The Political Economy of Capitalist State Formation in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Fragility of an Emergent State

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Abstract: The Nigerian state is at best emerging and dangerously wobbling to emerge, with consequences on its ability to function effectively. This paper employs the political economy approach to explain the crisis of state formation in Nigeria. It explains how colonialism created a dominant class without economic base which resulted in the inverted process of capitalist formation because Nigeria is building a capitalist state without capitalists, those who should normally possess paternalistic interest to build the state. Thus, in Nigeria, those with political power lack economic power thereby making the society to be unable to produce capitalists, evolve a ruling class and construct hegemonic order, to build a functional, viable and stable state. Consequently, the state should disengage from its absolute control of the economy so that the economy can grow, breed capitalists and create a ruling class that will establish a regime with hegemony, to build a functional and stale state.

Keywords: Political Economy, State Formation, Nationalist Struggle, Factions.

1. Introduction

The Nigerian state is in crisis. And this is obvious. Today, the Nigerian state cannot function adequately to provide effective management of the economy and resources, provide adequate infrastructures for the welfare of the citizens, provide adequate security and successfully conduct accurate census and operate a democracy that is characterized by free and fair elections. And as agued
by (Smith, 2009), the nature of the state, the institutions through which legitimate power is exercised and enforced, is central to the socio/political processes of a country.

We are therefore interested in the process of state formation in Nigeria, because colonialism had created the capitalist state formation processes when the environment did not have the institutions and values, or were there indigenous capitalists to grow capitalism. Also, we need to adopt the political economy approach in analyzing the instability that characterizes the Nigerian post-colonial state so that we are able to understand the problem with the dominant class and why the dominant class cannot evolve a ruling class.

Consequently, the paper begins by relating political economy to the state in order to explain how political economy is a sharp tool for analyzing state formation. Secondly, the paper interrogates the process by which colonialism created social classes with the imposition of capitalism which resulted in the beginning of class struggle as nationalism. This is followed by the analysis of the nationalists struggle and the development of factions, the development that defined pre-independent politics that brought about an inverted process of capitalist state formation.

Finally, the paper ends by analyzing the absence of hegemony and class domination in the process of state formation which is the cause of the fragility of the Nigerian post-colonial state.

2. Political Economy and the State: Some Conceptual Notes

Political economy is the study of the basis of the development of society (Nikitin, 1983), either as seen by Adam Smith who defines it as the science of managing a nation’s resources so as to generate wealth or Marx, who believes that it is how the ownership of the means of production influences historical processes, (Weingast and Wittman, 2008). Political economy, being the science of the development of social production is really about relations between people, i.e. the form of ownership of means of production, the position of the various classes and the distribution of wealth. (Nikitin, 1983). Thus, the social structure of a society which is part of the superstructure is determined by the relations of production. Also, the political structure which is related to the state has some bearing on the economy while the state itself is a principal agent of the economy (Sdobnikor, 1983). Therefore, the relationship between economics and politics is a reciprocal one, for politics largely determines the framework of economic activities and channels it to serve the interest of the dominant groups, making the exercise of power a major determinant of the economic system (Art and Jerris, 2007). Also, the economic process tends to redistribute power and wealth thereby transforming power relationships among groups and also transforming the political system (Art and Jerris, 2007). Thus, in reality, wealth and power are ultimately joined and lack of wealth means no power and without power the struggle for wealth is arduous.
To the extent that the structure and culture of capitalism create inequality and is responsible for the development of social classes, to that extent will the link between economics (wealth) and politics (power) be a useful analysis in understanding state formation processes (Paul, 2009). In the case of Nigeria, but for colonialism that brought and imposed capitalism on Nigeria the existence of exploitation, which characterizes capitalism and creates a class society (Kosonen, 1977) does not have precedence in Nigeria. We therefore should be interested in how, during colonial rule, the activities of the economic system impacted on the political system and how some political actions were responsible for the behavior of major economic actors with consequences on the performance of the economy (Danziger, 2001), thereby creating a social formation that was alien to the colonial society and which resulted in the redefinition of the Nigerian society as a social organization.

Political economy is therefore an approach that is by consequence the interrelationship between economics and politics, in so far as the dynamics of the interrelationship has a strong bearing on the development of social classes and on the social forces that define the nature and character of the state. That is why the economy is the most critical factor behind the socio/political forces that account for the development and evolution of the state, which makes political economy a viable tool in analyzing and explaining the evolution and development of the Nigerian state.

Thus, how did colonialism implement capitalism during pre-independence era? In other words, what were the consequences of the imposition of capitalism in a society with no capitalist class, where capitalist social classes did not exist and indeed, where there was no capitalist state? And how did the metropolitan bourgeoisie use the colonial state for capitalist formation in Nigeria that led to the emergence of a disorganized and in-cohesive dominant class and a state that has since independence been crisis ridden?

3. Colonialism and Capitalist Formation in Nigeria

Capitalism as instituted by colonialism, subordinated rural producers to the requirements of the metropolitan market and the colonial state administered them through a culture to which they had no access and with which they were not familiar. The rural producers then depended on the exchange of commodities in markets whose terms they could not control in order to realize the value of their labour (Williams, 1983)

Gradually, the integration of Nigerian producers into the international exchange economy increased. As a result, the demand for the cash economy required that Africans be drawn out of their old routines and systems of social organization. The production of cash crops then reinforced the incorporation of the majority of Nigerians into the colonial capitalist economy and changed the transfer of economic surplus to Britain (Brett, 1982). Consequently, the motives and processes of primary
production in the colonial economy were dictated by private capitalists for whom the colonial administration provided a propitious environment (Onimode, 1983). That was because the task of expatriate trading companies was essentially to organize the produce for export, whereas that of the colonial state was to organize the necessary conditions for all this to take place by trying to ensure that peace and stability was maintained and that roads and communications which facilitated the export trade were available (Ekundare, 1973).

In order to facilitate capitalist expansion, the colonialist embarked on the development of colonial infrastructures. From 1900, there was a massive development in communications. The railways, roads, shipping, internal waterways, ports and airstrips were all expanded and new ones constructed in order to meet the pressing demands of rapidly expanding colonial foreign trade.

Again, colonial administration, it has been argued, together with the activities of the missions, required clerks, teachers and clergymen. Education therefore provided the opportunity for salaried employment and also enabled people to develop formal accounting skills and come into contact with expatriate administrators and company managers. Education thus facilitated access to trade, enabled the natives to act in local political affairs as intermediaries between administrators and the chiefs (Williams, 1983). Colonial education thus became an ideological apparatus of the colonial state, even though western education started in Nigeria several decades before the formal establishment of the colonial state. The activities of the missionary groups therefore complemented those of the state administrators (Ekekwe, 1983). This is because as the tasks of local administration became more complex, the colonial government sought to incorporate educated and wealthy men into the native authority (Williams, 1983). We can say that the institutionalization of colonial education could be both a strategy for providing the basic skills required for capitalist industrial expansion and at the same time an ideological instrument for socializing the work force, for schooling the proletariat (Sarup, 1982; Haralambos and Holborn, 2008; Kraft and Furlong, 2008; Brighouse, 2006). By so doing, it was difficult to know whether education was a service for the people or whether it was a tool of the colonial state. Thus, the colonial liberal education even up till now emphasizes the importance of individualism, competition and rewards. It also stresses certain attributes like intellectual capacity because it regards such an attribute as a natural phenomenon, a biological kind of thing, rather than social (Sarup 1982; Brighouse 2006).

Having explained the emergence of capitalist mode of production, it is now possible to see how a different social condition of life took shape in Nigeria and how a community of interests involving large group of people emerged. We shall see how social classes emerged in Nigeria with the appearance of private ownership of the means of production and property inequality. Also, having analyzed the mode of production in a historical context, we can now come up with a roster of social classes in Nigerian social formation.
Class analysis in Nigeria is difficult to draw because the Nigerian social formation is a periphery formation where the distinctive characteristics for the characterization of classes are not all present. That there is a dominant petty bourgeoisie in Nigeria is no longer debatable because this is an element that has been recognized in African social formation (Cohen, 1981; Ake, 1980; Alavi and Ahamin, 1970; Williams, 1976). However, the dominant local social classes have been recognized as appendages of the international capital in Nigeria. (Onimode, 1983). The petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasant social classes all exist to serve the needs of international capital.

The concept of class, especially in Africa, has become highly debatable and very controversial. However, the controversy rages on especially when scholars tend to confuse Marxian and the Weberian notions of class. But we shall take class as having its dynamics in the social relations of production and the attendant class struggle (Anikpo, 1985).

4. The Bourgeoisie

The historical circumstances of the petty bourgeoisie in Nigeria make them susceptible to international capital. In other words, the dominant role of the international bourgeoisie in Nigerian social formation is the first characteristics of the Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie. Hence, they are often referred to as comprador class because they exist to serve the interest of international capital. Scholars have taken a look at the heterogeneous range of production which brings out the dependence characteristic of the dominant class and by which members or the class are referred to as petty-bourgeoisie. The class maintains its domination and exploitation of the workers and peasant producers through a variety of institutional managements. These managements are in the commerce and as well as in the political sphere, control of national and state structures.

Scholars agree that in the context of contemporary Africa, the petty bourgeoisie have become most important focus for class analysis of politics. This is the strongest indigenous class in Nigeria which also provided the leadership for nationalist movements and inherited political power at the time of decolonization (Cohen, 1981). Broadly therefore, we can categorize the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie into four groups, the groups that form the basic elements of the factions of the petty bourgeoisie.

First, there are the Obas, Emirs, Chiefs and Obis who were the intermediaries between the people and the imperialist colonizers. They became an auxiliary group of privilege natives to facilitate the repression and exploitation of the people (Onimode, 1983). They were the first principal group of beneficiaries of colonialism.

The second group of the petty-bourgeoisie is made up of merchants, those who squeezed between the imperialist firms and the peasants. They are transport magnate, timber magnate, palm oil magnate.
and those western acculturated repatriates in the south (Onimode, 1983). It is pertinent to say here that the above groups of petty-bourgeoisie had the privilege to send their children to British type public schools, like Kings College, Igbobi College, CMS Grammar school, Government College, Ibadan, Christ the Kings College, Onitsha and Barewa College Zaria.

The third group is made up of professionals, lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers and journalists. This was the group that later led the nationalist struggle and used the colonial politics as a base for primitive accumulation and they were the people who took offices immediately regional opportunities were open. They rose to a dominant position and when political initiative began to ease out of the hands of the British, they were the obvious candidates to seize it (Post, 1964).

It is important to stress a point that this group later engaged in a fierce and serious struggle with the first group of petty-bourgeoisie when the nationalist struggle became intensified by the educated elites. That was because the educated elites were later not prepared to concede to the chiefs, even though the chiefs, emirs and obas were the first group to perform administrative functions with the British especially with the introduction of indirect rule.

The fourth group of the petty bourgeoisie is made up of those top officers in the public and private sectors, the officer corps of the army, police and the intellectuals.

These categories of petty bourgeoisie performed the function of capital in Nigeria in so far as their roles are important for social reproduction and to the extent that they plan and execute the development process.

Again, the identified groups of the petty bourgeoisie are only relatively unified, in the same way that the fractions of bourgeoisie may be said to be unified. Their economic interests, although not without element of mutual conflict, inclined them to defend the status quo. Thus, while the indigenous bourgeoisie who are agents of capital defend the status quo because they have to maintain and protect their interests, the intellectuals and the armed forces maintain the status quo because of their important role in the production of social relations (Ekekwe, 1986).

5. The Proletariat

First among the oppressed social classes is the proletariat, those who are the wage and salaried laborers. However, in Nigeria, the proletariat class is not fully proletarianised because they do not, as a class, constitute permanent, urbanized proletarianised workers, but an amorphous collection of migrant workers with rights to land in rural area. They are not fully separated from their means of production as a group, belonging to the peasants. Those in the proletariat class still have one of their legs in the urban centers as wage laborers and one leg in the village participating in village rural activities, like going
"home" to plant during planting season and going back to harvest during harvest time. They also go "home" to take part in new yam festivals, coronation of an Oba, annual festivals etc. Again, at any public holiday, such cities like Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu, and Abuja are often deserted by workers because they all troop back to their villages to meet with their kin.

However, in spite of these unique characteristics, the Nigerian workers can still be seen as a proletariat within the Nigerian social formation and therefore we should not dismiss them as a social class.

6. The Peasantry

The last of the social classes, the oppressed class is the peasantry. This class is made up of those who still retain access to land for their production and whose major objective for cultivation is subsistence. They constitute the most numerous class to evolve in Nigeria as a result of the articulation of the colonial economy with the international economy (Ekekwe, 1986). The peasants are still with their traditional occupations as land cultivators even though they are tied to the international economy, yet they hold on strongly to elements of traditional ideology. And this is because the peasants still practice the pre-capitalist mode of production which has not been completely destroyed by colonial capitalist economy.

However, some of the Nigerian peasants are petty traders especially those who can afford the initial small capital to start. Thus, they are those who engage in seasonal trade. When it is new yam, they buy and sell, when it is time for corn, they also buy and sell like how they buy and sell when bananas are harvested. However, the poorer ones among them supplement their subsistence needs by occasionally hiring themselves out as laborers (Ekekwe, 1986).

In sum, colonialism made Nigeria a social formation where the relationship between the social classes was not one of coexistence and cooperative like the relations between social groups during pre-colonial era, but one of contradiction and antagonism. The local petty bourgeoisie and their foreign counterpart stand on one side and the peasants and workers stand on the other side maintaining contradictory relations (Saul and Words, 1969). The workers and peasants produce the surplus products which are appropriated by the petty bourgeoisie. The social, political and more extensively, the economic degeneration of all those indigenous societies in Nigeria were therefore brought into the orbit of the advancing western capitalist system (Hoogvelt, 1978). Consequently, a kind of regenerating forces and including the destructive ones became the basic elements of the transformation in Nigeria where the social order of indigenous societies metamorphosed into newly established economic relationship, the relationship that engendered new social classes, based on the western capitalist model.
The immediate consequence of that development was the emergence of two main forms of regenerations of the new social order. First was the regeneration of the domestic social hierarchy particularly the cultivation of the domestic classes whose interests economic, social and political, would be bound up with system operation of the capitalist metropolis. Second, the regeneration involved a wider cultural and structural diffusion of values, norms, beliefs, and social institutions which would make the organization of the colonial societies, in its main outline, as nearly as possible, resemble the organization of western societies. The regeneration was also one whose ordering principle lies in the relative autonomy of the major functional spheres of society, especially the political and the economic (Hoogvelt, 1978). Colonialism with its imposition of capitalism in Nigeria therefore, created an overall dual structure of economy and society, with consequences on the relationship between emerging social classes.

7. Social Classes and the Beginning of Class Struggle

It is important to state that the colonial period was never a static period and things continued to change more so when the capitalist mode of production set the society in a dialectical process of class struggle arising from the division of the society into social classes. The colonial economy was affected by the dialectics of capitalism; and from that dynamic perspectives, it had a profound effect on the colonial society from the point of view of the contradictions it generated and its consequences for change. In this regard, "the colonial economy was ridden with contradictions which had repercussions for its stability (Ake, 1979). What were then the consequences of the contradiction of the colonial economy on pre-independence politics and state formation?

The contradiction of the colonial economy as argued by Ake, could be seen from two perspectives. First, there was the contradiction between metropolitan bourgeoisie and Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie. Second there was the contradiction between capital and labour. In the first place, we have noted that the Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie were created by colonialism and ironically its creation became one of the most interesting contradictions of colonialism. The Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie led the battle against colonialism; the first type of contradiction.

We have also explained how the colonial state out of necessity educated the petty-bourgeoisie to inculcate in them western mode of thinking so that they could accept the colonizers ideology and be useful in the colonial administration. Consequently, one of the immediate results of the creation of the petty bourgeoisie was that they were able to take advantage of the limited opportunities by placing them in a very special position. Thus, the new status and their skills placed them in positions of becoming leaders and by the same token, of accumulating some wealth. Gradually, the few indigenous people who
were educated became highly skilled, conversant with the colonizers culture and in some cases imbued his values and became assertive. They became confident and had their expectation raised. But the class formation as engendered by the colonial economy gradually led to the antagonism and struggled between the colonial bourgeoisie and the emerging petty-bourgeoisie. That was because the expectation of the petty-bourgeoisie was being frustrated as the colonizers had exclusive claim to political power which was dictated by economic necessity because economic power and political power tend to fuse. They were frustrated in many other ways. First, the petty-bourgeoisie had hoped that with their education and skill and their participation in colonial administration, they would gradually be enjoying the lifestyle and privileges that the Europeans bourgeoisie were enjoying. Little did they realize that equal treatments for them would mean a negation of the logic of colonial ideology? So, the petty-bourgeoisie became seriously marginalized in terms of political and economic marginality (Ake, 1979). Thy then became a formidable political force which emerged from the contradiction and began to challenge colonial domination. Therefore, the monopolization of power by the colonizers and the provision of infrastructures to enhance the capitalist expansion created its own dialectical negation. In other words, a condition arose when the petty-bourgeoisie came together for the complete displacement of those who exercised political power. The petty bourgeoisie thus began to form interest groups as the struggle clarified their objective situation and consciousness and as they progressively recognized heir common enemy and common interest (Ake, 1979).

The second contradiction engendered by the colonial economy was the one between capital and labour. As we have noted, the penetration of the capitalist mode of production created the proletariat as a social class. Thus proletarianization negated colonialism because of the latter's exploitative character which brought into sharp focus the contradiction between the colonizers and the colonized. The urban centres expressed with brutal clarity the class character of the colonial society. On the one hand was European section of the town with large airy building, well-kept gardens, roads and streetlights. On the other hand, the Nigerian quarters consisted of crowded slums with no amenities. While this situation was the outcome of the contradiction of capitalism, it also contradicted the colonial regime. Consequently, the proletariat became the base of the political movement of the petty-bourgeoisie against colonialism. The proletariat began to form urban associations which provided welfare service to their members; the development of which resulted from changes, such as increased mobility and social re-stratification brought about by the western impact (Coleman, 1958). Such associations were of crucial significance in the development of the nationalist movement because they enabled nationalist leaders to mobilize and manipulate important segments of the population (Coleman, 1958) Thus, it became very easy for the petty bourgeoisie to mobilize the urban population against the colonial system.
In sum, as argued by (Ake, 1979), the contradictions generated by colonialism gave impetus to the wave of nationalist movement and liberation struggles by creating the conditions which enabled the nationalist leaders to mobilize the masses and politicize their grievances.

8. Nationalist Struggle and the Development of Factions

A number of complex factors have been adduced as being responsible for the acceleration of decolonization, especially in British West Africa (Aluko, 1987; Ajayi and Crowther, 1987). Nationalism can be viewed from two levels namely from the level of immediate personal grievances of individual and at the national level at which the grievances are not in collective terms (Seton-Watson, 1977). However, Coleman argues that nationalism is not merely the sum of accumulated grievances but also an awareness of greater possibilities and opportunities. To Coleman, nationalism and the sentiments or activities opposed to alien control, began in Nigeria since the first encounter between Europeans and the peoples inhabiting Nigeria and it manifested itself in a variety of ways (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963).

However, all the factors that have been adduced as being responsible for nationalism in Nigeria do not see the phenomenon as having been engendered by the antagonism of new classes. Nationalist struggle was the result of serious and heavy menace of the exploitation introduced by colonialism, which became a driving force that emanated from the educated petty-bourgeoisie. As a result, matters that featured on the agenda of the movement were those that were of immediate benefit to the petty-bourgeoisie. Thus, the petty-bourgeoisie embarked on a long tradition of liberal nationalism in which the demand for political liberty, social justice and national unity, dominated the items for all the pre-independence constitutional conferences. In other words, in the colonial period, no Nigerian social class controlled the means of production and there was no indigenous ruling class. Consequently, the economic and political control was in the hands of the aliens (Seton-Watson, 1977). A struggle then began, a struggle for power between the Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie on the one hand and metropolitan bourgeoisie, represented by the colonial state on the other hand. This is precisely because the struggle for power, i.e. politics, is the struggle over scarce resources, the process of gaining control of public resources for the pursuit of private ends (Williams, 1980). Consequently, the stage was set for class struggle over the control of political power. What that means is that while the Nigerian dominant social class, i.e. the petty-bourgeoisie began a struggle with the metropolitan bourgeoisie to have control of state apparatus, there was also intra-class struggle among them because the party - bourgeoisie themselves were not united.

The liberal posture of the nationalist leaders prevented them from being more constructive and imaginative, beyond the call for self-rule. And because nationalism was the effect of capitalist
exploitation, which increased the differences in the newly created social classes, the petty-bourgeoisie only pursued their own interests, canalizing popular discontent into channels which would further their own interests.

Thus, with the 1951 Macpherson constitution, the different factions receded to the regions, and Nigerian politics since then became a matter for which the various factions of the petty-bourgeoisie fiercely and seriously struggled over, first to dominate the wealth in their respective regions and second, to use this regional dominance as a stepping stone to acquire state power. Intra-class struggle among dominant social class then became a chronic phenomenon of disunity that characterized the nationalist movement.

9. Factions and pre-Independence Politics

The nationalist struggle made the petty-bourgeoisie to emerge as the locally dominant social class even though the dominance was more in socio-political sphere and not in economic sphere. The petty-bourgeoisie then realized that the best means to increase their capital accumulation was by raising the ceiling, put on their development by the foreign oligopoly and the colonial state and also in wrestling political power in the country (Ekekwe, 1983). Decolonization was therefore pursued on the liberal model, already imbibed through western education with no consideration for the radical alternative. This is partly explained by the fact that the petty-bourgeoisie were sure to emerge as the governing class in the postcolonial state, and therefore the use of violence was not a viable option to them (Ekekwe, 1983). In addition, the predisposition of the colonial masters to grant independence prevented the nationalist leaders from adopting the radical approach in the pursuit of self-determination. This was why in their rhetoric of anti-colonialism that informed their struggle little attention was given to the basic contradiction between state and society. Unable to relate the nationalist movement to class struggle, the petty-bourgeoisie was anxious to avoid any kind of violence against imperialism. They thus, concentrated on acquiring the colonial state without thinking of radically transforming it (Ekekwe, 1983). And that was because they assumed that if political independence was won, it automatically meant economic control as well (Post, 1964).

They formed political parties, the establishment of which became a necessary tool for the struggle. Political parties became necessary because those members of the petty-bourgeoisie who lacked access to political power needed the political parties so as to bring together those who are conscious of the possibility of altering existing power-relationship on lines favorable to themselves (Hodgkins, 1961). With the political parties mostly based in the regions, the British colonial state set out to come to terms with the bourgeois nationalists in such a way as to allow political control to pass to Nigerians while at
the same time making sure that British influence, particularly economic influence would not be seriously threatened (Post, 1964).

The various elections particularly beginning from 1951 allowed elements of the political leadership of the petty-bourgeoisie access to the regional state apparatus (Sklar, 1963; Post and Vickers, 1972). And in order for the petty-bourgeoisie to secure a base for domination, they began to agitate for regional autonomy.

After series of constitutional conferences, the details of which need not detain us here, the regions were granted autonomy, the East and West in 1954 and the North in 1957. The regional self-government thus gave full access of public funds and patronage to the bourgeois leaders for the first time (Post, 1964). The petty-bourgeoisie from then on generally operated mostly at the local and regional levels and their dominance as a class in the regions was with intense internal rivalries because they also jockeyed for positions both in the regions and in the national arena.

Consequently, the acquisition of political power by the petty-bourgeoisie and with the increasing power of the regions, there began a process of private appropriation of the state apparatuses by those who gained access to the state. Thus, they began the appropriation of the state apparatuses for accumulation and political domination (Ekekwe, 1983). Again, the faction of the petty-bourgeoisie who is in power in the regions saw governance as their right, and consequently, they used state power to disorganize their political opponents, i.e., those who are also struggling for access to the state. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951, therefore, created the regions as loci of powers and it divided the petty bourgeoisie from being able to unite against the colonial state. Although we should add that even the petty-bourgeoisie did not object to the arrangement because it gave them the opportunity to be kingpins at the regions. However, the most crucial and critical reason was that the regions were relatively in control of the regional wealth with each faction at each region aimed at getting control of the regional political power.

It can therefore be argued that the management of the country's economy, its administrative setting and the political perception of its leaders reflected the apparent dominance over the centre by the regions. Thus, the regions held such great attraction for the political leaders because each region retained control over important accumulation mechanism (Ekekwe, 1983). This thus explains why the struggles for access and political control started at the regions.

However, in the mist of the fractionalization and its attendant struggles among the dominant class, as represented by the three dominant bourgeois political parties, National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon in the East, Action Group in the West and Northern People Congress in the North, the country attained independence in October, 1960. Post argues that the bourgeois political parties, NCNC and Action Group still controlled the Eastern and Western regions, and the feudal NPC in the North. The
NCNC and the NPC tacitly recognized each other’s sphere of influence, agreed not to trespass on one another’s preserves and formed a coalition government at the federal level (Post, 1964). At this juncture, we should note the following about the internal structures of the colonial society particularly immediately before independence.

First, there had begun a class struggle between the dominant social class and the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the struggle was basically over the control of political power. Second the Nigerian petty-bourgeoisie was not united in the struggle. In other words, the dominant class was not cohesive in their fight over the control of political power at the federal level. This is explained partly because nationalism does not make easy the relation of different groups in mixed areas as it advocates a recasting of frontier’s and a redistribution of political power (Kedooure, 1960). Therefore, with the intensification of the nationalist struggle, the petty-bourgeoisie was factionalized because they were busy fighting to secure access and control of the colonial state apparatus.

Third, the period of the nationalist struggle could be regarded as the period when members of the dominant indigenous social class were getting ready and painting themselves in the image of a ruling class and heirs of the metropolitan bourgeoisie (Ekekwe, 1983).

On the whole, however, the colonial socio-economic formation did not create the basis for a united petty-bourgeoisie and, as a result, they chose the regions from where they operated their political parties. Thus, one of the serious implications of the fractionalization was the inability of the dominant class to speak with one voice, to present themselves as a united team, evolve a strong and virile political party, with a common objective and be able to stand for the country. Consequently, right from the period of pre-independence, the forces of centrifugal and centripetal were at play in the country. Although there was a dominant class, but because they were not united, they could not provide the needed hegemonic order for an emergent state as a result, there was an apparent lack of nationally recognized collective leadership, because the dominant class did not exhibit the discipline required for state formation, and hence they possessed very fragile domination. But as argued by Lenin, it is essential to have a united class with a well-disciplined political party that is politically conscious to lead a political struggle. And Gramsci has also elucidated the role of the party in state-formation and consolidation processes. But in Nigeria and especially during the Nationalist period, there was no cohesive dominant class with a strong party to present a viable, strong and disciplined leadership, which in the process will create hegemonic order. It is against this background that the fractionalization of the petty-bourgeoisie engendered a cutthroat competition and struggle for state power (Fadakinte, 2013).

We can now start to conjecture the possible implication of this struggle on a postcolonial society that will emerge with obviously very tenuous national integration and a state with very fragile legitimacy.
of authority (Onimode, 1983), as a result of a disorganized and belligerent dominant class and the absence of hegemonic order, brought about by inverted process of capitalist formation.

Thus far, we have seen how colonialism gradually brought the natives together only for them to see each other as enemies because of their quest for power. And that was because colonialism had instituted a new social formation that had changed and transformed the society. Again, at independence there was a dominant class whose dominance was not hegemonic because those that constituted the dominant class did not have economic power and were with very weak political power and doubtful legitimacy of authority, which was so because colonialism had inverted the process of capitalist state formation. What then does that mean? In order words, what were the consequences of the inverted process?

11. Inverted Process of Capitalist State Formation

History, it has been argued, is more than a record of past events and the residues of history constitute what we will familiarly regard as the present (Carr, 1961; Marwick, 1970; Oloruntimehin, 1976). Nothing seems to demonstrate the veracity of this more than the inverted process of capitalist state formation in Nigeria and its attendant crises of state formation. And it is here that colonialism as a factor of history becomes very significant. It led to events that have no heritage. One of such events is the establishment of the capitalist mode of production.

The colonial state established capitalism based on the European colonial model without its antecedents in Nigeria. The colonial masters, when liquidating their colonial powers in Nigeria, bequeathed to the natives such an institution like the state (although, what the Europeans left was a pseudo-state) that had been evolved over centuries by an entirely different people in greatly different conditions (May, 1981). And because of that, the Nigerian post-colonial state found it difficult to understand the idea of state, liberal democracy and an elected parliament.

Lloyd Fallers has done a beautiful comparative analysis of social patterns of industrialization in the West with those in African nations and concluded that the fact of the West's having been first to industrialized creates a far greater handicap to new nations than just colonial rule per se (Lloyd Fallers, 1963). According to (Lofchief, 1971) if this assertion is correct, then the implications of the scenario are staggering, and therefore, the important issue is not whether colonialism was a suppressive phenomenon but whether there might not well have been other more consequential political factors at work whose operations are concealed or badly obscured by the enormous salience and visibility of European colonial domination (Lofchief, 1971). Indeed, Lofchief was probably referring to the process of state formation.

It is therefore our belief that a major historical difference exists between the process of capitalist state formation in Nigeria and as it took place in Europe and America. This is because the social pattern
of industrialization in those societies had direct relation with the development of political culture and in particular, with the process of state formation and the development of liberal democracy.

The process of the evolution of the state and liberal democratic culture is therefore a critical and fundamental factor that explains the stability of political structures and processes in Europe and America as compared with the instability of the same processes, particularly state formation and democracy, in Nigeria. This position becomes clear if we compare the historical experience of Africa with Europe and America, especially in the way the experiences relate to the process of state formation. Put differently, the historical antecedents of how the dominant class in Europe and America used economic power to consolidate political power in form of organized domination for class rule shows the difference in the processes of states formation in those societies and Africa, where in the absence of economic power, the dominant class was left to compete, when there was no state to mediate class competition (politics).

From the above, it is clear that post-independence state in Nigeria will be chaotic and the process of state formation and consolidation will be norm less. And this is because, in the first instance, the dominant class with political power, without economic base, became preoccupied with the quest for economic power.

Second the dominant class did not possess the needed hegemony for state formation; hence, they could not evolve a ruling class to construct a hegemonic process. Thus, in the absence of hegemonic order and ruling class culture, the society, immediately after independence, embarked on dangerous and wobbling state formation process. Indeed, political competition without hegemony compounded the crisis of state formation immediately after independence. Thus, what makes hegemony and class domination which Nigeria lacked at independence, necessary imperatives?

12. Hegemony, Class Domination and State Formation

Hegemony, according to (Gramsci, 1981), is in two broad categories namely, domination and leadership. The first entails the control over the use of the coercive instruments of the state and the second is made up of moral and intellectual leaderships and both are exercised by the dominant class in society.

To Gramsci, there are basically three dimensions of hegemony viz intellectual, moral and political. Both intellectual and moral aspects of hegemony belong to the superstructure and political aspect to the base of society.

Hegemony, in short, is an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society, in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit, all tasks, morality, customs, religion and political principles, and all social
relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations (Falola and Ihonvbere, 1985). In the process of constructing hegemonic order, a social group strives to dominate all other social groups including the antagonistic groups, which the dominating group tries to subjugate or perhaps liquidate. That is why the dominating group must first try to exercise leadership before even acquiring governmental power. The leadership must necessarily include that of the economic, so that their economic leadership will reflect the critical functions in the decisive aspects of economic activities (Lukacs, 1991; Goodwin, 1997). In other words, part of hegemonic process is the way the dominant class maintains a dominant culture through the use of social institutions to formalize power. Thus, through social institutions, the dominant class presents its ideals, as the most suitable ideals for society, through education, media, advertising, the laws, judiciary, and the mobilization of a police force. Even while mobilizing the police and the military personnel to intimidate oppositions and agitators, such deployment of coercion is presented as being done to maintain law and order in the interest of peace for all. This is what explains how the dominant class maintains power and subordinates other social classes to accept, adopt and internalize dominant class values and norms.

Thus, whenever the dominant class is able to institute hegemonic order in a social formation, the supremacy or the domination of the hegemonic class becomes established and a social order becomes institutionalized, maintained and are reproduced quite often by consent over other social classes. Domination will then be imposed through all aspects of society. For the settlement or crisis, the class that has hegemony does not use force as an immediate solution to a crisis, because the people are made to believe in the independent judiciary, impartial police and supremacy of the law and human right.

The dominant class has to create the need for hegemony because quite often, they are not homogeneous themselves and for them to impose their values on the society, especially in matters that relate to competition, (politics) they need to avoid a state of chaos. Consequently, the dominant class imposes the machinery for achieving discipline, leadership and domination, not only within its ranks but also on the society as a whole. Therefore, to Gramsci, political power is derived from intellectual and moral leadership and a ruling class will then create political consensus through such means as elections on the platform of political parties and with such other institutions like the schools, media and religion, hegemonic process is formed and maintained in civil society. This is the process (Gramsci, 1981) refers to as the way by which the organization of people is used to control the thoughts and actions of people in the society.

But, as demonstrated earlier, the Nigerian post-independent dominant class was not cohesive enough to be able to institute hegemonic order that will embody a peaceful process of formalizing power. Also, Nigerian dominant class did not have the peace to create a process through which a ruling class will evolve that will stand for the state and on whose behalf the state will operate. Thus, instead of
transforming the newly independent Nigerian society into a propitious environment for indigenous capitalist class to grow, and evolve into a ruling class, they were embroiled in severe factional struggle for power, the bitter struggle that impeded the growth and development of everything except crisis and violence.

13. The Fragility of a Post-Colonial State

From the above, the fragility of the post-colonial state becomes obvious. And this is because in the first place, Nigeria is trying to build a capitalist state by inverting the process. In other words, quite unlike the developed capitalist states of Europe and America, the dominant class in Nigeria first captured political power prior to that of economic powers. Thus, whichever faction wins political power makes the quest for the acquisition of economic power a pre-occupation. So, in Nigeria, the men in power are lawless, arbitrary and lack focus, except the focus to corrupt themselves. As a result, the economic and political, as well as the internal bases of the emerging state are weak and the state automatically becomes very fragile. So, as it is today, Nigeria still finds it difficult to establish the structure and institutions, capable of building a strong capitalist state with its attendant values and ideologies. As a result, the Nigerian state is but artificial because, it does not possess the autonomy to function nor does it have the capacity to perform the basic functions of a state; such as effective territorial control, provision for security and welfare for the citizens, even knowing the number of Nigerians citizens is beyond the capability of the Nigerian state to ascertain. Thus, population census figures have always been issues of disagreements and disputations, even from the time of pre-independence. Again, because the dominant class is in a state of flux, it depends, most of the time on lawlessness and violence to retain political power. Consequently, the emerging Nigerian state is therefore riddled with contradictions. Such contradictions include conformity and consensus, peace and order within the state territory. The Nigerian state will therefore organize elections but will not abide by the rules, will maintain the police and armed forces only to use then to hunt oppositions or main citizens who protest in defense of their rights.

14. Conclusion

From the above, two critical problems remain to be surmounted by the dominant class in Nigeria. These are viz; how to halt the inverted process of capitalist formation while forming a capitalist state and second how to unite the disorganized and factional dominant class that finds it difficult to evolved a ruling class that will construct hegemonic order and build a stable and solid state. And these are two formidable problems.
Thus, to redress the problems, the Nigerian structure should be redefined, which will make the present six geo-political zones become six regions while the states in each region should become provinces.

Second, each region should enjoy high degree of autonomy, particularly in terms of funding so that no region will depend on the government at the centre for its financial needs. Third, a well-articulated federal system/arrangement should be adopted where there will be proper division of powers so that the peculiarities of each region will be taken into account. Fourth, a parliamentary system, which is cheaper to run than the presidential system, should be adopted. Fifth, six year-term tenure be adopted for a political regime, in order to save cost as the huge amount spent on election, each year is rather too huge, with very negative impact, on the nation’s resources.

With these recommendations, each region will evolve a ruling class; build hegemony at that level that will coalesce at the centre for a strong and stable state to emerge.

References


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