

THOUGHTS OF DEVELOPMENT TRUSTEESHIP IN EUROPE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON COLONIAL POLICIES IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The study took a critical look at how various doctrines of development trusteeship in Europe in the nineteenth century impacted colonial policies in Africa. References in the text were made specifically to policies relating to the land question in Africa, disintegration of the traditional governance structure, integration of Africa into the world economies among others. Although colonialism has elapsed as a period in African history, the development of the continent is still modelled along western developmental lines with Africa still producing raw materials for markets in the developed world. Until such a time that there is a paradigm shift in development focus towards industrialisation, the continent of Africa will still be challenged in terms of growth. Keywords : development, trusteeship, colonial policies, Africa

Introduction

The concept of development arose in the nineteenth century as a way of solving the challenges that had been invoked by capitalism in Europe. Prior to this historical epoch in European history, Karl Marx as cited by Rodney (1972) distinguished in European history several stages of developmental epochs. The first of this historical period in Europe was communalism. This was a period in European history where property was collectively owned and shared; work was done in common, with goods and service shared equally. This period was also very evident in African societies and cultures. Communal labour was entered into by cross section of African communities to make work more efficient. For example, the *Dokpwe* work group of *Dahomey* (Benin) had a wider application in serving the whole community to perform heavy task of clearing land, house building among others. Among the *Akan* in the

Gold Coast, this communal activity was known as *nnoboa*. By this, with the offer of some food and beer/ palm wine a work team could be mobilised in the short time in most African societies and cultures.

The next epoch after communalism was slavery. This was caused by extension of domineering elements within the family and by some groups being physically overwhelmed by others. Although slaves at the time did a variety of work, their main task was to produce food for those they were subservient to. After slavery followed feudalism where agriculture remained the main means of making a livelihood, but the land which was necessary for this purpose was essentially in the hands of a few people. During this historical epoch, the workers on the land were no longer the personal property of the master, but rather they were tied to the land of a particular estate. The last historical epoch was capitalism and this period actually changed European societies where the greatest wealth in society was produced not in agriculture but by the use of machines in factories. During this historical period in Europe, there was concentration of wealth in the hands of few people. These people were the bourgeoisie who had originated as merchants of the feudal epoch and had rose to be industrialists and financiers in capitalist Europe.

The origin of development as a discourse emerged in the nineteenth century in Europe as a natural process arising out of social evolution which has arisen from capitalism. This process of capitalist industrial revolution in Europe resulted in the social problems of unemployment, poverty, surplus population and welfare that needed to be solved by planned intervention by the state. It is this that Cowen and Shetton (1996) referred to as immanent development. Development was an agenda therefore to compensate for the negative propensities of capitalism. This intervention therefore needed to be undertaken by someone/ state who had knowledge to ameliorate the adverse or excesses of capitalist production.

Development therefore, always implies an idea of trusteeship. Trusteeship according to Cowen and Shetton (1996) is an intent which is expressed, by one source of agency, to develop the capacity of another. It is that which binds the process of development to the

intent of development. Therefore, the concept of development became an increasingly important factor of colonial policies in Africa in the twentieth century.

Ideas of Development Trusteeship In Europe In The Nineteenth Century

The ideas of development trusteeship has evoked a number of intellectual discourse in Europe spanning from the thoughts of the Saint Simon to that of Fredrick List which imparted on colonial trusteeship in Africa. The thoughts of Saint Simon first emerged in France. The Saint Simonians held the view that order in society will be imposed by the most enlightened members of the society which is based on capability not on nobility. According to the Saint Simonians, the solution to the consequences of progress lied with those who had the capacity to utilise land, labour and capital in the interest of society as a whole.

August Comte who was a student of Saint Simon also postulated the doctrine of positivism. Comte's thought on development was shaped by Saint Simon. He argued that if societal resources are to be placed in the hands of the most enlightened, then they should be guided by experts in the science of history or sociology who understood the laws of social evolution. John Stuart Mill on his part advocated that the creation of capitalism makes room for the creation of ideas through expansion of education to the masses. In his opinion, a condition for education was a radical extension of 'liberty', thus the success of development is about achieving progress with order through education. However Mill argued that development could only occur where the conditions of development were already present. Societies in which the conditions were not present had to be guided by those from societies in which such conditions of development were present.

Frederick List on his part postulated that the self interested individual was feeble and destitute alone and that the state needed to take up the task of constructive development. In his opinion nations have unequal potential but through the policy of economic development, all these states could activate their full potential. He further argued that existing human races in 'savage' states would progress more rapidly in riches and civilisation if these states continued to exchange their agricultural products for manufactured goods of the temperate zone.

It is an undeniable fact that from the foregoing arguments, central to the idea of development as an intentional practice is the principle of trusteeship. This ideological construct of development trusteeship presupposes a relationship in which a natural person is responsible for the general well – being of one or more persons who are deemed to be incapable of directing their own affairs. This principle of trusteeship therefore became the fundamental ideological foundation of European Colonial Empire. Each of these doctrines although formulated outside of Africa, had been the premise upon which African colonialism had been championed.

Influence of Trusteeship on Colonial Policies in Africa in the Twentieth Century

The different ideologies overtime have reflected the debates about the forms in which development trusteeship has taken place in Africa. Ideas about state development and the liberal reaction to them were all developed outside of Africa, yet they have influenced greatly the official colonial and post colonial policies in the twentieth century. For example, land alienation, state trusteeship and free market policies were developed outside Africa but these polices have rather been the pivot upon which development policies have been formulated on how African societies and properties should be held and regulated.

Trusteeship in Africa cannot be discussed without being contextualised in its colonial form. These colonial influences of trusteeship by the European Colonisers are evident in varied form such as the exploitation of the colonies, the land question, disintegration of native African institutions, alienation of Africans from their heritage; making Africans despise their past cultural values among others which span the period of 1800 to 1960 and beyond. The effects of colonialism as experienced by Africans continued to be felt long even after decolonisation and that Africans' current woes are attributed to this historical past.

By 1895 Chamberlain, a British Colonial Secretary made an instructive proclamation on the reason why it was necessary for development to encompass the colonial empire as a whole. He stated 'It is not enough to occupy certain spaces of the world's surface unless you can make the best of them, unless you are willing to develop them. We are the landlords of a great estate; it is the duty of the landlord to develop his estate...in the long run... they would

sooner or later earn a large reward either directly or indirectly'. This statement by Chamberlain feeds into the intent of the British Crown to develop colonies in order to provide both outlets for British investments and markets for British goods in order to meet the British 'national needs' of industrial expansion and employment. This exploitative intent of the colonisers ensured that the colonies became producers of raw materials to feed the industries of European Powers. By this reasoning, there was no attempt to industrialise the colonising states. Even where they did, the infrastructure built was in areas where they could obtain the needed raw material to be transported to the coast for export. For example, in the Gold Coast, the northern part was completely ignored in terms of infrastructural development because that area did not have any resource or raw material needed by the colonisers. What they did was to build complex railways in cocoa and mineral bearing areas to the seaports for export. The African economy by this policy was integrated into the global capitalist economic system, as a peripheral member of the colonisers.

Amin (1972) lamented that the aim of colonial trusteeship was basically exploitative, built on a center – periphery relationship to obtain cheap export for the development of the center. The colonialists achieved this exploitation through various means, sometimes through direct domination and brutal political coercion and at other times they maintained ties with the local social classes to serve as 'conveyer belts' through which they could exploit the colonies.

The land question was crucial to the political economy of colonial rule in Africa since the control of land was a key imperial economic objective of the colonisers. Land alienation was often at the center of early conflicts between European colonial powers and African rulers. Between the periods of 1896 and 1912, the British Crown made claims to lands in the colonies by passing the colonial land bill specifically in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Such claims were also made on Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, and Benin among others. In Southern Africa, Pwiti and Ndoro (1999) postulated that the occupation of white settlers was motivated by greed to exploit the rich gold fields, but when this failed most especially in Zimbabwe, they shifted their focus onto agriculture. This idea to engage in agriculture by the white settlers culminated in the enactment of series of legislation. The most inconceivable of this in Zimbabwe in 1930 was the 'Land Apportionment' which was subsequently amended to the

‘Land Tenure Act of 1969’ arrogating the most fertile agricultural lands to European settlers while the poorer areas went to the Africans. The cumulative effects of these enactments were the creation of class societies of black and white areas of influence. This divisions was evident in South Africa during the era of apartheid and in Kenya, this issue of land alienation led to displacing of a number of Kikuyu from their ancestral homes thus resulting in the break in cultural continuity from their past.

This idea of land alienation by the colonisers was an indictment on African nationalism because land was held in trust by chiefs for the people who had specific use right over lands in their community. Communal land ownership is what African traditional societies thrived on. In fact, land was the capital of the indigenous people, so taking their land meant depriving the people of their source of livelihood. In areas where the colonisers were comfortable with the climate, they made a deliberate attempt to settle and cultivate the land. This was possible specifically in most Southern African countries. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) observed that the land issue became the basis of African labour supply to white farmers. When the colonisers eventually confiscated lands, Africans had no source of livelihood but to work for the colonisers unwillingly. By providing labour meant the Africans had to pay tax imposed by the colonisers. Taxes were collected in the coloniser’s currency, so that in order to have that, the Africans had no option than to provide labour for European farmers which hitherto could be paid for in kind in the traditional African society.

Prior to the proclamation and the establishment of European colonial power in Africa, the supreme authority over the various indigenous states; political, military and the maintenance of law and order was vested in the respective heads of clans, villages etc. The European colonisers were successful in destabilising this autonomy of the traditional African governance structure through the introduction of indirect rule. Indirect rule as a colonial policy was widely credited to Lugard in his doctrine of the dual mandate. By this policy of indirect rule, Lugard supports an ‘appropriate native policy that emphasised administration along native lines’ through the use of local indigenous chiefs and the creation of native courts. The use of this colonial policy reduced the once autonomous African rulers to agents and in fact servants of the colonial government. The chiefs could not by this policy raise an

army and tax. These limitations usurp the powers of traditional authorities breaking the traditional African governance structure. Women who played active part in the traditional governance process had no place under the policy of indirect rule. The queen mothers were therefore relegated because the policy did not assign them any defined role in the new governance process.

Colonial conquest led to the demand to incorporate and transform colonial societies through the introduction of western cultural norms and practices especially the spread of Christianity, western education and medicine. The European colonisers perceived the African native people as ‘backward’, static and trapped in their customary ways. However, Casely – Hayford (1903) an African Nationalist, stated succinctly that ‘before even the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people, having our own ideas of government’. The colonisers per their perception of Africans therefore felt it was their moral obligation to civilise these perceived ‘backward’ people. The French referred to this as the *mission civilsatrice* which was to eradicate native institutions considered as antithetical to development and therefore the need to educate the native Africa population. However, a critical observation and analysis of colonial education only points to the fact, such education provided by the colonisers was essentially literacy which was meant to produce clerks among others to support the exploitative colonial administration. Mart (2011) noted that the colonisers through education only wanted the Africans to be useful and qualified for their economic development. Most importantly, colonial education was not rooted in African culture and therefore could not foster any meaningful development with the African environment because it had no organic linkages.

Conclusion

Colonialism which was a by product of the various development doctrines which arose in the nineteenth century in Europe was not a pleasant experience to Africans. These doctrines of development in its most overt political form according to Amanor (2013) was an approach through which dominant political powers within the world attempted to bring other nations under their ambit, to conform to their vision of the organisation of society and an attempt to construct the world in their own image. The policies did not lay any solid foundation for

African industrial take off and even in the twenty first century today, most African nations rely on western models of development. There is the need for African State to free themselves from western development models if it is to succeed. The consistent production of raw materials to European market should be looked at. The need to add value to such raw materials produced on the continent will ensure that African goods also become competitive on the world market ensuring a paradigm shift for western models of development.

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