

**IMO STATE, RICH, BUT POOR; AN ESSAY ON
DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE FACE OF ABUNDANT
RESOURCES, 1976 – 2011**

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Abstract

Beginning from 1976 when Imo state was created out of the defunct East Central State of Nigeria as was the case with many states of the federation, the new state was inevitably faced with problems of underdevelopment. Consequent upon this, successive administrations, both military, civilian, and private business operators boastfully and vainly claimed that efforts by way of economic and political policies had been initiated to bail the nascent state from the clutches of avoidable poverty. These initiatives such as free primary education, encouragement of state wide sanitation exercise and its enforcement by sanitary officers popularly known then as Nwole Ala, scholarship programmes and stable political environment which guaranteed reduced insecurity and confidence in political leadership. According to the successive military leaders in the state, these were parts of the grand strategies to steer the state away from imminent underdevelopment and place her on the part to prosperity. Unfortunately, these lofty initiatives could not substantially translate into, or trigger the much expected or desired leap in economic fortune of the state through sustained industrialization, which would have brought about development and improvement in quality of life for Imo citizens, rather what obtained was persistent reduction in quality of life



and underdevelopment occasioned by massive de-industrialization in the face of abundant human and material resources. In view of these, the present paper opines that the weak economic condition to which Imo State was subjected within the time under review was caused by myriads of factors which were both political and economic to which the state was plunged by the successive military administrations in the state. To achieve the studies' set objectives, thematic, historical and analytical methodologies were adopted as emphases were laid on both primary and secondary sources of data.

Key words: Industrialization, de-industrialization, Imo State, Development, Underdevelopment

Introduction

It may not be totally out of context to say that the topic the present study is interested in, is apt, timely and indeed, issue provoking. This is so because the study is indeed an encouragement to both local and foreign investors, and a clarion call to government of Imo State on the need to look inward for development potentials that abound in the state which, with proper management could be transformed into purposeful productive engagement for sustainable development. The essentiality of this call was anchored on the fact that Imo State, like many other states in Nigeria, though in different degrees had, from inception in 1976 been struggling to free itself from shackles of economic poverty, leadership failure, anachronistic and moribund leadership style ridden with acute and deep rooted corruption that were the roots of the historical epochs which Samir Amin sequentially described as; the primitive communal mode, the tribute paying mode, the slave-owning mode and the simple petty – commodity mode of production, in which emphasis were laid on greedy acquisition of material wealth for selfish and personal end.¹

Evidently and indeed, unfortunately too, the backward economy of the state which Samir Amin's description above explained was



not only characterized by poverty which was caused partly by lack of functional industrial base and persistent winding up of a few existing ones, but also the inability of leaders to identify and mobilize the human and material potentials of the state towards industrialization – a term which L.S Staverianos describes as, a deviation from the primitive and manual means adopted by man in the production process, to one in which production of goods and services were carried out by mechanical means, thus encouraging mass production, division of labour and increased wealth for the people and standard of living.² Unfortunately however, the concern this ugly trend posed became a major source of excruciating pains because Imo citizens unavoidably and on the account of the epileptic economic condition which prevailed at the time, were victims of pushed migration to other parts of Nigeria and beyond in search of better livelihood. In view of the foregoing, the core objectives of the present study includes, suggestions on ways out of the development debacle to which Imo State was subjected. The paper is also intended to serve as a reference study for students, law makers and politicians who may be interested in this branch of study, and to serve as a clarion call to investors and economic operators who might not be aware of the huge economic potentials with which Imo State was endowed. It is also the objective of the study to serve as a reference study for students, law makers and politicians who might be interested in this branch of study, as well as to serve as a documentary for public usage and consultation where and when necessary.

Theoretical framework

Most imperialist and capitalist development theories put together over the years by Western philosophers were intended to explain how capitalist nations were able to exploit the human and material resources of peripheral countries for the development of the economics of core or Western nations, and consequently created the conditions that enabled the flowering of underdevelopment in peripheral nations. For instance,



Lenin's Theory of Monopoly Capitalism,³ tries to explain the fact that capitalism necessarily induces monopoly capitalism as capital projects into peripheral countries to find sources of raw materials, cheap labour and free market for capitalist economic survival.⁴

Both in content and objective, Lenin's Capitalist Theory shares much in common with the Accumulation Theory, developed by J.A Hobson. Unfortunately, however, none of these theories addresses the special case of Imo State in which internal greed, selfish accumulation and inability on the part of leaders to identify human and material potentials inherent in the state, and mobilize them for state development.

Against this rather unfortunate lacuna, the present writers propose to adopt the Primitive Accumulation Theory developed by Samir Amin. This theory lays emphasis on the reckless and selfish accumulation of material wealth by individuals or groups in society through unguided and reckless exploitation of resources, without corresponding efforts to replenish the resource through community development initiatives vis-à-vis industrialization and human capital development.⁵

According to Samir Amin, the Primitive Accumulation Theory, ventilates and tells much about the backwardness of societies in their primitive communal stage, during which the emerging exploitative group becomes insensitive to the plight of the masses, whose aspiration to good life has been marred and hindered by undeveloped productive sector. This mode of production is an error to other modes of production and is characterized by a complete lack of industrial base. The adoption of this theory for the present study is in line with the fact that the theory aptly explains the mindless exploitation in Imo State by the political elites, as factors that inhibit development in the state.



Geography, Land and People of Imo state

On 30th March, 1976, during Murtala Muhammed regime, the old Imo State which comprised the Present-day Abia State was created out of the defunct East Central State. In the same vein, in 1991, Abia State was created out of the old Imo State; and what remained of the old Imo State was reorganized into the present-day Imo State.⁶ The new Imo State is made up twenty seven local governments and three senatorial zones. The state derived its name from the popular Imo River.

Since its inception, the state has been ruled by a number of military and civilian administrators. The state is made up of entirely Igbo speaking people who are mostly Christians and a handful of traditional religionists. Geographically, the new Imo State-the area of the present study, on the South of its border is Rivers State, while Cross River and Akwa Ibom occupy its border land to the east⁷.

Owerri is the state's capital territory. The state covers land area of 12,689 Sq kilometers. It's population is 2,938,709 by the 1997 population census⁸. Besides Owerri, other major towns in the state includes; Orlu and Okigwe. Many other towns such are Obinze, Oguta, Mbanjo, Mbaitoli, etc, are also emerging. Traditionally, Imo State is an agrarian economy. Though, in recent times, other forms of economic activities can be seen in the state. This, to a large extent, is the result of modernization and globalization, which have not left Imo State behind, though with its unavoidable capitalistic challenges.

Imo State, A land of Abundant Resources

An understanding of, and researches into the nature and human resources of a state is a right and essential step towards unlocking the secret of her economic growth. This is so because such knowledge is an important tool required by policy makers, administrators, industrialists and economic planners for



effective conduct of their business which border on economic development and consequently, wealth creation for the people. It is for these reasons that effort is made here to identify, where necessary, the economic and human resource endowment of Imo State, in the hope that such information will be effectively utilized by appropriate authorities in the state for the purpose of economic planning and development.

Imo State is blessed with both solid and liquid minerals in large quantities that can sustain industrial establishment and growth. These minerals includes, but not limited to “Glass Sand in Njaba, Nsu and Ehime; Kaolin which is used for the production of ceramics, paint, drugs and paper. This mineral is found at Ehime Mbano, Ihite-Ahiazu, Umuna in Onuimo, Okwudo, Orlu, Awo-Omama in Oru East, Ngo Nkpala and Obowo Local Government Areas⁹. Other minerals include lignite/Coal used for fuel and power generation. This is found in Ihioma, Orlu, Awo mama, Oru East, Umuezeala in Ehime and Obowo. Similarly, Marcasit – a raw material that produces sulfur for fertilizer production is found in large quantities at Umuoboni in Ideato South.¹⁰

Moreso, Rock Aggregates which serve as raw materials for construction work are found in Okigwe and Obowo. In the same vein, Lime Stone is found in Okigwe and Ohaji. One could also find large deposits of petroleum products at Izombe, Oguta, Awara in Ohaji and Egbema. Gypsum are also found in Okigwe; while Bentolite and Quitz are located in Ekwe, Okwuodo, Isiekenisi, Umuechele, Ehime, and Obowo¹¹. It must not also go unmentioned that Cooking Gas, is found in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

Besides the availability of solid and liquid minerals in the state, the state is also blessed with attractive tourism resources. Unfortunately, the tourism potentials of the state appear not to have been given deserved attention. There is no local government area in Imo State that does not have one tourism potential or the



other. For instance, the Okonko, Mmawu, Ebuebu and the New Yam Festival of Orlu people; the Nri of Ugwuele stone culture; the iri-ji, Ituaka, Ajala, Ikummanu, Okpalaka and Iwufuji of Okigwe,¹² are important tourism potentials of the areas where they are celebrated.

Others includes; the Ubom Uzo, Iriji, Iwakwa, Agu-Okonko and the Ahia-Nganga of Oboma. Achara massquerade-Festival of Iho in Ikeduru¹³. Similarly, Owerri North is known for Onwu-Oru, Onwu-Awaka, Mkpukpu-Uzo and the Ita-Okazi Festivals. Oru-west is known for her Ikwuezi, Olulu and the New Yam Festival.¹⁴ Oru-east's Umuimo Dance, Odogwu Ozara Dance, Owu Festivals, Ekeleke and Okorosha Dance are well known¹⁵ in the same vein, the Omenife Okorosha and Igbuefi Cultural Festivals are associated with Oguta people. Also important part of this chronicle is the various masquerades dances for which Mbaitoli people are known, prominent among them are; the Owu Ochii and Arugwo Alaenyi of Ogwa people as well as the Okorosha Dance which were common among Ogbaku, Orodo and Umunoha people of Mbaitoli.¹⁶

There were also tourism centers in Imo State which have the potential of attracting tourists on yearly bases. To mention a few of them, the Abadaba River, the Oguta Lake, the Orashi River, Mbari Cultural Centre, Imo River and the Otamiri River¹⁷.The above notwithstanding, the human population of Imo State constituted important source of resources for development. This was so because not only that the huge population constituted ready source for industrial labour and market for industrial products, the mentally developed ones among them were reliable sources of policies and programmes that were capable of stimulating development in the state. To be more specific, an over view of Imo State's population of 2004 and 1991, may be helpful in understanding the strength of the state in terms of availability of labour force both skilled, Semi-skilled and Unskilled.



Ahiazu – Mbaise	=	96170 92462
Ideato North	=	11,8519
Ideato South	=	79236
Ihete- Oboma	=	69009
Ikeduru	=	10,8367
Isiala Mbano	=	10,6170
Isu	=	62167
Mbaitolu	=	10,2393
Ngor- Okpala	=	12,5711
Njaba	=	81489
Nkwere	=	46250
Nwangele	=	79780
Obowo	=	6477
Ohaji/Egbema	=	11,9116
Oguta	=	87415
Okigwe	=	74910
Onuimo	=	58789
Orlu	=	11,7343
Orsu	=	84172
Oru East	=	84172
Oru West	=	66005
Owerri Municipal	=	98507
Owerri North	=	98767

Source: Imo State Population Commission

Aside of population which constituted ready market for industrial products, almost every Local Government in Imo State had arable land for agricultural practices. For instance, Ohaji, Onuimo, Egbema, Ngor-Okpala and some parts of Owerri North and Okigwe had expanse of land that could support mechanized agriculture¹⁸. An example of successful mechanized agricultural establishment in the state was the Ada Palm, Avutu Poultry, Emeabiam Robber Plantation and the Songhai Farm. Though, some of these farms are now moribund, the truth remains that during their early days of operation, they functioned effectively



and contributed greatly to the development of the state's economy.

An Assessment of Imo State Government Efforts at Economic Development/Industrialization

From inception, Imo State has been ruled by many governors both military and civilians. The first of the administrators to rule Imo State was Ndubuisi Kanu (March 1916-1911). He was followed by Adekunle. Then came the regimes of Lawal (1977-1978); Sunday Ajibade (1978-1979); Samuel- Onunaka Mbakwe (1979-1983), Ike Nwachukwu (1984-1986); Amadi lkwecheghe (1986-1990); Anthony E. Ogugwo (1970-1983) Evan Enwerem (1992-1993); N.J. Aneke (1993-1996); Tanko Zubairu (1996-1999); Achike Udenwa (1999-2007) and Ikedi G. Ohakim (2007-2011)¹⁹

Beginning from 1976 when Imo State was created and was first governed by Ndubuisi Kanu, no meaningful or articulated economic development programme on how Imo State would be placed on sound economic foundation through industrialization was said to have emanated from that regime. However, the regime of Brigadier General Ike Nwachukwu was a little different, in the sense that his regime attempted to put up a programme of economic recovery for the state. This was contained in the policy, tagged, "The Imo Formula, which led to the establishment of the old Imo State University (now Abia State University)²⁰. Importantly, the Samuel Mbakwe's self help programme tagged, *Otu-Olu Uzo*, which was aimed at mobilizing the people of Imo State towards self development of the state, resulted in the construction of public facilities after the civil war.

Mbakwe's efforts in reviving the ailing economy of Imo State compelled him to go beggarly before the Federal Government, to the effect that he was nicknamed; *the weeping governor*. In addition, Sam Mbakwe's tenure witnessed the establishment of



such industrial units as; the Standard Shoes; Avutu Poultry, and Golden Guinea in Umuahia. One would concede that given the lean financial resources available to Mbakwe at the time, the land area of old Imo State coupled with fratricidal civil war and its devastations, yet one cannot but submit that the post war civilian leadership of the state provided enough economic cum social take off ground for subsequent leaderships in the state. It was within this period that Aba took a lead as the most industrialized urban city in Nigeria, and consequently was nicknamed “the Japan of African, while *Orlu* became the most industrialized rural area in Nigeria ²¹.

Beginning from 2006, Imo State Government which was at the time headed by Achike Udenwa articulated a programme and policy tagged, *The Tripod Vision*, according to which the economy of the state would be re-engineered to meet the development challenges confronting the state. According to the vision, Imo State was to be the Nigeria’s model of well oriented human development and fast growing, broad- based private sector-driven agricultural and manufacturing economy by 2015 ²². The conception according to the regime’s leadership was intended to make Imo State’s economy a model frame-work for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. As a vision whose major thrust was the full and active constructive engagement of citizens in productive agricultural and industrial activity as well as value orientation, it embodies programmes and policies of economic, social and political emancipation of the state.²³

Closely following Udenwa’s *Tripod Vision* was the Ikedi Ohakim’s *New Face of Imo Vision*. This vision was initiated in 2007. It was conceived among other things,

To chart new policy and programme direction for increased food and agricultural production through massive support for agro allied industries, including



a focus on providing the enabling environment, policies, materials and financial support for commerce and industrial growth, as well as tourism, energy and petroleum development and encouragement of partnership with private sector, so as to achieve the vision's goal.²⁴

The extent these programmes and policies were able to bring about industrial growth in the state has remained a source of controversy and nagging question. If the regime of Sammuel Mbakwe must be excused for its concrete achievements in the areas of cottage industry establishment in the old Imo State, the same may not be the case for Achike Udenwa and Ohakim's visions of economic recovery. For instance, it may be interesting to note that beginning from the regime of Ike Nwachukwu, Imo State experienced an increase in the number of cottage industries. These industries, some which belonged to government, individuals or public private partnership, were functional and contributed to the economic stability of the state. These industries included, but not limited to the Standard Shoes, Aba; Clay Product Company, Ezinachi; Sack Harcules, Owerri; Nsu Tile Factory, Ehime; Imo Health Food limited, Uba-kala; Ada palms, Ohaji; Imo Modern Poultry, Avutu; Modern Product Inspections Laboratory and Oguta Hotels ²⁵.

Others included companies in partnership with government which could be classified as second rate companies in terms of their importance to the state economy. For emphasis, such companies as "Fusion Industries, Owerri; Africa Enterprise, Orlu; Imo Concord Hotel, Owerri; Card packaged Industries, Orlu; Resin Paints, Mbaise; Sab Spare Parts and Allied Accessories; Oma pharmaceutical; Masu Industries, Atta, ²⁶ to mention just a few. These industries performed to their optimally, and helped in re-focusing Imo State economically. However and unfortunately, with the ouster of the civilian regime in 1983, and the subsequent military political control of the state,



every plan towards the state's economic emancipation and recovery was truncated as successive regimes of reckless looting of state treasury and economic pillage became evidential part of the state's leadership.

Thus, the foundation for self-centered leadership was again laid by the military that in 1999, when civilians took over, the same culture of reckless leadership, corruption, embezzlement and mindless leadership continued, to the effect that the foundation of industrial growth which was laid by previous civilian government of Samuel Mbakwe was destroyed²⁷. This therefore placed a question mark on the efficacy, sincerity, and development oriented nature of the so called *Tripod Vision* of Udenwa and *The New face of Imo Vision* of Ohakim's administration.

Evidence abounds to submit that these visions were only intended to deceive the unsuspecting public as to divert their attention from the economic and administrative recklessness of the regimes. These visions only contained attractive phrases such as; *Clean and Green Initiative* and the *Imo Rural Road Maintenance Agency* as its creative energy/catch words²⁸. Yet, the question which many citizens ask is; at what cost were flowers and grasses planted in Imo State? How many rural roads were maintained and constructed in the state during the regime? What happened to all the trucks, caterpillars and pale loaders that were purchased with state money? The Willie Amadi's Sager in the state was allegedly a result of accusations of corruption and embezzlement of state funds through the instrumentality of *The Clean and Green philosophy* of Ikedi Ohakim's regime.

What is more, in spite of the increases in investment in the state's manufacturing and agricultural sectors of the economy before 1983, the state's economy began a downward movement beginning from the post 1983 period - a movement which the regime headed by Anayo Rochas Okorochoa could not find



solutions to, instead the problems were compounded by the policy of infrastructure chinalization.²⁹ It is sad to state therefore that consequent upon this, an excursion to Imo revealed continuous case of industrial decline to the effect that in the three senatorial zones, what greeted one's eyes upon visit were decaying/dilapidated industrial sites and machines. Worst of all was that most of the industrial equipment were allegedly sold and the proceeds were diverted to private hands. Below are tables of some winded up industries in Imo State within the period covered by this study.

Table I: Showing Winded up Industries in Orlu Zone

S/N	Name of Companies	Location
1.	Oma Pharmaceutical Ltd	Orlu
2.	Cohab Nigeria Ltd	Orlu
3.	Nze Duru Ohanenye & Sons	Orlu
4.	Ike sons enterprise	Orlu
5.	Theo and Theo Paints	Orlu
6.	Oham International Feeds	Orlu
7.	Harmony Paints Nigerian Ltd	Orlu
8.	Ferdinard group of Companies	Orlu
9.	Ferdinard Oil Mills Pic	Orlu
10.	Iheuzo Enterprise	Orlu
11.	Barrage Engineering Company	Orlu
12.	J. N. Anumudu and Sons	Orlu
13.	Maurice Ama Industries	Orlu
14.	Johny Bros Metal Construction	Orlu
15.	Godfery Goka & Co	Orlu
16.	Kindius Enterprises Nigeria	Orlu
17.	Jonsico Enterprises Nigeria	Orlu
18.	Dilion Group of Companies	Orlu
19.	New Pito Ltd	Orlu
20.	Agi O Harvest _WA) Ltd	Orlu
21.	Egbema Christian E.M.C.S	Orlu



22.	Topaza Industries	Orlu
23.	Innoko Shoes Company	Orlu
24.	Sam Industries Ltd	Orlu
25.	Lake – side Industries Ltd	Orlu
26.	Niwaka Paper Mills	Orlu
27.	Cosmas Printing & Packaging	Orlu
28.	Agric Enterpires Pic	Orlu
29.	Pedmagre CKS Ltd	Orlu
30.	Campham Products Ltd	Orlu
31.	Lodys Oil & Chemicals	Orlu
32.	Atlantic Gulf Ent. Ltd	Orlu
33.	Samzor Industries Ltd	Orlu
34.	D. Tophers Industries	Orlu
35.	Junction Plastic Ltd	Orlu
36.	Agility Chemicals and Allied Products	Orlu
37.	Niproc Ltd	Orlu
38.	Safary Breweries	Orlu
39.	Ukama Industries Ltd	Orlu
40.	Santa Bekery	Orlu
41.	Omeire Pharm.	Orlu
42.	Fairland Pharm. Ltd	Orlu
43.	Macron Fams Ltd	Orlu

Source: Imo State Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Table 2: showing winded up industries in Okigwe Zone

S/N	Name of Companies	Location
1.	Limca Bottling Company	Okigwe
2.	Obi Farms and Animals	Okigwe
3.	Kwukwee and Cosmetics	Okigwe
4.	Okigwe Pottery Centre	Okigwe
5.	Imo Poultry	Okigwe
6.	Raia (Nig) Ent.	Okigwe
7.	Nwoke Paper Mills	Okigwe



Source: Imo State Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Table 3: Showing winded up industries In Owerri Zone

S/N	Name of Companies	Location
1.	3dumegwu Commercial Centre	Owerri
2.	vl.A Amadi & Sons	Owerri
3.	Feadi Foundation	Owerri
4.	The Good Shepherd Ent.	Owerri
5.	Daniel Nigeria	Owerri
6.	Rotex Industries	Owerri
7.	Resin Paints Industries	Owerri
8.	Wire Plas Industries	Owerri
9.	Catason Industries	Owerri
10.	Box Ltd	Owerri
11.	Anyaechie Foundation	Owerri
12.	Buco Steel Company Ltd	Owerri
13.	Fuason Industries Ltd	Owerri
14.	Frontier Publishers	Owerri
15.	Agric Development Programme	Owerri
16.	Akabo Flour Mills	Owerri
17.	G. C. M. Electrical Ltd	Owerri
18.	Clay Products Ltd	Owerri
19.	I Units of Vegetable Oil Ltd	Owerri
20.	Awe & Company Nigeria	Owerri
21.	Macron Group of Companies	Owerri
22.	Amimax Paper Mills Ltd	Owerri
23.	GBC Oil Mills Industries	Owerri
24.	Lingo Agro Technical Ltd	Owerri
25.	David Laboratories Ltd	Owerri
26.	Baa Industries Ltd	Owerri
27.	International Papers Mills	Owerri
28.	Integrated Soil Materials	Owerri
29.	Komak Pints	Owerri
30.	Mid East Nigeria Ltd	Owerri



31.	Evatex Ventures	Owerri
32.	Nucci Punitures	Owerri
33.	Nigeria Oil Mills	Owerri
34.	Key Products	Owerri
35.	Industrial Dynamics	Owerri
36.	Umukene Vegetable Oil	Owerri
37.	R. C Okeaku & Co	Owerri
38.	Mezu Industrial Ltd	Owerri
39.	Metals and Rocks	Owerri
40.	Asfra International Ltd	Owerri
41.	Odyweu International Ltd	Owerri
42.	Dettec Investment	Owerri
43.	Benco Industries	Owerri
44.	Orogwe Plastic Industries	Owerri
45.	Armund Industries Ltd	Owerri
46.	Izuogu Motors	Owerri
47.	Bester Industries	Owerri
48.	Golambo Vegetable Oil Ltd	Owerri
49.	Cassava Paper MFG	Owerri
50.	Ise Industries	Owerri
51.	Oskar Concrete Poles	Owerri
52.	Limca Bottling Co Industries	Owerri
53.	Visco Italian	Owerri
54.	Akobo Flour Mills	Owerri
55.	Dan Nails Industries Ltd	Owerri
56.	Bacron Industries	Owerri

Source: Imo State Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Imo State and the Problem of De-Industrialization, Causes and Consequences: The reasons for industrial wind up in Imo State cannot be located in one particular source. The reasons were both general; emanating from the larger Nigerian system and the international community, as well as specific, emanating from the state. Generally speaking, one of the factors



responsible for industrial decline in Imo State was the slump in Nigeria's oil market and the consequent decline in Oil earning which adversely affected the importation of industrial inputs and manufacturing capacity, utilization³⁰. The problem was further aggravated by the rapid depreciation of the Naira which immediately accompanied the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), in 1986³¹.

Besides these external factors which contributed negatively towards Imo industrial evolution, it should be noted that the zeal with which the regime of Samuel Mbakwe, between 1979 and 1983, pursued the issue of industrialization in Imo state, if sustained by successive regimes, would have launched the state on the part of industrial progress. Similarly, military interventions in Nigeria's politics cannot be relegated as one of the major factors that played noticeable role in truncating the industrial motion put in place by the preceding regime of Samuel Onulaka Mbakwe.³² Cyril, Ndo and E, Emezie commenting on this, would have us believe that, the Army has always failed to live up to the aims of the coup; the Army finds it quite easy to criticize the civilian administration on a host of issues to justify a coup, but very difficult to find immediate solution to the problems they accused the civilians of³³.

The Army on coming to power, soon discover that the reforms necessary in establishing the economy and improving the living condition of the people demand further tightening of the belt, at least, for a limited period, could throw the required discipline overboard, and resume an era of unmitigated and reckless plundering and satanic embezzlement of state resources, all to the detriment of the people³⁴. It is sad to note that for the fifteen or sixteen years the Army took over governance in the state, the state's industrial sub -sector of the economy was subjected to untold relegation, pillage, and worse of all, mindless destruction. On the extreme, most of the industries were sold, most often than not, at give - away prices; and the proceeds emanating thereof,



were diverted to private pockets³⁵. More still was the fear and mistrust the civilian populace had for the Army. This was a great disincentive for prospective investors. The fear and lack of trust was not limited to the citizens of the state but the country and the international community, as it became practically difficult for the state to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), or Technology Transfer, which were among the benefits of states' interaction in a democracy. Gradually, but steadily, the state, on the account of these ugly trends, began a journey towards de-industrialization³⁶.

Closely related to the above factor is the obvious, but regrettable lack of political will on the part of the state's political leaders, as well as corruption among both citizens, and leaders of the state, which characterized successive leadership of the state beginning from 1999³⁷. For sure, no real man in Imo, in 1999 took the Army seriously when they made open their intention to hand over governance to democratically elected government, obviously because of previous failed promises to hand over power to Civilians. However, only business men, gamblers and risk takers who had no vision and mission for leadership, undertook to contest for the state's gubernatorial election in 1999. As a result, at the end of the elections, the state again was subjected to the whims of men who could, at most, be defined as military men in civilian uniform, thereby creating room for another era of reckless impunity, inarticulate leadership and political high handedness in the state. Lacking in vision and philosophy of good leadership, Achike Udenwa, in 2001, was quoted as saying that, the reason for his low performance during the first term of his leadership as the governor of the state was because the dislocations caused to the state's economy by the Army was colossal and needed time to respond to development plans of his administration³⁸.

Though there were elements of truth in this statement, yet superior argument would have it that leaders make the best use



of their abilities in times of difficulties. The Governor and his team were not the best brains for Imo leadership at that time of crucial need. This was evident in the suffocation the state's industrial sector was plunged into, from which emancipation was, and has continued to be an illusion. In the face of persistent economic decline and its associated problems of de-industrialization to which Imo State was plunged, it becomes pertinent to highlight other factors that were at the roots of Imo State's economic woes. Prominent among them includes the issue of land tenure system in Imo state and elsewhere in the country. The difficulties associated with land acquisition for industrial purpose has not been easy. Consequently, investors are made to go through series of huddles in an attempt to secure land for industrial purpose³⁹. The relocation of Nigeria Bottling Company from its original proposed site in Imo State to Enugu is not unconnected to land acquisition problems coupled with government's demand for kick back and kick front⁴⁰. This was Festus Odumegwu's explanation when questioned on the issue in 2003. The issue of land tenure system in Imo is a source of complex problems because there are many forms of land ownership system in the state.

Besides communal ownership of land in Imo state, there was also the individual land ownership, which could be acquired by means of inheritance, purchase or by pledge. According to Lord Cohen, and G.A Nwigwe, the meaning of land ownership is not always clear. The term, ownership of land is loosely used in Africa. Sometimes it demonstrates what in effect absolute ownership is; at other time, it is used in a way which indicates that the reference is only to rights.⁴¹ Directly linked to the above problem was executive or administrative red-tapism. During the 2013 World Economic Summit, in Abuja, Nigeria's former president, Good luck Jonathan, submitted that, one of the problems of doing business in Nigeria was administrative delay. It often takes snail speed to compile and sign documents for setting up industries in Nigeria. These delays, most of the times were caused by corrupt



civil servants and politicians, who would, most often, demand kickbacks and kick fronts from applicants seeking to set up industries in the country. In most instances, frustration and discouragement caused by such behaviour have never been palatable to investors.

Another great source of worry to investors in Imo State at the time of study was the case of kidnapping. Imo, like many other states in South-east Nigeria, had been under the siege of Kidnappers. Whether politically motivated or economically induced, the art of kidnapping in the state had gone digital and constituted an issue of concern to many, including foreign investors.

Further, low internal revenue generation has also been noted as among the factors responsible for slow pace of industrialization in the state. Fundamentally, the developmental challenges faced by the state was summarized by Achike Udenwa thus;

The problem of communication, transparency and accountability; improvement and maintenance of economic, social and institutional infrastructure, human resource development; gender balance and unemployment; environment and sustainable agriculture, financial management; and re-orientation especially the value system, are at the root of de-industrialization in Imo State⁴²

The implications of all these were many and counterproductive. For one thing, the poor industrial base of the state and the concomitant industrial regression resulted in mass exodus of Imo citizens to other parts of Nigeria and beyond in search of greener pasture. This mass migration in turn created weak economic base for the state since active population of its citizens were not engaged in productive activities in the state. Worse still was the annoying case of brain-drain which become the hallmark



of Imo State. This regrettably was a major challenge confronting the state's industrial progress.

Aside of low economic base of the state due to lack of industrial production, the per capita income of the individual citizens of the state was nothing to write home about. Though hospitality industry form of hotels and eateries seemed to have gained momentum in the state; yet there is wisdom in saying that other tourism potential of the state, which, if activated, would compliment hotel business, were seriously undermined, and regrettably untapped. In fact, between 2000 and 2013, one of the major problems faced by the state government and management of higher institutions in the state, especially Imo State University, was the problem posed by admission and examination syndicates in collaboration with the institution officials. The unpatriotic and regressive activities of these syndicates, paved the way for admission of persons into the institutions, and consequent the consequent graduation of unqualified persons who, in turn, contributed virtually nothing to the economic development of the state.

Conclusion

The paper has succeeded in chronicling a lot of winded up industries in the state as well as the economic potentials in the various local governments in the state. It has as well placed a patriotic call to government and individuals to avail themselves of the information contained this research report and consequently challenged investors both local and international to lift the state from its economic weakness. Certainly, this research report does not embody all there is to the topic being examined. It is only but an attempt at fetching water from a big stream with just a sizeable cup. However, the versed nature of the topic under discussion places invitation to scholars to take part in the academic water fetching exercise, in the hope that by so doing, and over time, a reasonable quantity of water would have been drawn from the stream to keep the intellectual homes going.



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