

# **The Dominant Class And The State In Nigeria: A Confederacy Of Profligacy**

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## **Abstract**

*The Nigerian state has been persistently referred to as an alien state by all and sundry not because its operators are aliens or non Nigerians. Far from that, it is so because of the modus operandi of those Nigerians assigned the duty of superintending over their lives using the institutions of this state. This state having entangled itself with the dominant exploiter class in Nigeria and indeed elsewhere to the detriment of the masses has elicited reactions leading to the quest for a re-definition of its functions. This state having acquired new characteristics in the interest of the exploiter class has attracted the interests of analysts who have in reaction substituted its conceptualization through papers such as this to that of being an entity in a confederacy of profligacy with the dominant exploiter class in Nigeria to expropriate the Nation's wealth. This paper has therefore given detail to the dimensions of the dialectical materialist processes evolved by this state through its alliance with the exploiter class to expropriate the people. It was established through this paper that based on deliberate class characterization of Nigerians this state and its allies have perpetuated corruption and underdevelopment as well as other social ills among Nigerians leading to contentions among the citizens for its repositioning. On this basis far reaching recommendations were made as solutions to the ills so far occasioned by the present conditions of the Nigerian state.*

**Keywords:** Dominants class; state; confederacy; profligacy; corruption; development/underdevelopment; poverty.

## **Introduction**

In recent times, the role of the Nigerian state as an agent of societal development brought its policies, control and use (or abuse) of public resources has attracted much concern. Such concerns arise partly because of the ever increasing failure of this state to live up to its responsibilities. Much critique has trailed the Nigerian state in this regard because of its unfettered fraternity with the dominant exploiter class in Nigeria and elsewhere. Among

allegations leveled against this state include its lack of neutrality in the ever increasing contestation for the allocation of Nigerians multi-billion dollar petroleum resources, by engaging in unbridled and biased relationship with the dominant class to the detriment of the large population of the citizens (Ekewe 1986). This order which analyst see as a common practice (Ake 1985) among African dependant capitalist states (Frank 1975) has succeeded in arousing the concern of the citizens to the extent of constituting a problem. This action of the state which Diamond (2006) see as an unholy alliance between the state and the dominant exploiter class has transcended from being a common practice into an order of the confederation of profligacy in Nigeria.

Ake (1996) argues that the emergence of class division in Africa, but particularly in Nigeria was occasioned by European colonial interests which gave birth to Nigeria and by so doing established a structure of class characterization of the citizens that facilitates wealth expropriation for British vested interests. It is this structure that was inherited by the post colonial Nigerian state and imbued with its exploitative European masters characteristics, this state has pursued and caused the furtherance of class division among Nigerians, in the interest of both indigenious and the western exploiter class. Ake furthers that while no one denies the existence of localized traditional classes of citizens in pre-colonial Nigerian communities, the dimension of the alliance between any of such classes with the traditional state institutions was nothing compared the contemporary order of a confederation of profligacy between the state and the dominant class which facilitates the satisfaction of the vested interest of the later.

Ake submitted that *in Nigeria, the* dominant class (referred to) here are all those who are in the power position to take what they can from the nations accumulated wealth either directly or through an form of patronage and are also in the position of decide what other will get (Ake 1996:15). In Nigeria, this class includes a range of individuals who operate as cabals independently in a way it collectively engaged in covert manipulations that sustain their vested interests. Through a complex web these individuals associate to establish long term and general pathways for their families, associated and cronies for in the scheme of things in society. Using their regular connections in the corridors of state power, they create a fraternity with former and serving heads of states and government, political office holders, bureaucrats, technocrats and other with high connections to policy processes of the state. Access to the status of a dominant class is synonymous with being in control of the state apparatus that creates access to unequal distribution of public resource in this class interest. Other associated prerequisites includes access to exclusive benefits of immunity against aspect of public law, prestige, unfettered contract awards, and other opportunities that guarantee wealth for members' future generations (Onimede 1988). This is therefore an existing and ever increasing complex order of profligacy between the operators of the state apparatus and the dominant exploiter class in Nigeria which has in recent times attracted concerns among state observers in our society.

Mosca (1936:50-69) is proved right in the light of the above when his studies earlier contended that there is in every society a minority that constitutes a dominant class which may in part be formed as a political class, because it is formed through and based upon monopoly control over instruments of power (coercion). Mosca referenced Marx by arguing further that the dominant ruling class had become hereditary in fact, if not in law. Here the crux of the matter is that the

Nigerian state has been variously accused of entering into an unwholesome alliance with the dominant exploiter class and by so doing has unwillingly been protecting the vested interests of this class to the detriment of larger masses (Amin 1976).

The state has therefore taken sides with the exploiter class while jettisoning its neutrality position in the contestations between the exploiter and exploited classes in Nigeria.

## **The Dominant Class And Exploitation Of Nigerians**

The Nigerian dominant (exploiter) class remains a caricature of their European and American counterparts to the extent that they defy attempts at scholarly interpretation of what they represent. Nonetheless it is imperative that some form of explanation, if not definitions be alluded to this class using historical antecedents of the western bourgeois society that seemingly reflects its nature as Nigeria. In other words, an explanation of the dominant class of the western bourgeois societies in its true and original form stands to help us get a grasp of what this class is, as it stands to feed on the Nigerian citizens like a wood worm.

Warren (1973) views the metropolitan dominant class as one whose members own and control the means of economic production. Using the nomenclature of class analysis in Marxist conceptualization to locate the dominant class in this paper, we may have to adopt English definition of the term “bourgeoisie” to mean the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of socio-economic reproduction and employers of wage labour (Marx & Engel 1888).

Sklar (2006) furthers that this term has been used by critical analysts to identify the dominant class in society as those maintaining market economies and capitalist accumulation for the purpose of sustaining private property and in that process control the society at large.

To understand this dominant class and its actions and dimension we need to elucidate the concept “class”. Here Lenin (cited in Ekekwe 1986:6:6) holds that the classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in historically determined system of social and economic reproduction by their relation to the means of production, by their roles in social organization of labour and consequently by the dimension of the share of social (and economic) wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring them.

We can deduce here that classes are groups of people (even though they may not be homogeneously so within specific socio-economic and by extension political and other related factors, one of which can appropriate the labour of another, including the accruing surplus owing to the different places they occupy in definite systems of socio-economic relationship. Here divisions of men into these classes are determined by their positions (not necessarily by accident of birth or culture) in the scheme of a society’s socio-economic reproduction processes.

Igwe (2005) argues here that divisions in society along class differentials are not new in society because since antiquity various attempts have been made either to explain, rationalize or justify

these divisions. These attempts have divisions have been on the basis of access of each of the groups in this division to economically determinable factors. It is therefore evident that as these divisions deepen in response to prevalent modes of socio-economic production, there have always emerged efforts by men to either reconcile the coherent differences or to deepen these differences for vested interests. As much as overtures at causing co-existence between this groups (classes) have been made by men, its sustenance have in the same vein been compromised by breaches occasioned by the in ordinate ambition for self same by members of the dominant class.

In Nigeria such breaches which the state is expected to mediate in have often been either ignored or exacerbated by this state in favour of the exploiter class. In the course of time, increases in the expropriation of public wealth accruing from the labour of the masses through the emergent confederation of corruption between the stat and this dominant class, have had reciprocal antagonism emerging from the exploited class. Out of these provides emerges contentions and struggle for supremacy between the classes over society's socio-economic good. (Santos 1970). Out of these struggles emerges class a consciousness and a 'we' feeling of the exploited masses or aggregates of people who share a common relationship as providers of labour. Based on shared common ideological deposition, which in (crude) capitalist societies coalesce into labour movements and in recent times other forms of fifth columnist and terror groups; as they have come to exist in Nigeria as agitators against the ills of state motivated appropriation of national wealth by a few; conflicts began to emerge across the land. This consciousness becomes pre-eminent after the workers and others who have suffered negative consequences on their relations with the exploiter class have endured to no end. Seeing their alienation, deprivation and humanities by state agents and the dominant class, as unacceptable, these exploited class begins to desire for change, a change they often pursue with vigor to the extent of deploying conflict as an inevitable road map to the overthrow of this state and its accolades in the exploiter class (Marx and Engels 1977). Arising from these conflicts are usually other forms of interventions which the exploiter class have often brought to bear on the exploited class using the instrumentality of the state in areas of political manipulation, divide and rule among the working class, declaration of moratorium in emerging political institutions, and outright acts of state sponsored terror against individuals with clout among workers.

In contemporary advanced metropolitan capitalist societies such as Europe and the Americas, other humane criteria have been brought to bear on the system by the state In collaboration with the exploiter class. Having accepted the efficacy of Karl Marx's megrim opus in the "communist manifesto" as a guide to revolution of the working (exploiter) class, the western societies have abandoned the crude unsuccessful approach still in vogue in fledging capitalist societies such as Nigeria. Using intricate webs of public policies such welfarism, workers' social security. less working (credit facilities) education, health and other social services, the advanced capitalist societies have sought to assuage workers. These societies have in recent time sought to dilute the extremes of capitalism as a mode of production based on the principle of survival of the fittest and faceless individualism. Here egalitarianism has been borrowed from socialist cum communist literature with little or no thanks to Karl Marx's philosophers as a mechanism to dilute the excesses of the dominant class in the interest of all mankind. Whereas the above as a bourgeoning scenario in these metropolitan societies, stiff necked apologist of crude public wealth appropriation among Nigerians have refused to reconcile themselves to need for change,

hence the endless carnage as Nigeria among citizens as they struggle for the equitable allocation of the nation's resources.

Saul (1974) points out here that in some parts of Africa (including Nigeria) the crystallization of a fully formed (crude capitalist) class around the state apparatus constitutes a problem. This classes having an interest that is quite distinct from and being antagonistic to the interest of the masses and indeed their societies development lacks in all spheres the distinctive "humane" characteristics of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. This is so because while the metropolitan dominant class engages itself with their states, they operate fundamentally for the multiplication of economic interest of their society and by so doing cause capital to recycle. As much as they may be maximizing their interests, their capital is kept within the borders of their nations to either attract external profits through multinational corporate business or cause domestic capital increase which creates jobs, social services etc. Whereas this is an order propelled by the alliance between the state and the capitalist (dominant class) in Europe and the Americas, the opposite pervades in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

In Nigeria the dominant class uses their confederation of profligacy to pillage the Nigeria's multi-trillion petrodollar wealth. They sit around the corridors of state power to collect and transfer wealth to foreign countries where such wealth are expanded for ostentatious life cycle that enriches European economies to Nigerians' detriment. Having entangled itself with this parasitic document class, the Nigerian state has been adjudged worthy of no recognition as being recognized as the committee of states of people of repute. As much as Nigerians may wish to take their state back from this octopusian class seeking the juice of life out of them, the is need for greater efforts at raising the people's consciousness regarding the task ahead, in the area of continued vigilance over the many faces of the exploiter class in their avowed determination to sustain their hegemony over Nigerians.

## **Theoretical Base**

This paper adopted the theoretical base of historical and dialectical materialism (Marx and Engels 1974). This theory, popularized by Karl Marx and later expounded by Lenin and other post Marxian school posits that there are inherent contradictions in every human society that keeps such a society in a constant state of flux. These contradictions being in themselves relevant aspects of society have succeeded in keeping society under a dynamic equilibrium.

Basically this theory postulates that it is the materials (economic substructure) base of every structure and by extension the determinant of the ideas there in. To this theory, the fundamental determinant of the forms of political, social and ideological levels of every society is the material conditions of existence of the people.

Ake (1981) alludes to this view when the synthesized the views of Marx to conclude that the economic base constitutes the core of all other relations mostly in capitalist societies. The relevance of this theoretical underpinning to this paper is that; because western capitalism was imposed on Nigerians under colonialism and that since this mode of economic reproduction

subsists no post colonials Nigeria, then every form of relation be it class oriented or between classes and institutions are matter related. Expectedly, the directive of class analysis presupposes that class conflicts are inherent aspects of the relationship between the exploiter and exploited class, provides a platform for this theory's efficacy in this paper. Since these classes are eternally engaged in class contradictions, an unavoidable dialectical relationship persists over the material base of their society. It is in the course of the competitions and contention over the wealth and resources of society that the state's role as a neutral arbiter becomes compromised to favour the exploiter now Fund Gender Frank dominant class. Having successfully taken control of the state to its favour, this document class has gone further to forge a unity of purpose between it and the state through a confederation of interest which is public wealth appropriation. Since the state's neutral position is no longer guaranteed with the struggle for societies resources among these classes, the emergent order elevates all forms of unorthodox practices and vices by the exploiter class to an official state art concluded as a confederation of corruption between the document exploiter class and the weak spineless state in Nigeria.

### **The Confederation Of Corruption In Nigeria**

There is no over emphasizing the fact that Nigerians are under a siege perpetrated from all frontiers by their own kit and kin. Having taken control and usurped the state for its class interest; and having successfully created a strong foundation upon which wealth expropriation occurs in their interest, this class has elevated corruption to its heights in Nigeria irrespective of their intra-class differentials, political groupings and occupational nomenclatures, this class now attests to control the Nigerian society. The emergent confederation of profligacy situates in Nigeria in various dimension through mechanisms that cause the state to make governance a personal prerogative that must be achieved by all means in the interest of the dominant class.

Aluko (in David-west 2003) sums this up as in life of "self perpetuation, a never bowing out tendency of African heads of state and politicians". Governance and statecraft has been the dominant days in Nigeria. Such acts are displayed across the land where this class members pendulant from one political office to another. Examples include ex-senators slightly position to become governance and vice versa, ex-legislators or governance, heads of states seeking political positions they ordinarily would have expected to leave for younger political starts, as well as the jostle for political posts all with the content of staying in offices long enough to accumulate the gotten wealth.

Aluko's position is that such acts under-develop societies like Nigeria and are evidenced by practices that include:

1. Turning government into a personalized and cultish enclave.
2. Suppression and oppression of position, stifling dissenting, voices and opposing opinions of labour intellectuals and the masses.
3. Transforming unbridled corruption into state art.
4. And the institution of one part (dictatorial) state.

In Nigeria, the orgy of bad governance, poor infrastructural development, poor or low industrial capacity utilization, cultism, demonization of politics, whole sale corrupt practices and other vices have pervaded superintended by a spineless state. The state's lack of the capacity to maintain law and order becomes and order of the day under which society degenerates into chaos giving rise to other forms of social ills that endangers the masses. Out of these processes emerges an elite state-masses gulf characterized by rural-urban inequalities, slum life, among the citizens, high rate of unemployment, illiteracy, disease and death. Others are the oblivious ever increasing cases neglect of the agricultural sector leading to food crises, lack of inter sectoral linkages between industries, weak industrial production capacity and other socio-economic problems that cause the citizens to lose faith in their state.

## **Analysis**

The Nigerian state is a questionable state in all ramifications, in view of its loss of both the qualities of a people's state and its tenets as a neutral arbiter between men in their social relationships. Conceptualizing the unity of purpose between the dominant exploiter class and the states in Nigeria as they collaborate to perpetuate political and socio-economic corruption in the land is nothing less than a confederacy of profligacy. Based on a theoretical underpinning of historical and dialectical materialism, this confederacy between the state and the dominant class in Nigeria is a reverse order of the true meaning of a confederation. Suffice it to note that a confederacy often occurs through rational and well thought decision by parties with common interests to unite for the good of all irrespective of some differentials that include class divisions (Appadorai 1975). The confederacy as a political organization of willing participants is a concept adopted in this paper in a reverse order to represent the tacit conscription of the Nigerian state by the dominant class for their myopic interest while pretending otherwise.

The implications of this paper's position is that there are various units within the fledgling colonial structure called the federation of Nigeria which has become the exclusive machinery for exploiting the post colonial Nigeria citizens. To this end, calling the Nigerian state as it exists today to question arises out of the negative consequences of the activities of this class as they dominate the masses through the state. As the viability of this state as a defender and provider for all continues to vitiate under this class, a near total collapse of its ability to provide for the people becomes oblivious. The state as it exists in Nigeria lacks the political will to cause any meaningful socio-economic development for the people because of its complicity to elevate corruption to a state craft in collaboration with the dominant class.

In recent times, especially under the much bandied about democracy from 1999 till date, evidence of wanton looting of nation income with past and present political office holders trade blames, perhaps washing their dirty linens in the public. Such actions of these public offices often occur when intra-class fraction (which is acceptable in class alliance most among greedy public officials) occur over specific interests that bother on when controls the processes of further expropriation. The Nigerian state as is therefore seen in this paper as a failed state in all ramifications. This is so because this state cannot explain why it has expanded fifty five (55) years of self rule (be it military or civilian they are the two sides of the same coin) without

fulfilling simple obligations such as the provision of basic infrastructure, improved education and health services and other necessities state all over the world, irrespective of their ideological learning, have gone far in providing for their citizens.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the light of existing evidence of a failed state in Nigeria and the rising contentions, agitation as well as the emerging trend of fifth columnists rising intermittently to constitute security problems beyond the state control, this state stands called to question. This demand is fundamentally anchored on the ones that with the degeneration of the policy security of lives and property, continually downward spiraling economic woes, youth restfulness, (leading to cultish lifestyle and gang-rubbery life) unemployment, social decay and other natural vices that orchestrate Nigeria's underdevelopment, Nigerians have become helpless. It used to be a natural prerogative of the state to deploy its resources (wealth) which comes from crude oil, (Nigeria's one and only golden goose) for the provision of basic needs of citizens as well as other variables that engender development. The case in Nigeria is however the opposite. This state having been overwhelmed by the dominant exploiter class is now engaged in manipulations entailed in "pirate capitalism" (Diamond 2006:578) that deviates it's from its legitimate and legal imperatives of service to masses of Nigeria. Despite the enormous national resources accruing this Nation, the managers to the state apparatus have failed (refused) to cause development to occur in the land.

This state and its allies in the dominant class such as, the politicians serving and retired military officers, serving and retired heads of state (presidents etc) and government, parliamentarians bureaucrats, technocrats and other opportune to occupy exalted public offices; have in recent times metamorphosed into a cabal that loots the national treasury, they corruptly enrich themselves by violating legal rules about official conduct, through illicit manipulation of public offices to create access for themselves and their cronies for an endless rapacious appropriation of the peoples wealth. The line between private and state power and access to public goods is almost nonexistent in Nigeria. State officials openly display illicit wealth acquired through fraud, contract fees inflation and embezzlement, illicit economic ventures, subsidy pay offs and other acts of political and socio-economic criminality that taffies even their metropolitan bourgeois masters beyond imagination. This state has therefore failed and having so failed to the extent of not being able to defend the integrity, internal and external security of the people, the death knell is hereby sounded for its demise. The people of Nigeria must call this state to question in the bid to restructure it. Since the doctrine of class analysis pre-supposes that class conflicts in the face of such horrendous acts of profligacy by this state and the class dominating it, the need for a Nigerians to demand for change is now. For all intends and purposes there is need for all hands to be on deck on the project of re-ordering the Nigerian state, away from this hegemonic and parasitic claws of the dominant exploiter class.

A call to a confederation of the people's will must be made through various organs and bodies of society committed to equity, justice fair play and rule of law in Nigeria. This call goes out to the intelligentsia, academics, the media, civil and human rights organization, nongovernmental and faith based organization (NGO and FBO) as well as labour unions and individuals towards fostering a strong civil society dedicated to liberating the Nigerian state from the shackles of



dominant class bondage. This is a clarion call to all Nigerians to contribute their quota to the task of taking back and repositioning of their state for an accelerated over all societal development. To achieve this task of change for good the media stands out as the arrowhead in a quest for revolutionary repositioning of the peoples state (Ake 1978). Looking in concert with the intelligentsia the media must provide the channels of information discrimination among the masses which will culminate into an ideological re-awakening of the people for the final on sloughs of taking back their state for the people

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