

Measures Taken by Independent African Countries to Curb Neo-Colonialism

Francis Paschal Nwosu, Phd

Department of History and International Studies

Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka

Email: afrikanambassador2006@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Africans did not willingly accept the continuous economic, social and cultural domination of the Western powers. This paper therefore highlights colonial economic policies in Africa which they used as a weapon to dominate African countries and also showcases the various efforts made by African leaders to reduce such domination. Analytical method of Data collection was used in this research. Data were gathered from secondary source from various literatures such as Journals, Newspapers, published and unpublished Books, Periodicals, Projects, and Magazines were consulted and analyzed. The paper discusses these efforts from the economic, technological and cultural perspectives. It concludes that Africans can reduce the burden of neocolonialism if they should properly address the leadership problems confronting the continent that has abundant human and material resources.

Introduction

Africa was already under the firm grip of European Octopus-imperialism. That is why Isreal Okoye quotes Jules Meline, an erstwhile Franc's Minister of Agriculture to have stated with a memorable bluntness in 1899 that French should:

---discourage in advance those attempts at industrialization that may take place one day in our colonies: in a word, oblige our overseas possessions to address themselves exclusively to the metropoles (France) for manufactured goods, and to fulfil voluntarily or by force-their natural role as markets reserved by crivilage for metropolitan industry ¹

It is believed by so many scholars that colonialism nurtured anti-colonial aggressiveness in all colonial territories in Africa, irrespective of their divergent policies. In fact, the dogged efforts to use the school system to de-Africanize Africans ended up nurturing enlightened but ghastly-frustrated Africans. In that respect. Jack Wodds aptly stated:

Thus, the African intellectual is subject to two opposing influences. On the one hand the imperialist tries to suborn and seduce him by offering him small privileges and by smoking his national pride and loyalty through a subtle and deliberate process of de Africanisation and Westernization. On the other hand, because imperialism anxious to retain all the plumps of office and profession. The African intellectual finds his ambitions, both for himself and for his people as a whole, constantly unwanted and frustrated. ²

For anybody to assume or assert that western education is totally bad and unprofitable to Africans would, to say the least, a wrong assumption and argument. In fact, it enlightened Africans and broadened the frontier of their knowledge thereby prepared them for their roles in the emerging new world ordered in managing the new structures and institutions introduced by the respective colonial governments. It's very clear that it was not the intention of the colonial governments to make the best of Africans which will enable them ascend to the apex positions in their respective field of endeavor.

With the emergence of educated Africans, including those of them who were privileged to study in the Western countries, increased the tempo and intensity of the revolts against colonialism in all

ramifications. After Second World War, the Africans that participated in the war having been recruited to fight gained exposures and confidence and boldness to revolt against the colonial system.³

Having relied heavily on forced labour and taxation to sustain their exploitation of the economic resources in Africa, colonial governments treated Africans with disdain. What mattered most to them were the benefits of their exploits. Thus living Leonard Markowitz declares that colonialism was only one expression of an ever more encompassing capitalism. He further argues that contact with the west in the final analysis produced a growing dependency, and other directed, cuter-directed alienated development⁴. Colonialism inadvertent sowed the seed of popular revolt against it. Thus Walter Rodney stated that:

After reading the harrowing account of the brutalities of slavery of subjugation of deprivation and humiliation, when nations were crushed in order to serve the imperialist interest of the West, when settled societies were disintegrated by force of imperialist arms so that the plantation owners of the 'New World' could get their uprooted, and therefore permanent labour force to build what is now the most advanced capitalist economy. It becomes clear that the only way out of our current impasse is through a revolutionary path-a complete break with the system, which is responsible for all our past and present misery.⁵

The dire need for emancipation from the shackles of colonialism and imperialism led to the emergence of cells of revolts which, as a result of exposure to similar circumstances and shared aspirations, established some common platform for united action. In that context, Jill Hollings noted that the African movement for independence has been called "Nationalism".⁶ similarly, Donald Gordon pointedly stated that the struggle that would become known as African nationalism was essentially an anti-colonial struggle, and its intensity was a reflection in large part of the degree of colonial impact on groups and individuals.⁷ We shall briefly discuss the character of the communities in which those movements were organized and the orientations. The Western powers which is the colonialist and the imperialist forces did everything within their power to destroy Africa's indigenous heritage and potentialities for development hence Kwame Nkrumah noted that:

The aim of all colonial governments in Africa and elsewhere has been the struggle for raw materials; and not only this, but the colonies have become the dumping ground, and colonial peoples the false recipient, of manufactured goods of the industries and capitalists of Great Britain, France, Belgium and other colonial powers who turn to the dependent territories which fed their industrial plants. This is colonialism in a nutshell.⁸

After the Cold War, a New World Order emerged. An American led imperial age called globalization. Unfortunately, this New World Order tends to worsen Africa's situation. The question therefore is; what efforts are these independent African nations making to remedy the situation?

Kwame Nkrumah had earlier warned that political independence was meaningless without economic independence. He believed that the yoke of economic neo-colonialism could be broken by political Pan-Africanism on the pan of the exploited Africans. Even before his emergence as the First indigenous president of Ghana, Nkrumah had started spear heading the Pan African Movement. He was the brain behind the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester. In 1958, he convoked the conference of Independent Africa States in April and the All African peoples conference in December and in 1959 the All-African trade Union Federation Conference in Accra. His effort was targeted at raising African states that will be strong and truly independent of the former colonial masters. This can only be achieved, according to him, if they are politically and economically united.

Nkrumah followed his crusade with action. Ghana under Nkrumah in 1958 offered Ten Million Pounds' loan to Guinea to help her escape total economic collapse after French withdrawal of her economic aids.⁹ It could therefore be argued that the activities of Nkrumah in Pan-Africanism laid the foundation of Africa's effort towards curbing neo-colonialism. Africans have tried at the Continental, Regional and State levels to show that they were not comfortable with their status at the international scene. Let us look at this discussion therefore from three dimensions- Economic, technology and cultural.

Economic Measures

At the continental and regional level their efforts were expressed through the following organizations:

Formation of Organization of African Unity (O.A.U)

By 1963 the organization for African Unity was formed with the following aims

1. To promote the unity and solidarity of the African states
2. To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa
3. To defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence
4. To eradicate all forms of colonialism in Africa
5. To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the charter of the U.N and the universal declaration of Human Rights.

However, the OAU made considerable progress in her struggle to decolonized Africa politically. Economically the O.A.U in association with the UN's Economic Commission for Africa made a call for a "New International Economic Order or Fundamental rearrangement of relations" between Africa and the developed nations. The efforts of these two bodies could not yield any dividend. All their reports, resolutions and recommendations could not be carried out due to lack of funds and ideological differences between African states.

Formation of Sub-Regional Organisation in Africa like Economic Community of West African States, East African co-operation Treaties etc.

ECOWAS is a sub-regional economic organization just like its counterpart, the East African Community. The East African co-operation treaty was signed by the heads of states of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in June 1967. However, the common market did not last due largely to economic nationalism within the member states.

ECOWAS was established in 1975. The treaty establishing it was signed by 15 Heads of states in November, 1976 at Lome. S.K.B Asante in describing the aim of ECOWAS stated that:

"the recognition of the dynamic potential of regional cooperation and integration whereby developing countries can break out of their narrow national markets and form regional groupings as an instrument of economic decolonization".¹⁰

It set-up an industrial fund with an initial capital of N50 million dollars. The objective was to use the credit to finance industrial projects, compensate losses arising from trade liberalization among others. Unfortunately, too, it has not made much success in the areas of economic integration as it did achieve political will which brought about the defense protocol in management of conflict within the region.¹¹

Establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is another serious effort made by African states with a view to addressing the neo-colonial question. It is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy and body politics. The programme is predated on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world.

NEPAD initiative is not entirely an African project. It is planned to partner with the advanced economies of the West involving the group of eight **industrialized** nations of the world. The NEPAD's programme of action and vision by African leaders to pursue the economic recovery of Africa was born following the merger of the earlier plans of Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal ie the Millennium and Omega Initiatives.

At the Organisation of African Unity (O. A. U) Summits held in Libya (1999), Togo (2000) and Libya again (2001), these initiatives and the work done by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria were received and packaged. On 11th July 2001, it was presented to the Organisation of African Unity (O. A. U) Summit of Heads of States and Government in Lusaka, Zambia where it was "unanimously adopted in the form of declaration as Africa's principle agenda development, providing a framework for the development of the continent."¹²

The fundamentals and principles of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) include:

- i. Ensuring broad base African ownership, responsibility and leadership
- ii. A partnership with international community based on common interest, mutual obligation and accountability
- iii. Making Africa attractive in order to mobilize resources from both domestic and foreign investors.
- iv. Unleashing the full economic potential of the continent and
- v. Creating conditions necessary for sustainable development.

For the implementation of its priority programmes various strategies were adopted. The A.U/F.A.O were some of the lead agencies charged with the responsibility of facilitating the implementation of Agricultural/Market and infrastructure/Banking respectively. Individual countries and regional groupings like ECOWAS were also employed to coordinate specific areas of the programme.

The architects of NEPAD identified persistent armed conflict, political instability, widespread corruption, questionable management and poor leadership as some of the major reasons behind the failure of past initiatives. The question now is to what extent have they addressed these problems so as to ensure prospects of achieving their set goals?

At the state level, many African countries have adopted various economic reforms to address the issue of economic backwardness and underdevelopment. South Africa for instance presently occupies the first position in Africa's development index. Since the end of apartheid, it has made great strides in economic and social development, raising economic levels and reducing poverty. The secret is that they have capable economic managers who maintained the prudent macroeconomic policies that created economic climate conducive for growth and job creation. One of the major economic reforms in South Africa was the expansion of her investment in the African continent. The stock of South African direct investment in the rest of Africa equals approximately 5% of the country's GDP.¹³ Her corporate community being fully involved and her banks hiking advantage of the growing financial services in the whole Africa.

In Egypt, since 2000 there has been a consistent structural reforms reflecting the fiscal, monetary policies, taxation, privatization and new business legislations. These reforms have helped Egypt to move towards a more market-oriented economy resulting in increased foreign investment. It has also strengthened macroeconomic annual growth averaging 8% annually between 2004 and 2009. The economy was diversified and the main export goods include crude oil, petroleum products, cotton, textiles, metal products, chemicals and Agricultural goods. Another remarkable effort was through remittance inflows. "An estimated 2.7 million Egyptians abroad contribute actively to the development of their country through remittance inflows, circuiting of human and social capital, as well as investment"¹⁴.

The first post-colonial government in Nigeria inherited an economy that was totally dominated by foreign business interests. By the end of the first republic, petroleum had assumed a place of relevance in the nation's economy, coupled with the increasing number of graduates from our universities who

believe that Nigerian had all it takes to control foreign owned companies and set up new industries of their own. According to Okechukwu Okeke "They became more confident of their ability to manage large, modern enterprises and more concerned about the dangers (real and imagined) of neo-colonialism"¹⁵

In response the second national development plan of the federal government 1970 - 1974 considered as its main objective the control of the various sectors of the economy and gradual but steady elimination of foreign dominance in the national economy in terms of financial ownership, level of management and technical control. In pursuant of this objective the Federal Military government in 1972 promulgated the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (NEPD) whose major task was to advance the course of promoting enterprises that Nigerians shall not only participate but be in control. The enterprises listed in Schedule (1) of the decree were reserved for Nigerian citizens and associations only.

Foreigners were not allowed to do such business in Nigeria. Under Schedule II, enterprises whose paid-up share capital of less than two hundred pounds (£200,000) were also exclusively reserved for Nigerians while enterprises whose paid-up share capital exceeded this limit were open to foreign participation.

These were enterprises that required a lot of capital and technology. In 1976, the Obasanjo administration followed the Indigenization Programme and received the 1972 NEPD. His successor President Shehu Shagari also inherited the programme and introduced some minor changes to the 1976 NEPAD.

Another remarkable effort of the Shagari administration was the policy of Green Revolution which was launched in October 1979. The main objective was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in basic food items and exporter of various crops. Funds were released to support peasant farmers, irrigation and drains were constructed, funding of River Basin Development Authorities among other measures were taken to ensure that the dream was realized.

Technological Measures

In one of his writings Paul Ndoj stated that:

"A society that is not science conscious should forget about dreaming of developing or catching up with the technologically advanced countries in their developmental efforts"¹⁶

The Federal government of Nigeria in pursuit of her economic development discovered the pivotal role of steel as an engine and catalyst of industrial development and growth decided to invest in the sector. According to Prof. Okay Okoroafor

"----it is basic to development of any nation be it manufacture, agriculture, power, transportation or defense. Indeed, the level of steel production and consumption is an index of economic growth and level of development of any nation".¹⁷

That was why the Shagari administration pursued the development of the iron and steel sector with vigor and provided adequate funds to ensure that the projects were realized.

In 1979, Shagari awarded contract for the establishment of the Ajaokuta Steel plant. By the end of his administration in 1983 four other steel plants were under construction in various locations in the country.

Another technological effort worthy of note was the Biafra's technological breakthrough during the civil war. The Biafra government set up what they called the Research and Production unit (RAP) which was composed of scientists, technicians, undergraduate students of engineering. The RAP was charged with the responsibility of designing petrol distillation gadgets, home-made rockets, self-detonating anti-personal and vehicle mines. They produced toilet soap, brandy, etc.

With the assistance of the engineer in the Biafran army the RAP also fabricated and repaired military hard-wares. Cocoa-nut milk was used as brake fluid, mixture of diesel and grease as engine oil, etc. at Amandugba oil refinery was installed and kerosene, diesel, fuel and aviation fuel were all refined there. "The Biafran experience and achievements in science and technology made the average Biafran to be very proud of the Biafran state".¹⁸

At individual level, there are numerous Africans who have made giant strides in science and technology. Prof Barth Nnaji in 2000 built the 22-megawatt

Emergency Power Plant that supplied electricity to state house in Enugu States, NNPC and Abuja Central Business District. Bisi Ezerioha an engineer who has built some of the world's most powerful Honda and Porsche engines. Seyi Oyesola, another Nigerian doctor who co-invented hospital in a box. Other world class scientists of African origin are Haile Debas from Eritrea, a gastrointestinal investigator and has made contributions to the physiology, biochemistry and pathophysiology of gastrointestinal peptide hormones.

From South Africa, we have Christian Bernard, a cardiac surgeon who performed the world's first successful human-to-human heart transplant, Sydney Brenner won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine.

In North Africa, an Egyptian nuclear scientist Sameera Moussa and a French Moroccan scientist Rachid Yazami who was known for his research on lithium ion batteries⁹. The list is endless.

Cultural Measures

Cultural renaissance as one of the major tasks facing the post-colonial African leaders. The Europeans had condemned Africa's culture and tradition regarding it as uncivilized and barbaric. The French in expressing their cultural arrogance introduced the policy of assimilation in her African colonies during the colonial period and continued to influence them even after independence.

Negritude was therefore set up to challenge European cultural domination and assert African cultural values, pride and dignity. Negritude is a French word which means "blackness". It was a movement used to express Africa's feelings, beliefs and experiences. Some of the apostles like Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor, Mongo Beti. Cam are Laye, etc used their literary works to reverse African cultural values that were distorted and misinterpreted during the colonial period.¹⁹

Another historical effort made by African leaders towards reviving, promoting and preserving Africa's cultural heritage was the convocation of all black festival of arts and culture in Dakar, Senegal in 1962 and the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. According to Orjiako "the second world black and African festival of Arts and Culture recaptured the origin of the African heritage".¹⁹

Another landmark achieved towards curbing neo-colonialism culturally was recorded in 1996 in Nigeria by the Owerri Catholic Archdiocese through the establishment of the Odenigbo Lecture Series.

This is an annual event that has helped in uplifting the spirit of the Igbo both at home and in the diaspora.²⁰ The main objective include:

- i. To accept support and reinvigorate these cultural values that abound in Igbo (and
- ii. To explicate human philosophy and thought in Igbo language
- iii. (iii) Promotion of Igbo language through the spread of the gospel among others.

One peculiar feature of this intellectual harvest is that the lecture is written and delivered in Igbo language, the discipline of the lecturer notwithstanding. Odenigbo has gained enormous interest and sympathy from among Igbo people all over the world. African musicians must also be remembered for their contributions in promoting Africa's culture. I commend the Ijaw, Hausa/Fulani and other groups who maintained their traditional dress code.

Conclusion

Africans are not unaware of their predicament and through these efforts have expressed their resentment to neocolonialism. Development is often accelerated by necessity. Africans have acquired enough skills

from Western countries, have enough natural resources. What is lacking is committed and selfless leadership to put together these human and material resources that abound in Africa for the emancipation of Africa.

Endnotes

1. Isreal Okoye, "Emancipation of Africa" in Joules Meline, led French Economic Colonial System (Paris: new age publication 1970) p. 26
2. Isreal Okoye, Emancipation of Africa in Jack Wodds (ed) nurturing of Africans, (Enugu: new age publication 1962) p.264
3. Isreal Okoye, Emancipation of -----p.39
4. Isreal Okoye, Emancipation of -----p.20
5. Walter Rodney, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" (Abuja: Panaf Publishers, 2005)p.150
6. Jill Holings, "the Shackles of colonialism" (London: bright publications 1972) p.35
7. Donald Gordon, Anti-colonial struggles in Africa (England: Durban prints, 1996) pp.58-59
8. W. Senteza. L. T. Lewis, C. O. Taiwo, African Encyclopedia for Schools and Colleges (London: Oxford University Press. 1974) p.364
9. Kwame Nkrumah, "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism"(London: Heinemann Publishers, 1995)p.40
10. Kwame Nkuruma "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism"----p.36
11. S.K.B Asante "colonialism in Africa (London solid publications, 1967) p.10
12. W. Senteza, L.T. Lewis, C.O. Taiwo, African encyclopedia for schools and colleges (London: oxford university press 1974) 364
13. WWW.doubleglist.co<<i/partnership 12/09/16
14. Okechukwu Okeke, Aya Akpuuru-Aja and Sydney "African History" (Port Harcourt; educational books and investments ltd 1998) p.50
15. Paul Ndoh "Technological Development in Africa" (Enugu: fourth dimension publishers, 1986) p.31
16. Okey Okoroafor "Economic Development in Africa" (Enugu: Peoples Prints,1999) p.30
17. Odenigbo Lectures series 1997
18. Colloquium papers presented at the 2003 Ahiajoku festival.
19. Ngozi Orjiakor, Lecturer/ Civil Servant, 63 years, class room lecture of History and International Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, in 2016
20. Odenigbo Lecture Series at Owerre, 1997.