of the world, the intense pursuit of foreign policy objective is essential to enable government transform the lives of their citizens through cooperation with other nations.
It is worthy to note that no nation is an island of its own. Every nation both industrialized and less industrialized cooperate and relate with each other to remedy their deficiencies.

Nigerian government over the years (1960-date) has followed foreign policy objectives that could enable Nigeria and her people benefit from such relationships. We can say with relative ease that from the time of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to date Nigerian foreign policy and external relations have almost remained the same with little emphasis on one aspect playing down the others. Africa has remained the center piece of its foreign policy. It is imperative to state that Africa as the center piece, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-aggression, respect for territorial integrity of other states, internal security and the growth of a viable economy etc. are all aimed at promoting a sound external relations; and with peaceful co-existence in the globe, the much needed economic development that will transform the Nigerian society could be pursued. It is also necessary however to recognize that the capacities of nations to pursue and enjoy their foreign policy objectives could be predicated on the following, a strong economy, political will of the leadership at any point in time, availability of vibrant and well informed civil society in a state, a well-developed human capital and of course science and technology.

However, the external relations of Nigeria and its foreign policy thrust has not been a viable and a sound one, therefore incapable of achieving its dreams owing to the fact that Nigeria is completely dependent on external economies in all ramifications. This is virtually the most perfect explanation of the position of Nigeria as a nation and in relation to other nations.

The following factors are held as some of the causes of dependency in Nigerians external relations;

- The implementation of orthodox and mechanistic approaches rather than autonomy perpetuates dependency.
  
  Some of this policies and approaches include the issues of the dictates of IM|F and World Bank regarding economic stabilization, SAP, and even the politics of debt cancellation that is presently, going on.
- Policies such as trade liberalization can only succeed in endangering endogenous efforts at industrialization.
- Relying on market forces tends to distort national priorities and to fuel inflation. Excessive budgetary reduction through the removal of subsidies the curtailing of social programs and so forth only succeed in causing social strife etc.

In sum, dependence has affected the external relations and thus the foreign policy of Nigeria basically in the fact that the economic fortunes and misfortunes of the Nigerian state and other aspects of socio-political life are controlled and dictated by external forces. Therefore, dependence has achieved nothing more than the status of a weak nation for Nigeria.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The foregoing discussion has shown clearly that Africa and other third world countries with particular reference to Nigeria’s situation has not and cannot have a sound external relation owing to the fact that the pipe laid down to perpetuate dependency is still an ongoing process and unless such pipes are broken, the independence of Nigeria and other third world countries will still be a mirage.

However, the position of this paper stands that, all hope is not lost for development and independence in the economic, political and socio-cultural life of the nation. But deliberate efforts must be made by the state to first of all define their developmental objectives and mobilize resources to pursue such objectives to their logical conclusion.

It is time for Nigeria and other third world economies to give the so called recovery and mechanistic programmes that are alien and unworkable in their environment with particular reference to the Nigerian situation a hard look. As such foreign programmes have thwarted the developmental programmes of third world countries.

There should be the formulation of indigenous programmes that will suit the nature and character of third world countries and indeed the Nigerian state which will reflect our own interest rather than adhere to the dictates of foreign powers.

Such policies can include indigenization/ nationalization of foreign owned companies to ensure adequate participation of African countries in the running of their own economy, there should be diversification of the economy to ensure inter-sectorial linkages which will guide against a mono-cultural economy. Also emphasis should be placed on industrialization to ensure effective productivity rather than relying on foreign products. Also there should be economic and sub-regional cooperation amongst African states to promote trade and other economic activities.

In this way, Nigeria and indeed other dependent economies of the world will certainly get out of poverty and issue of dependency and thus, there will be coherence and consistent external relations between the Nigerian state and other economies of the international community.

Emphasis should also be placed on the internal fabrics of Nigerian society as external factors alone cannot capture issues of over dependence of the Nigerian state as issues such as good governance, discipline rather than indiscipline, transparency and accountability rather than corruption and embezzlement should be encouraged.
Bibliography


