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Institutionalized stratification in Northern Nigeria

Abstract. A raft of theories exists in the fields of social sciences providing explanations for the deepening social inequality and existential problems confronting the northern region of Nigeria. Many of the theories include the colonial interference in the modes of life of Africans, personal failures of the politicians to meet the social needs of their people, institutional corruption and others. This paper will take a fresh look at the problems with a proposed solution. To achieve this objective, the authors have taken the perspectives of economic sociology for critical and analytical approach by employing new ways of knowing to detect asymmetries of systems of social institutions and their concrete relationship with a range of social outcomes. The innovative interdisciplinary approach has made it possible to detect those asymmetries, their concrete ways and methods of influencing extant social institutions. Further still, this work explores the existential problems by making a careful appraisal of the set of social institutions and their contributions to social deprivations and social exclusions in the north of the country. A combined method of primary observation and secondary data have been adopted for this analysis, to allow a cursory look into the social and economic challenges threatening the existence of Nigeria as an entity.

Keywords: social exclusion, institutionalized stratification, social instability.

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Introduction.

Upon gaining independence after decades of colonial dominion, the young African states soon confronted head-on the realities of running societies with complex political, economic, and socio-cultural as well as administrative systems, for which they were ill-prepared. Nigeria has been struggling with the task of nation-building since its independence in 1960. The new country

was inherited by inexperienced leaders who lacked national consciousness and constituency and were more tuned to the subverted indigenous ethos of government and culture. By 1960 most of those who took over the reins of power from Britain had a very short experience in democratic governance while those in the North had only a modicum of western education.

The young Nigerian state continues to face to date the challenges of searching for the

principles by which to consolidate and cohere the society. Not surprisingly, at the declaration of independence from the Great Britain in 1960, the young country had three main regions namely the Yoruba dominant in the west, the Igbo in the east and the Hausa-Fulani in the vast north. The three regions consisted of over 250 ethnic groups with distinct languages, diverse cultures, and political interests. Lacking the political and economic wisdom to cohere the society, politicians resorted to patronizing traditional leaders (formerly sidelined by the British) for society consolidation. This patronage in turn has consequentially emboldened the traditional leaders to assume supremacy once again over the legitimately elected politicians. This marked the beginning of a patron-client political system that will have lasting consequences for the country's political life.

Problem statement

The illegitimacy and indeed the moral and ethical bankruptcy, of the multiple and overlapping networks of customary and modern governance have created vast space of alienation and social exclusion in a world where the armies of impoverished youth were neither citizens nor subjects, a social landscape for the politics of resentment to fester [1]. Rural and urban, federal, and local, religious, and secular, customary, and modern, the crises of authority were all instrumental in the processes that created a rural and urban underclass, alienated, and excluded from the worlds of legitimate authority, and from the market order. These floating populations – the lumpen proletariat, Quranic students, and land-poor peasants in the northern parts of the country, the unemployed youth in the south-east detached from the old gerontocracy order, unable to pursue their measures of personal advancement through marriage, patronage, and work. Existentially, young men, unanchored from social, civic, and political structures, occupied a social space of massively constricted possibility, in a world where economic recession and the dreadful logic of provisioning and self-interest deprived millions of the basic needs in

life, conditioned to a hapless and hopeless social underclass. Thus, the youth in these regions was, by default, nothing much of an extended social category as a permanent way of life [1].

The logic of indigeneity and indeed, the legitimacy of community forms of rule encoded within the constitution, in effect institutionalized a parallel system of governance represented by chieftaincy in the south and emirate rule in the north. In this multi-ethnic political drama, indigenes looked to customary institutions as a source of legitimacy and authority, and nowhere more so than around question of access to and control over land [2]. The patronage political tradition has inevitably cumulated in institutional corruption and lack of credibility for the holders of public offices. Institutional corruption here means contracts undone, breach of trusts or pervasive dishonesty, damaged investment environment, failing infrastructures and massive economic loss, youth marginalization and an inescapable break down in social order. The centripetal tendentious patronage of the traditional hegemony by the legitimate community rulers has proved counterproductive by the centrifugal tendentious institutional failure and existential predicament now starring the nation.

While all this provided the context for the first steps towards the construction of early versions of patron-client relations along ethnic, regional and party lines, the resources with which to fund the supporting networks came in greater abundance in the post-civil war period of oil boom when Nigeria became awash in petro-naira, thanks largely to 'the two great oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979' that ensured that 'staggering new revenues poured into the country. These massive oil rents helped the politicians fed their patrons upon whom they depend for political nominations and success at elections, much at the expenses of the unsuspecting voters. However, the overwhelming influence of political godfathers and moneybags in the electoral process pose incredible threats to democratic survival and the democratic institution. The logic of the political settlement entails buying off powerful groups and individuals so that they do not become a threat (co-optation); permitting some benefits to

trickle down to purchase consent and legitimacy and building powerful coercive apparatuses to ensure compliance.

Goals

The goal of this paper is not to reproduce the arguments and existing theories on the theme, but merely to point to the correlation between institutional stratification and existential predicament and the way in which information from each can, perhaps help throw light on our interpretation of the other. Conflicts between structures and agents in the political order in the north will be explored to discover asymmetries inherent of the two social constructs.

History

Historically, the hegemony of the African feudal lords has never been catalysts for progress, safe only for promoting debilitating internecine wars, pillaging communities and slave raiding. Sadly, we see the reminiscence of this hapless past in contemporary Africa. Once again Africans are living precariously and are susceptible to slavery. Everyday across the Mediterranean, Africans are being shipped across the sea in the most inhuman conditions to places where they are treated with hostility and indignation, slaving away only to remit money home to impoverished relatives. A clear indication that the African economy cannot be able to absorb its able bodied, employable youths.

Arguably, if as has been the case after the end of colonization all over Africa that economic production is much below that capacity to absorb the ever-growing army of youths that form the bulk of the African population, it would appear logical to devise doable social development initiatives to garner the underused capacity of the continent's economy to address society's challenges. Mass job-creating initiatives such as building Community Parks, constructing bridges and access roads; river channelization are all doable community development projects. Plantations on partnership or cooperative, or contract bases can transform subsistent peasant

farming into modern extensive farming that will, in turn, lead to efficiency in food storage and distribution. Initiatives to build new towns, infrastructures, and a raft of others, executed exclusively with the local labor forces would all have the additional advantage of triggering the private sector investment and job creation that would help overcome lack of economic capacity.

These never happened when Africans were being massively shipped to slave on plantations in the Americas in the 18th century, it never happened when Africans labored on plantations under colonization at home. And although food production today throughout Africa, at best, continues to be at the subsistence level, yet all the legacies of colonial systematized mass agricultural production, functioning urban infrastructures have all become derelict followed by barbaric plundering of the assets. In Nigeria, none of the attempts to restore the systems has yielded significant results. A wanton prodigality of the huge resource-endowment in Africa.

Research Methods

For this volume, a desk research on the fundamental concepts namely: 'social exclusion', 'institutional stratification' was carried out. This was aided by reviewing and analyzing both national and international scientific work on the northern Nigerian enduring poverty. Further still, as a research method, a review and analysis of scientific articles on the impact and the characteristics of the enduring problems were applied. The reports of the: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Index on Nigeria; data from the National Bureau of Statistics were among the secondary analysis. This study is descriptive and based on the indicators of empirical studies by the author. The study mainly focuses on the scope of the institutional stratification, with reference to the effects on the everyday life of millions of people in the region.

For a better grasp of this discourse, it is imperative to shed light on the meaning of the fundamental concepts of this paper, such as 'social exclusion' and 'institutional stratification'. Both social exclusion and institutional stratification

feed on each other in describing a system that continues to deprive millions of the basic needs of life, conditioning them to a hapless and hopeless social underclass. The resulting instability, a break-down of social order, centrifugal separatist movements in all the three main regions of the country, terrorism, human kidnapping, broad day atrocities, are all too familiar even to the outside world.

The alternative views, presented by different authors on this subject raise many questions, but cannot be dismissed lightly because they are all based on a detailed analysis of the prevailing situations in the country. Unfortunately, they have all proffered solutions that lack the required vigor, considering the scale of the problems. Paradoxically, it would also appear that the distinction between separate forms of social institutions in the southern and northern parts of the country has been responsible for a certain reversal of the progression contrast between the prosperity of the former and the deepening poverty of the latter. There is a need for interdisciplinary analysis.

The objectives of this paper are to substantiate the hypothesis that systemic marginality is responsible for the difficulties being experienced by people and communities within a system whereby distribution is inequitably constructed through the systems of religious and cultural hegemony. Systemic or hegemonic marginality differs from market-induced marginality because it defies market reforms as a corrective measure. Mainly because it stems from a conscious plan by an existing hegemony to perpetuate its political control, social exclusion and economic exploitation. The history of hegemonic marginality is considered specific to each community relative to the historical configuration of power within it. Vivid instances of these would include the inequity and oppression suffered under apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia,

ethnically targeted exclusionary practices in countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Sudan, and policies that (in)advertently marginalize ethnic and religious groups leading to horizontal inequalities in countries like Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire where autochthony confers and denies rights. In many African countries, it remains at the center of agitations for secession and ethnic militancy. However, the susceptibility of ethnic minorities to hegemonic marginality is peculiar not to Africa alone [3].

Reversion to the old ways of life leading to the eminence of the Weberian traditional authority has taken the form of serfdom and feudalism underscored by absolute poverty and hopelessness particularly in the northern parts of Nigeria today. As stated by ex-president, Goodluck Jonathan: "A situation where 52.4% of males in the Northeastern region of Nigeria have no formal Western education. The figure is even worse when you consider the states most affected by the insurgency. 83.3% of the male population in Yobe state has no formal Western education. In Borno state, it is 63.6%. Bearing this in mind is it a coincidence that the Boko Haram insurgency is strongest in these two states?" [4, p.196]. In the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Index Nigeria Country Briefing published in 2017, the poverty map of Nigeria's states runs as follows:

Arguably, there are development disparities throughout the country, as can be seen in the last two southern states. Nevertheless, poverty in Nigeria, according to Elombah, increased from 27% in 1980 to 66% in 1996, in 1999 it increased to 70%, by 2011 it was estimated that more than 85% of Nigerians live in poverty, accelerated mainly due to pervasive impoverishment in the north of the country [6].

A report published by the National Bureau of Statistics released in May 2020 revealed comprehensive data on poverty and inequality in Nigeria for the year 2020:

Table 1. The Poverty Map of States in Nigeria [5]

Zamfara	Jigawa-	Bauchi	Sokoto-	Kebbi	Katsina	Gombe	Taraba	*Bayelsa	*Osun
92%	88%	87%	87%	86%	82.2%	77%	78%	29%	11%

From the table above, the disparity between north and other states is startling, makes one wonder what form of self-rule makes this possible. The survey could not cover Borno state for lack of security. Borno state is the seat of the dreadful Boko Haram insurgents. Since Yobe is the most adjacent to Borno state, it is safe to assume that poverty level in that state could be as high as

92%. Yobe and Borno states are also the states where Boko Haram is forcefully campaigning against Western Education. Meanwhile the ruling elite and the clerics all studied at the Christian Missionary schools established by the colonists, they attended European system universities, speak fluent English, and hold career positions in the public offices, yet they brazenly support

Table 2. Poverty and Inequality by States in Nigeria [7]

State	Poverty headcount rate	Poverty gap index	Squared poverty gap index (Severity)
NIGERIA	40.09	12.85	5.63
Urban	18.04	4.47	1.68
Rural	52.10	17.42	7.78
Abia	30.67	7.15	2.59
Adamawa**	75.41	27.64	13.21
Akwa Ibom	26.82	7.25	2.74
Anambra	14.78	3.24	1.06
Bauchi**	61.53	20.50	9.07
Bayelsa	22.61	5.25	1.89
Benue	32.90	8.43	3.05
Borno			
Cross River	36.29	9.66	3.60
Delta	6.02	0.94	0.21
Ebonyi**	79.76	34.09	17.05
Edo	11.99	2.90	1.01
Ekiti	28.04	6.16	2.00
Enugu	58.13	16.00	6.34
Gombe**	62.31	20.03	8.97
Imo	28.86	6.89	2.35
Jigawa**	87.02	38.73	20.53
Kaduna**	43.48	15.51	6.74
Kano**	55.08	15.24	5.68
Katsina**	56.42	16.18	6.50
Kebbi**	50.17	15.14	6.19
Kogi	28.51	6.19	2.01
Kwara	20.35	4.45	1.50
Lagos	4.50	0.67	0.18
Nasarawa**	57.30	16.87	6.62
Niger**	66.11	21.68	9.12
Ogun	9.32	1.63	0.44

Ondo	12.52	2.28	0.58
Osun	8.52	1.43	0.44
Oyo	9.83	1.85	0.52
Plateau**	55.05	17.80	7.61
Rivers	23.91	5.46	1.73
Sokoto**	87.73	38.82	20.34
Taraba**	87.72	42.38	24.44
Yobe**	72.34	26.48	12.84
Zamfara**	73.98	24.95	10.41
FCT	38.66	9.77	3.80

Note: * The estimates exclude Borno State. ** States in the north of Nigeria.

movements against education for all, thereby perpetrating institutional deprivation, sowing the seeds of absolute poverty to their hapless and gullible people.

Results and discussion

During this study, poverty rates throughout the states in the north point to the fact that a systemic stratification exists throughout the north of Nigeria. Meanwhile, 19 of the 36 states in Nigeria, including the Federal capital territory are all in the north, the north region has produced virtually all the ministers, presidents, and heads of states for the country.

Absolute poverty, an aftermath of social and economic deprivation, has been described as the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the state of one who lacks basic human needs, which commonly includes clean and fresh water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter. About 1.7 billion people are estimated to live in absolute poverty in the world today.

The United Nations further defines poverty as: 'a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity'. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed or clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit.

It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It also means living on the edge, being susceptible to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation [8].

Thus, poverty can further be understood to mean a multidimensional phenomenon that is both a state and a process. A person in poverty is in a continuous state of deprivation or denial of the basic opportunities needed to enjoy a decent steward of living; to live a long, healthy fulfilled life and to take active participation in the political, economic, and cultural processes in the society.

In the precarious and poverty ridden north of Nigeria, the sight of middle-aged and older people seen reclining tiredly on mats spread in street corners panhandling with no discrimination to gender is ubiquitous everywhere. A survey conducted in 2013 on child beggars in different cities in the north estimated the population of waifs and strays in the streets at a staggering 12.4 million. The survey also indicated that there are as many as 10million child beggars in northern Nigeria. The Quranic education – Almajiri system, predominantly found in the north of Nigeria – has produced child beggars in multitude. The Almajiri in the north are children generally denied of parental care and they constitute most of the children beggar population [9]. All efforts to revoke the institution have been resisted and suppressed. In northern Nigeria, modern-day slavery is a way of life for millions of people.

In this predicament of mass pauperization, it is difficult to calculate how many people are still being held under slavery in the elite homes across the northern region.

Conclusions

Between agents and structures in the north of Nigeria, there are conceptual conflicts of interest, while the former is being constrained, the latter is unruffled and indifferent towards the plight of the former and with impunity. This volume has discussed the causes and effects of social exclusion being perpetrated by means of keeping generations of youths in the north of Nigeria in the dark; it further reveals the set of institutions and structures of undisclosed agenda through which stratification is perpetrated. It is horrendous that many African leaders relish in keeping slaves for slavery work in their households or denying millions of youths the basic constitutional rights of access to western education that should provide the skill set to make them employable. Unfortunately for the youths in the north of Nigeria, the traditional hegemony seemed to have successfully blended Islam with traditional African feudalism, to keep their unsuspecting, gullible subjects in the dark. Any social order so crafted as to suppress a great part of its men, with the sole aim of alienating them from their constitutional rights will soon realize that with disaffected men no significant progress is achievable. This is especially true for

the north of the country today. It is just natural that people who have traditional views on life also tend to be more averse to changes, even when the benefits of such changes are too obvious. For the North of Nigeria, any changes in the status quo – particularly those not originated from the traditional leaders – are perceived as deviance and disobedience to the authority, and potential threats to life.

Thus, leaders of the region feel complacent and secure in their domain and so are averse to pursuing creative and constructive agenda that would lead to progressive changes however the backward their region is.

Leaders of northern Nigeria have tacitly pursued programs that make western secular education a privilege for the few, not least, engineering and technology have been systematically neglected for a very long time, public schools are poorly funded and derelict, while teachers are raptly allowed to waste away. Unsurprisingly, elsewhere reversion to the traditional old ways of life and preferences for the one-man hegemony has resulted in nothing but poverty and misery for most Africans. The findings in this volume should have policy implications for the leaders of the northern Nigeria. Institutionalized stratification and social exclusion have long reached a point of inflection. We are at a point at which the disruptive social media and the internet both can make inequality so intolerable as to garner radical supports for movements to change it.

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Солтүстік Нигериядағы институционалдық стратификация

Аңдатпа. Әлеуметтік ғылымдарда Нигерияның солтүстік аймағының алдында тұрған әлеуметтік теңсіздік пен экзистенциалдық проблемаларды түсіндіретін көптеген теориялар бар. Көптеген теорияларға Африканың өмір салтына отаршылдық араласу, саясаткерлердің өз халқының әлеуметтік қажеттіліктерін қанағаттандыра алмауы, институционалдық жемқорлық және басқалары жатады. Бұл мақалада біз ұсынылған шешімге қатысты мәселелерге жаңа көзқараспен қараймыз. Осы мақсатқа жету үшін авторлар экономикалық институттар жүйелерінің асимметриясын және олардың бірқатар әлеуметтік нәтижелерімен спецификалық байланыстарын ашуда білудің жаңа тәсілдерін қолдана отырып, сыни және талдамалық көзқарас тұрғысынан экономикалық әлеуметтанудың перспективаларын қабылдады. Инновациялық пәнаралық тәсіл осы асимметрияларды, олардың қолданыстағы әлеуметтік институттарға әсер етудің нақты тәсілдері мен әдістерін анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Сонымен қатар, бұл жұмыс экзистенциалды проблемаларды әлеуметтік институттардың жиынтығын және олардың елдің солтүстігіндегі әлеуметтік депривация мен институционалдық бөліністерге қосқан үлесін мұқият бағалау арқылы зерттейді. Бұл талдау үшін Нигерияның тұтастай өмір сүруіне қауіп төндіретін әлеуметтік және экономикалық проблемаларды тез қарауды қамтамасыз ету үшін біріктірілген алғашқы бақылау және қайталама деректер әдісі қабылданды.

Түйінді сөздер: әлеуметтік оқшаулану, институционалды стратификация, тұрақсыздық.

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Институциональная стратификация в Северной Нигерии

Аннотация. В области социальных наук существует множество теорий, объясняющих углубляющееся социальное неравенство и экзистенциальные проблемы, с которыми сталкивается северный регион Нигерии. Многие из теорий включают колониальное вмешательство в образ жизни африканцев, личные неудачи политиков в попытке удовлетворить социальные потребности своего народа, институциональную коррупцию и другие. В этой статье мы по-новому взглянем на проблемы с предлагаемым решением. Для достижения этой цели авторы взяли перспективы экономической социологии для критического и аналитического подхода, используя новые способы познания для обнаружения асимметрии систем социальных институтов и их конкретных отношений с рядом социальных результатов. Новаторский междисциплинарный подход позволил выявить эти асимметрии, их конкретные способы и методы воздействия на существующие социальные институты. Кроме того, в данной работе исследуются экзистенциальные проблемы путем тщательной оценки набора социальных институтов и их вклада в социальные депривации и институционализированные расслоения на севере страны. Для этого анализа был принят комбинированный метод первичного наблюдения и вторичных данных, позволяющий бегло взглянуть на социальные и экономические проблемы, угрожающие существованию Нигерии как единого целого.

Ключевые слова: социальная изоляция, институциональная стратификация, нестабильность.

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