

AFRICA AND RESOURCE CURSE DILEMMAS: LESSONS FOR NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

That most African states are having resource curse is no more worrisome as it has been widely felt and acknowledged. What is worrisome now is that they are also facing the challenge of resource curse dilemmas and seem not to know what to do to break the curse. Against this backdrop, the paper discusses Africa's resource curse dilemmas within the context of resource diplomacy conundrum. In adopting futures studies interdisciplinary approach, the paper focuses on Nigeria, the most populated and arguably, the most naturally-endowed nation in Africa to draw the attention of leaders and citizens alike on what must be done to break the dilemmas of resource curse in the second decade of the 21st Century in lieu of the newly found oil in the northeast and the need to urgently diversify the economy. The paper relies on historical and current documents and other pieces of information obtained through secondary sources, as well as on everyday observation to find that the major reason for the resource curse dilemmas is mainly resource diplomacy failure arising from not being people-oriented and centred. It argues that the reasons for this are that instead of making and implementing policies that could make the resource wealth a blessing to all Africans, such as diversifying the economy, being transparent and accountable to the people, investing in areas that could develop the people and the economy in the long run when the national resources might face revenue and macroeconomic volatility, Nigeria and by extension African states, embark on rent-seeking, policies that fail, corruption, inefficient/ineffective investments. The paper further contends that Nigeria like most states will never come out of this state of dilemmas because the benefits the appropriators of the resources are enjoying will continue to induce them to maintain the status quo especially when the suffering citizens are largely docile. To change the status quo, the people should face the challenge by taking back the power they gave to the state during the social contract signing because the power belongs to them. This paper therefore calls for the peoples' revolution in Africa through the ballot boxes and not through violence or conflict in order to genuinely enthrone critical thinking leaders who can blend with the dynamics and realities of contemporary resource diplomacy which are people-oriented and participatory in nature.

Keywords: Africa, Natural Resources, Nigeria, Resource Curse, Resource Diplomacy.

1.2 Introduction

Much has been said and written about Africa-resource curse nexus before the second decade of the 21st century (Mbabazi 2009; Mbabike, 2012; African

Development Bank Group, 2013; Aborowa, 2014) but it is worrisome however that there is no strong effort or policy from most African states and the citizens that has been able to genuinely

change the status quo. Rather than changing the status quo, the recurrent thing remains strengthening the existing policies and strategies that even place the states in a seemingly state of dilemmas because it favours those that are appropriating the natural resources. The consequences are far-reaching because instead of the abundant natural gifts from God bringing genuine economic and financial development as well as social welfare to all the owners, it is widening the inequality between a few capitalists who appropriate them in the name of the peoples' leaders and majority of the people who are ostracised from the benefits. From the colonial days to the present time, this has been the way and manner through which African huge resources have been managed. This is against what resource diplomacy stands to achieve anytime.

Resource diplomacy like every other type of diplomacy in international relations is meant to attract benefits and not curse. "In its very ordinary sense, the term diplomacy indicates the art and processes involved in the management of relationships so long as benefits are sustainably derived" (Orngu, 2017 :3). Management here includes negotiation whereas relationships refer to both national and international relations. Resource diplomacy as Orngu argues can be a potent instrument of negotiation in international relations whenever any resource issue arises between concerned international actors. The question, therefore, is whether the negotiation is done in line with the fundamental

objective of resource diplomacy or the primordial interest of a clique. The answer to this question is not far-fetched because it is the outcome of any negotiation that justifies if the instrument, tactics, expertise and strategy adopted are potent and result-oriented or not.

As observed by Delabre and Okereke (2019) while exploring "The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil" in Malaysia and Indonesia where oil palm is one of the most profitable land uses (accounting for a combined total of over 80% of global production of palm oil) governments and companies commonly argue that oil palm production generates jobs, foreign currency, and improves the quality of life of poor farmers. To avert the chances of argument over the genuine position of government and companies arguing on behalf of the poor farmers, Delabre and Okereke refer to GAPKI (2011) who earlier observed that the campaign slogan of the Indonesian Palm Oil Association is oil palm, a gift from God for Indonesian welfare. In a similar vein, MPOC (2018) as cited by Delabre and Okereke also refers to the Malaysian Palm Oil Council which calls oil palm nature's gift to Malaysia, nature's gift to the world. More so, despite the fact that the oil sectors of these nations carry social impacts, they generate significant incomes for the states and their citizens (Aiken & Leigh, 2011; Varkkey, 2012; Gelbert, 2015). This foregoing examples cited here are evidence that resource diplomacy of any kind is primarily designed and deployed



to attract significant benefit to the state and citizen alike whether it is in a resource cursed state or not. In Indonesia and Malaysia for instance, 'Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is one of the numerous commodity roundtables established since the 2000s to address sustainability problems associated with commodity production, including habitat destruction and deforestation, unsustainable and polluting operational practices, and land and labour rights issues' (Delabre & Okereke, 2019).

The two countries referred to here are not resource cursed but referring to them serves two purposes. First, they confirm that any type of natural resource (not only when they are many) is a source of foreign currency and welfare of state and citizen if well harnessed through the instrumentality of well-intended resource diplomacy. For instance, despite criticisms and critiques that follow RSPO, as observed in Delabre and Okereke, stakeholder participation is a central feature through which commodity roundtables gain legitimacy and emphasize the importance of stakeholder inclusion at international and local levels. Second, because of the potency of their resource diplomacy the state and citizens are benefitting substantially from the highly-valued natural resource (oil palm) which Nigeria undervalues and undermines because of petroleum and gas.

For years, the increasing situation of series of conflicts, crises, wars, hardship, economic recession, exponential

increase in poverty, hunger, unemployment, food insecurity and more importantly, underdevelopment of the economy and society in Africa keep prompting the question of whether African resource curse cannot be reversed. This is not to say that Africans are not desirous of being cured of the disease or trying to reverse the condition but the fact remains that despite the seminars, workshops, conferences, roundtables, and even all that has been written, the curse still persists. By implication, Africa, as it is presently, is in a state of resource curse dilemmas. As frequently as the question about Africa's resource curse dilemmas and the way out is being asked, no answer has been sufficient because the challenge is still looming large especially when there are new discoveries of natural resources in some places in Africa where such were non-existing before. For example, the recent discovery of oil in north east Nigeria to state the obvious has generated some concern about what the fate of the people of the geopolitical zone in particular and Nigeria in general will be now they have a new opportunity. More so, this type of question reappears to be answered when a multiply-naturally-resourced country like Nigeria faces series of domestic problems especially economic recession arising from the lack of harnessing the huge potentials for the good of all the owners. This has necessitated recently the emergence of a growing recognition among Nigerian students and scholars of international relations alike of the need to study in a more systematic way the

resource diplomacy of the country, Orngu (2017); Oni and Taiwo (2016) for example.

This paper therefore looks at this recurrent African challenge from a modified perspective as never done since the beginning of the second decade of the 21st Century. It argues that the people, that is, the collective owners of the sovereign wealth are not enjoying their blessing from God because of the violation of the social contract by the leaders or managers of their state resources as observed in the impotency of the resource diplomacy they adopt and apply as well as the result it produces. The present Nigerian case where many people are unemployed, hopeless, food insecure, exponentially poor and low self-esteemed because of being largely excluded from the processes of production, distribution and benefit sharing while the appropriators of the resources are not only enjoying with their families, cronies and collaborators but as well are dumping hard currencies in foreign countries without reinvesting the proceeds into meaningful productive areas in the country suggest that the newly-found northeast oil may not lift the country out of its state of resource curse dilemmas if the resource diplomacy conundrum is not resolved. From this standpoint, the rest of the paper develops as follows. The next section situates Africa's resources within the context of the continent being exceptionally blessed. The methodology is then presented, followed by the theoretical framework

that the paper adopted which is resource curse theory. The next section dwells on showing that Africa is in a resource curse dilemma and further analyses the policy implications of such a condition. The next section takes the case of Nigeria as an exceptional one out of many in Africa in the second decade of the century considering its position as "a giant in Africa" and as where oil has been recently found in a zone it has not been existing. The paper taking a modified position thus becomes *primus inter pares* in this decade owing to the fact that while many has considered the debate on resource curse a well-worn out issue especially within the international relations discipline thereby overlooking the need for more contributions to the way out, it, rather, sees the possibility of the country curing the curse before the end of the decade. The recommendations made herein however suggest the ways through which Nigeria can achieve this.

1.2 Research context and methodology

Methodology has to do with the science or study of method or a set of methods used in a particular research. This paper adopts a qualitative research approach which makes it to rely heavily on documents and information from secondary sources as well as observation. With the aid of futures studies' interdisciplinary method, the paper telescopes the probability of an endless resource curse in Africa for the fact that as it is presently, the (mis)appropriators of nation-states'



resources seem not ready to be willing to change that status quo which favours and will continue to favour them if nothing is done by the mass of people who are ostracised from the benefits of their rich natural resources. For example, corruption in Nigeria has become endemic and appears to be a culture of a kind. Elections are still based on do-or-die approach, where winning of elections are rigged through the misuse of state security organisations at all cost and with impunity. Money politics cannot be overlooked in this context because everyday observation shows that during and after elections, results are being influenced when money is shared. Ayoade (2008) observes the emergence of two groups of elite in Nigeria's fourth republic which are worthy of mention here. The two groups are those referred to as the moneybags and the godfathers. Moneybags are those who use wealth acquired from public office to sponsor political processes in expectation of personal advantage and the godfathers are those who by their financial status or command of violence or mobilisation of ethnic support rule by proxy and are shielded from the law by their protégés. Through these ways and means political leaders emerge and seat in positions where they dictate who gets what when and how, and for the fact that the mass of people are excluded from the process of electioneering they have no means through which they can checkmate the excesses of their acclaimed people's leaders. These are the kind of leaders that go into diplomatic relations with other foreign

actors on issues bordering on the nation's natural resources. As already known, the resource diplomacy they adopt end up fanning the ember of resource curse. Jalloh (2013) for instance cites an example of a common view that the discovery of natural resources has played a key role in the conflicts that have plagued a number of African countries, both motivating and fuelling armed conflicts and the most disappointing thing is that revenues generated from the exploitation of natural resources are not only used for sustaining armies but as well for personal enrichment and building of political empires. Thus, as long as this type of system remains cyclical, the cure of resource curse is impossible. However, the aim of this paper is not to tow the usual cause- effect line of thought in which Africa's resource curse has been debated rather, the choice of futures studies enables the paper to foresee against all inhibitions a future where it becomes possible that the yoke of resource curse is broken sooner than expected. Using Nigeria as a guinea pig in this study is based on the fact that if the newly found oil in northeast part of the country must be beneficial to all the owners (all Nigerians) and economy successfully diversified, there is a need for the change of the status quo.

1.3 Africa; an exceptionally blessed continent

Africa is arguably the most naturally blessed continent in the world. Hardly can you see another continent as blessed as Africa. Little wonder, around

different places in the continent, some of these natural resources are visibly seen randomly located. This does not imply however that all African nations are naturally endowed equitably. However, while some are endowed more than

others, no nation is left without any natural resource (Nwosumba, 2013). This table below summarises some of the natural resources in Africa according to countries.

S/NO	COUNTRY	NATURAL RESOURCES
1	Algeria	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Iron Ore, Phosphates, Uranium, Lead, Zinc.
2	Angola	Petroleum, Diamonds, Iron Ore, Phosphates, Copper, Feldspar, Bauxite, Uranium.
3	Benin	Small Offshore Oil Deposits, Lime-Stone, Marble, Timber.
4	Botswana	Diamonds, Copper, Nickel, Salt, Soda Ash, Potash, Coal, Iron Ore.
5	Burkina Faso	Manganese, Limestone, Marble, Small Deposits of Gold, Phosphates Pumice, Salt.
6	Burundi	Nickel, Uranium, Rare Earth Oxides, Peat, Cobalt, Copper, Platinum, Vanadium, Arable Land, Hydropower, Niobium, Tantalum, Gold, Tin, Tungsten, Kaoline, Limestone.
7	Cameron	Petroleum, Bauxite, Iron Ore, Timber, Hydropower.
8	Cape Verde	Salt, Balsalt Rock, Limestone, Kaolin, Fish, Clay, Gypsum.
9	Central African Republic	Hydropower, Diamond, Uranium, Timber, Gold, Oil
10	Chad	Petroleum, Uranium, Nitron, Kaolin Fish (Lake Chad), Gold, Limestone, Sand and Gravel, Salt.
11	Congo DR	Cobalt, Copper, Niobium, Tantalum, Petroleum, Industrial and Gem Diamonds, Gold, Silver, Zinc, Manganese, Tin, Uranium, Coal, Hydropower, timber, Arable Land, Water.
12.	Republic of Congo	Petroleum, Timber, Potash, Lead, Zinc, Uranium, Copper Phosphates, Gold, Magnesium, Natural Gas, Hydropower.
13	Ivory Coast	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Diamonds, Manganese, Iron Ore, Cobalt, Bauxite, Silica Sand, Clay Cocoa, Coffee, Palm Oil, Hydropower.
14	Djibouti	Geothermal, Gold, Clay Granite, Limestone, Marble, Salt, Diatomite, Gypsum, Pumice, Petroleum.
15	Egypt	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Iron Ore, Phosphates, Manganese, Limestone, Gypsum, Talc, Asbestos, Lead, Zinc.
16	Equatorial Guinea	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Timber, Gold, Bauxite, Diamonds, Tantalums, Sand and Gravel, Clay.
17	Eritrea	Potash, Gold, Zinc, Copper, Salt, Possibly Natural Gas and Oil, Fish.
18	Ethiopia	Small Reserves of Gold, Platinum, Copper, Potash, Natural Gas, Hydropower.
19	Gabon	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Diamonds, Niobium, Manganese, Uranium, Gold, Timber, Iron Ore, Hydropower
20	The Gambia	Fish, Titanium, Tin, Zircon, Silva Sand, Silva Clay, Petroleum



21	Ghana	Gold, Timber, Industrial Diamonds, Bauxite, Manganese, Fish, Rubber, Hydropower Petroleum, Silver, Salt, Limestone.
22	Guinea	Bauxite, Iron Ore, Diamonds Gold, Uranium, Hydropower, Fish Salt.
23	Guinea Bissau	Fish, Timber, Phosphates, Bauxite, Clay, Granite, Limestone, Petroleum.
24	Kenya	Limestone, Soda Ash, Salt, Germ stones, Fluorspar Zinc, Diatomite, Gypsum, Wildlife, Hydropower.
25	Lesotho	Water, Agricultural and Grazing Land, Diamonds, Sand, Clay, Building Stone.
26	Liberia	Iron Ore, Timber, Diamonds, Gold, Hydropower.
27	Libya	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Gypsum.
28	Madagascar	Granite, Chromite, Coal, Bauxite, Salt, Quartz, Iar Sands, Semiprecious Stones, Mica, Fish, Hydropower
29	Malawi	Limestone, Arable Land, Hydropower, Uranium, Coal, Bauxite.
30	Mali	Gold, Phosphates, Kaolin, Salt, Limestone, uranium, Gypsum, Granite, Hydropower, Bauxite, Iron Ore; Manganese, Tin, Copper.
31	Mauritania	Iron Ore, Gypsum, Copper, Phosphate Diamonds, Gold, Oil, Fish
32	Mauritius	Arable Land, Fish.
33	Morocco	Phosphates, Iron Ore, Manganese, Lead, Zinc, fish, Salt.
34	Mozambique	Coal, Titanium, Natural Gas, Hydropower, Tantalum, Graphite.
35	Namibia	Diamonds, Copper, Gold, Uranium, Silver, Lead, Tin, Lithium, Cadmium Tungsten, Zinc, Salt, Hydropower, Fish, Coal, Oil, Iron Ore.
36	Niger	Uranium, Gold, Iron Ore, Tin, Phosphates, Gold, Molybdenum, Gypsum, Salt, Petroleum.
37	Nigeria	Natural Gas, Petroleum, Tin, Iron Ore, Coal, Limestone, Niobium, Lead, Zinc, Arable Land, Precious Stones, Forestry, Fish, Phosphates, Marble, Cocoa, Palm Oil.
38	Rwanda	Gold, Cassiterite (Tin Ore) Wolframite (Tungsten Seed, Mathane, Hydropower, Arable Land.
39	Sao Tome and Principe	Fish, Hydropower.
40	Senegal	Fish, Phosphates, Iron Ore
41	Seychelles	Fish, Copra, Circamon Trees.
42	Sierra Leone	Diamonds, Titanium Ore, Bauxite, Iron Ore, Gold, Chromite.
43	Somalia	Uranium, Iron Ore, Tin, Gypsum, Bauxite, Copper, Salt, Natural Gas, Oil.
44	South Africa	Gold, Chromium, Antimony, Coal, Iron Ore, Manganese, Nickel, Phosphates, Tin, Uranium, Gem Diamonds, Platinum, Copper, Vanadium, Salt, Natural Gas.
45	South Sudan	Hydropower, Fertile Agricultural Land, Gold, Diamonds, Petroleum, Hardwoods, Limestone, Iron Ore, Copper, Chromium Ore, Zinc, Tungsten, Mica, Silver.

46	Sudan	Petroleum, Iron Ore, Copper, Chromium Ore, Zinc, Tungsten, Mica, Silver, Gold Hydropower.
47	Swaziland	Asbestos, Coal, Clay, Cassiterite, Hydropower Forests, Gold Diamonds, Quarry Stone, Talc.
48	Tanzania	Tazalite, Gemstones, Hydropower, Tin, Phosphates, Iron Ore, Coal, Diamonds, Gold, Natural Gas, Nickel.
49	Togo	Phosphates, Limestone, Marble, Arable Land.
50	Tunisia	Petroleum, Phosphates, Iron Ore, Lead, Zinc, Salt.
51	Uganda	Copper, Cobalt, Hydropower, Limestone, Salt, Arable Land, Gold.
52	Zambia	Copper, Cobalt, Zinc, Lead, Coal, Emeralds, Gold, Silver, Uranium, Hydropower
53	Zimbabwe	Coal, Chromium Ore, Asbestos, Gold, Nickel, Copper, Iron Ore, Vanadium, Lithium, Tin, Platinum, Group Metals.

(Sources: Aina and Salau, 1992:53; Afribiz Foundation (2009); The World Factbook).

The list of natural resources in the above tables includes mainly natural resources of commercial importance such as rare earth elements; mineral, petroleum, hydropower etc. So, the appearance of the products indicates that they have made or are likely to make a significant contribution to the economy of the countries. Another evidence of Africa being arguably the most endowed continent on earth is that it possesses 50% of the world's gold, most of the world's diamonds and chromium, 90% of the cobalt, 40% of the world's potential hydroelectric power, 65% of the manganese; millions of acres of untilled farmland, as well as other natural resources (Aborowa, 2014).

However, a wide range of literature agrees that Africa is heavily blessed by God in terms of natural and even human resources (Nwosumba, 2013, Mbabike 2012; African Bank, 2007; Aina and Salau 1992), the problem is that these huge resources instead of being a

blessing to Africans are also widely believed to be a curse to them.

1.4 Resource curse theory as a guide

Resources are natural when they are not made by man. As such, man is only involved in the use and modification of natural resources for his benefit. This implies, as argued by Aina and Salau (1992:10) that “natural resources and physical environment are productive assets which support economic development and sustain human populations.” More than this, natural resources, due to the premium importance man places on them, have become a major political factor in local, national, regional and global relations to the point of being a source of conflict or crises, wars, in fact a curse. Realistically, while natural resources are not evenly distributed among peoples of the world, some have enjoyed them to the point of believing they are blessings. Conversely, those who are not enjoying the proceeds from their natural resources commensurately believe they are a curse



to them. Africa as this paper contends belongs to the later (though not all Africans). This paradox situation for many is referred to as “resource curse.”

Resource curse has been a long standing theme in the literature. The idea that natural resources might be more of an economic curse than a blessing according to Morrison (2013) has been around for long but gained currency when scholars first systematically compared the experiences of resource rich countries with countries that did not have these resources.

Richard Auty first used the term resource curse in 1993 to describe how countries that were rich in mineral resources were unable to use that wealth to boost their economies and how counter-intuitively, these countries had lower economic growth than countries without an abundance of natural resources (Auty, 1993). Following this, many benchmark works have been developed to debate on the idea of a resource curse; they include, Sachs and Warner (1995), Ross (1999; 2001), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Morrison (2013) and others.

In agreement with Auty’s thesis (1993), Sachs and Warner (1995) in taking an economic position in the debate estimate with evidence that countries with a high ratio of natural exports fully dependent on export of GDP in 1971 had abnormally slow growth rates between 1971 and 1989, a fact which shows that a high ratio of natural resource exports

to GDP correlate lower economic growth. Ross (1999), following his studies on the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa confirms that there is strong evidence that states with abundant resource wealth perform less well than their poor counterparts. The work reviews efforts made by economists and political scientists to explain how the export of minimally processed natural resources, including hard rock minerals, petroleum, timber, and agricultural commodities, influences economic growth and summarises the evidence for a resource curse. Resource curse debate also has its own political side as Ross (2001) is of the view that it correlates with less democracy, controlling for other factors.

Based on the foregoing points, resource curse also known as paradox of plenty is a puzzling empirical issue that associates natural riches with lower economic growth and so depicts a negative relationship between countries’ natural – resource abundance and dependence and their economic growth after controlling for other relevant variables (Torres, Afonso and Soares, 2013). Further, Gavin & Hausmann (1998) find a strong relationship between resource intensity and inequality. However, there are many approaches to understanding or explaining the resource curse which include; structuralist and Dutch Disease theses, rent-seeking behaviour, institutions and policies, namely fiscal, resource drag and possible endogeneity of initial income term, market volatility

among others. No matter the shortcomings of resource curse theory which borders on its sojourn in the context of multiplicity of theories or theses without eventually proffering a lasting solution to Africa's worsening economic growth and development challenges, it still represents the best of theories that explain reasons why majority of Africans are not enjoying the full bliss of these gifts from God called natural resources which they have in abundance. It is therefore theoretically and empirically relevant to this study in the sense that no matter how multiple the debates on this theme seem to be, recent survey suggests that the resource curse literature has been progressing, especially in the estimation methods, and thus is closer to providing a more comprehensive and accurate answer to the curse paradox (Torres, Afonso and Soares, 2013).

1.5 Paradox of plenty: Resource diplomacy failure

In Africa, the enormous natural resource endowment has brought so much inequality between those that appropriate the resources and those that own them, that is, the mass of the people. In the 1970s, usually referred to as an oil boom era for Nigeria, the country generated a lot of revenues that misguided it to boast openly that the problem is not finance but shortage of executive capacity (Yahaya, 1989). The oil boom era were years of excess liquidity which offered the Nigerian government the opportunity to enter into an era of financial recklessness as it

resumed a massive public sector expenditure in the social and economic fields. In 1970/71 for instance, government's total recurrent revenue was put at N558 million, by 1975/76 this increased to N5, 252 million and as the earnings continued to rise, by 1980, they "have reached over N11 billion" and this was the time "when the Naira exchange rate was over N1: \$1.5" (Yahaya, 1989: 13). By implication, the natural resource earnings from the oil boom era, instead of being reinvested into productive areas of the economy and some of them saved, were recklessly misused. According to Federal Ministry of Information, Social Welfare, Youth, Sports and Culture (n.d.), misappropriation of public funds amounting to billions of naira from the national treasury were unaccounted and unchallenged, oil merchants and agents surfaced overnight owing their wealth to illegal oil deals. As observed by Gambari (1984), Nigeria pledged US\$5 million within the era and by 1990, paid up over US\$3 million as part of its contribution to the establishment of a Special Emergency Assistance Fund for draught and famine in Africa.

In the period under review, a good number of Nigerians (executive and political classes) in collaboration with foreign agents dipped their hands into the robust resources of the country and selfishly and consciously appropriated them through highly inflated contracts, staggering millions of naira were paid out in the name of mobilisation fees to contractors (both local and foreign) who disappeared on collection (Federal



Ministry of Information, Social Welfare, Youth, sports and Culture, n.d.). Through this official source the following is observed; oil, which is the live-wire of the nation's economy, was tampered with in sales and in diversion of proceeds by Nigerians in collaboration with foreigners into private accounts and these unearned incomes which found their ways into circulation eventually started the spiral of inflation in the country. By the mid-1981, Nigeria's economic growth due to these wastes, have witnessed a downturn effect as economic recession took the centre stage and the nation unfortunately found itself in both economic and socio-political crisis. Funding of foreign policy and diplomatic activities began to dwindle (Yahaya, 1989). The military, capitalising on the backlash, overthrew the 4 year civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari to save the country and its economy from total collapse as promised by the head of the junta, General Muhammadu Buhari. Due to the foregoing situation, General Buhari's regime adopted a diplomatic strategy that appeared to be confrontational in the eyes of the western countries and the result was Nigeria exchanging crude oil for needed items from available sources instead of taking developmental loans from IMF.

Another diplomatic failure of note here is where Nigeria advocated for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) between 1973-1985, an order which sought for the redressing of the

inequality that has prevailed in the international division of labour, trade and investment relations between the industrialised and non-industrialised countries as facilitated by the World Bank, the IMF and Multinational Corporations through economic penetration and exploitation but couldn't achieve this owing to the setback the search suffered in the country between 1975-1980 (Asobie, 2002). Citing Asobie (2002), Nwogbaga, Nkwede and Chukwu (2016) further said the NIEO was later suspended as a component of the nation's economic diplomacy especially owing to the reluctance of the industrialised countries to honestly engage in the North-South dialogue that eventually collapsed and as a follow-up, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was adopted as part of the efforts to redress the ailing economy of a – once – oil boom induced- rich nation. SAP was later abandoned by the regime of General Abacha which cited the woeful failure of the programme to revamp the nation's economy as a major reason. SAP as Yahaya (1989) observes unleashed an unprecedented trauma as has never been experienced in recent memory, every facet of national life is facing this. Consequently, SAP was replaced by Abacha's regime with guided deregulation policy under which the Nigerian state was to supervise the commercialisation and privatisation of public companies and as well, attract and regulate foreign investment into the country but this eventually couldn't live up to the expectation. This diplomacy

conundrum has continued to the present day.

The Nigerian example shows that with the present down-turn of the economy many state governments have not paid the salaries of workers for months yet some governors, legislators and members of the political class purchase state-of-the-art vehicles for use. Sometimes, a fleet of cars (Jeep mainly) worth millions of Naira form the convoy of one political office holder while many citizens are dying of hunger and frustration. The case of Mobutu Sese Seko the leader of Zaire (defunct) and late Sani Abacha of Nigeria are still alive in the memory. These and other leaders like them use natural wealth of state for selfish and group interests. The above examples thus confirm Mbabike (2012) position that the discovery of natural resources leads to concentration of wealth in a few hands of powerful officials in governments and those directly involved in drilling, mining and resources exploration (like International Oil Companies). By implication the rich natural resources turn out to be a blessing to these few while the majority is ostracised from the benefits. As in life generally, anything that has to do with curse has far-reaching negative consequences on the cursed.

Lending credence to this point, Mbabazi (2009) then concludes that the resource curse has crippled many African nations since their independence. Cases like Angola, Sudan, the DRC, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone,

Liberia, and several others, have endured the hardships brought on by the presence of highly sought after raw materials, notably oil and precious gemstones. In Africa, even now, there are ugly cases of hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, insecurity of lives and property and a lot more that are products of the resource curse arising from resource diplomacy impotency leading to the paradox of lack in the midst of plenty. Thus, as the resource wealth is mismanaged or squandered and the mass of the people left with exponential poverty, worsening food and life insecurity the result is the feeling of deprivation by the deprived and some of the consequences of this are threats to nation building or survival.

1.6 Policy implications of resource diplomacy conundrum

Most African states are in resource diplomacy conundrum due to endogenous and exogenous factors and this has far reaching policy implications. Ojo (2007) in viewing the Nigerian scenario uses political economy approach to prove that the country's petroleum resources case has shown how natural resource can sow the seeds of discord and conflict among domestic stakeholders, politicians, developers, local tribes and residents in the resource endowed locations who often clamour for resource control or have larger shares of resource revenues. The attempts by stakeholders to seek unfair resource rents which engender tribal conflicts have adverse effects on local and foreign investments apart from direct loss of



resource revenue. Ojo also proves that resource rents are sources of corruption and economic inefficiency which culminate to undermine sound economic policies and weaken fiscal discipline. Revelations then show that the resource-control related crises leading to attacks on oil workers by local residents in the oil-rich Delta region have adverse effect on foreign investment and loss of resource revenue worth about N650 billion for the year 2005 (Ojo, 2007).

No matter the language used to describe or analyse the continent's situation, one thing is certain, that is the reality that Africa is in a resource diplomacy conundrum because even the countries where oil and gas for instance were recently discovered which attempted to avoid the resource curse are currently nose diving into it. Uganda is an example (Africa for Results Initiative, 2016). Kumah-Abiwu, Brenya, Grenya and Agbodzakey (2015) for example are worried about how the recent discovery of oil in Ghana can make Ghana have economic growth and development by learning a lesson from other naturally rich oil nations such as Nigeria who are in a resource curse dilemma. In Nigeria, oil has recently been reported to have been discovered in the north east area, a point which reactivates the question of the type of diplomacy to be adopted in order to escape the resource curse in the second decade of the 21st Century.

According to African bank (2009), many African countries' natural resource booms have only to a limited

extent set off a dynamic growth process. This is due largely to the failure to implement the right growth promotion policies and ensure that strong institutions are in place, suggesting that it is very difficult to make the big push towards diversification and development of manufacturing in the resource – rich parts of the continent. Ojo (2007) admits this fact by adding that despite expectations that resource-rich countries can promote growth by using the large revenues they derive from their resources to invest more in economic infrastructure and human capital, the policy implication is that economic growth in these countries has often stagnated. The underfollowing points to a large extent contribute to the foregoing.

The Dutch Disease:- The syndrome of rising real exchange rates and wages driving out pre-existing export and import – competing industries (Ojo 2007). A clear example is Nigeria's palm produce and other agricultural export commodities that sustained the country en route sustainable economic growth in the pre-colonial and colonial periods which were suddenly undermined because of the discovery of oil in the late 1950s and the eventual oil boom that followed shortly after 1970. The Malaysian and Indonesian arable lands have encouraged palm oil economies worthy of reference and so indicative of the fact that a palm oil economy can give a majority of the people better life (Delabre & Okereke, 2019) not to talk about when other

natural resources revenues are added. In these countries, as observed in Delabre and Okereke, negotiations are done even outside of government for the natural resources to attract foreign currency, jobs and other benefits to the people as well as the government and the companies involved in the sector. With oil windfall, Nigeria's export commodities (predominantly agricultural) were undermined and substituted with imported goods. The adverse effect of this anomie is the over flooding of wanted and unwanted goods into the Nigerian markets at rates that compete and eventually subdue local industries and production generally (Nwosumba, 2012). It is shocking to hear that Nigeria according to the former Minister of Agriculture Adeshina Adewumi on an NTA programme (2011) spent N98 trillion on rice importation between 2007 and 2010 where as its farmers walked and still wallow in poverty and hunger in spite of the untilled huge arable land and population the country has. So, because oil price was very high during this period, there appeared as was during the 1970s an oil boom era, a belief that Nigeria was enjoying a moment of excess cash liquidity. Even toothpicks were imported also without minding that there were and are numerous forests in the country that need to be harnessed. This underscores the relevance of the Dutch Disease thesis which argues that an oil boom would lead to a contraction in manufacturing.

Another factor that explains the reason for Africa's resource diplomacy conundrum is that of revenue and macroeconomic volatility (African Bank, 2007). This factor is based on the assumption and reality of the fact that commodity booms are typically not permanent and prices tend to show at least some degree of mean reversion over time. Thus, as a result, countries that have experienced one or more commodity export price booms will typically also have faced high volatility of export prices. In many cases resource booms have encouraged less prudent fiscal policies with limited control and inflation thereby hampering growth, equity and the alleviation of poverty (African Bank, 2007). In the case of Nigeria, the hosting of FESTAC in 1977, the involvement in African liberation struggles and elephant white projects within the oil boom days and the economic doomsday that followed shortly explain the point more. Nigeria shares this less – prudence factor with many other oil rich nations like Libya (accused of being a sponsor of transnational terrorism), Angola and Gabon.

There is also the fact that majority of African resource rich nations tend to have limited transparency and accountability in the management of their natural resource revenues leading to the creation of parallel budgets, and as a result price stability and budgetary discipline suffers. This makes it that even as natural resource money is pouring in, these countries often have



fiscal deficits, and sometimes, double digit inflation (African Bank, 2007). This kind of situation hampers equitable income distribution, exchange rate unification and trade liberalisation and further makes investments more risky. The correlative anomaly is that public spending decisions “become compromised with extravagant commitments made during booms that subsequently lead to drastic cuts in vital expenditures during troughs” (African Bank, 2007:112).

Another factor of importance is economic policy failures. The effects that natural resource revenues have in exposing existing policy failures including, on economic investment, regulatory reform and trade, as African Bank exposes, are also linked to the Dutch Disease and further, in policy decisions on economic diversification, choices governments make in supporting regulatory reform, skills development, business support, and public investment in infrastructure such as ports and roads have an impact on the way in which the Dutch Disease affects the economy.

There is another reason which borders on corruption and rent-seeking syndrome. Rent seeking among most naturally resourced nations is also a reason for the resource diplomacy conundrum because as Hausmann and Rigobon (2002) argue, resource wealth such as oil somehow makes societies less entrepreneurial, this follows the reasoning that there is so much wealth

floating around the government that entrepreneurial people find it much more profitable to engage in unproductive rent seeking activities to appropriate that wealth rather than in creating more wealth. This is the case of Africa where almost every adult wants to be in government by any means in order to join the appropriators of the resource wealth. The implication of this is that entrepreneurial skills are not converted to production or manufacturing or even servicing but policies of “do-or-die” as former President Obasanjo branded Nigeria's politics, where political power must be gotten at all costs and by any means possible without minding the consequences. This kind of situation has made it that instead of reinvesting entrepreneurially generated income into diversified economic activities most people prefer to plough the money in politics with the hope of making more money without the stress of doing business if they are elected or appointed into juicy government positions. In Nigeria, partisan politics has become misconceived to mean a profession which some people abandon their work to pursue. Suffice it to say therefore that joining the appropriators/elite group becomes more intense and paramount leading to scramble for political positions and the attendant conflicts, crises and violence which in turn affect the activities of state and citizens.

Ojo (2007) confirms this point by adding that resource curse works by destroying domestic economic and political institutions. In the case of Nigeria as Ojo

further argues, the presence of oil gives rise to rent seeking and corruption which adversely affect the climate for investment and growth after distorting earlier useful social, economic and political institutions in the country and this is possible because of the way natural resource activities minimise the two-way interaction between the state and its citizens. Evidence abounds that governments that have easy recourse to oil rents do not need to promote wealth creation that they can subsequently tax, as such citizens have less incentive to hold governments accountable. Thus the rent-seeking-syndrome as can be argued is usually attached to any state that suffers resource curse dilemma and so it is not peculiar to Nigeria or even Africa. Venezuela is an example.

The next reason for Africa's resource diplomacy conundrum is routed to its historical past. Colonialism which was the main reason for the establishment of most African states laid a certain faulty foundation which ab initio disarticulated the traditional economic development of Africa making it largely dependent on the developed economies for its development. This has continued even after the political independence of these states and in the face of the current globalisation process which has promised to open the global system for equal participation and benefits for all peoples and nations. Many argues that the disastrous impact of the world system which colonialism co-opted Africa into is the colossal appropriation of Africa's natural heritage by capitalists

(foreign in collusion with the indigenous) (Adeoti and Attah, 2012); Nwosumba, 2013). This follows the argument that the relationship between the Third World (Africa inclusive) and the rich industrialised centre nations is not a relation that is aiming at even encouragement (Galtung, 1973; Offiong, 1980). The policy implication of this type of relationship is that the control of these natural resources are more in the hands of foreigners who exploit and refine them because of the advantaged position of their expatriates, technology and reseach. This is also like this due largely to African leaders' conspiracy with foreign capitalists to maintain the status quo that favours the elite, especially those appropriating the natural resources in the name of the state and the people.

The way out of resource curse dilemmas in the 21st Century for Nigeria.

The instance of Malaysia and it likes where resource diplomacy has been well intended and deployed stand to be emulated by Nigeria. The case of most African states just points to the direction of the gap between policy making and implementation as well as the lack of seriousness and commitment of the leaders in changing the status quo. That there is resource curse dilemma in Africa is to a large extent because of policy-default and lack of commitment on the part of the leaders (appropriators) to adopt people-oriented resource diplomacy. A situation where the policy is not people based is uncalled for.



In observation of this, the quotation from the remarks made by African Theologians in Uganda in 1989 is apt here.

While in the past, development was principally understood in terms of economic progress, we now realized and become convinced, that appropriate progress should be integral development. Such development must cater for the whole human person, and encompass the people of the nation as a whole by developing their spiritual, religious, social, moral, economic, cultural, political, mental, educational, physical and environmental dimensions of life (Ike and Edozien, 2003:4).

The issue at stake now is the way to achieve this and then be out of the natural resource curse dilemma.

Some has the believe that Africa's resource curse dilemma is inescapable considering the fact that African leaders mindset is still to maintain the system that favours and may continue to favour them. Look at former President Mugabe's case for example; he was over 90 years and still wanted to continue appropriating and misappropriating the people's natural resources. Is it for what reasons? Zimbabwe with its abundant natural resources: Coal, Chromium Ore, Asbestos, Gold, Nickel, Copper, Iron Ore, Vanadium, Lithium, Tin, Platinum, Group Metals, Agricultural Land is one

of the poorest countries in the world. The rank of Zimbabwe's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2011 based on data available in 2012 and methods used in 2012 was – 173 out of 187 countries (Human Development Report, 2013). So between 1980 and 2016 36 years of Mugabe's reign, Zimbabwe's resource curse worsened as to make the country to be ranked one of the two poorest countries in the world survey (New Zimbabwe, 2016). This survey further reveals that Zimbabwe, a former net food exporter, is perennially hungry; formal industry has collapsed and unemployment is around 90 percent. Nigeria's case is not even better considering the fact that the nation is currently owing the World Bank \$9.81 billion as revealed by the Debt Management Office, DMO (Plustv Africa, 2020), whereas, the leaders that misappropriated the huge revenues of the oil boom days over forty years ago are still much in-charge of the resources today.

Stemming from this backdrop, it is imperative to suggest here that as far as the essence of diplomatic relations is mainly the achievement of national interest, Malaysia's success story can be emulated by Nigeria. Malaysia is natural resource-rich but not cursed because of the potency of its resource diplomacy. The wealth is shared among the people. The nation's success story of natural resources management lies on the fact that in the country according to the World Bank (2013), natural resources

raised incomes of the bottom 40% of rural households.

Malaysia is a country situated in the southeastern part of Asia. The country has a wide array of natural resources including fertile land for agriculture, minerals, and extensive forest. The country's economy is driven by these natural resources through exports and local sales. Although the nation's major resource, like that of Nigeria is undoubtedly petroleum, agricultural products such as palm oil, timber, cocoa, pineapples among others are also exported and locally consumed. In the global palm oil sector Malaysia is only second to Indonesia in production capacity (Bada, <https://googleweb.light.com/>). Nigeria should learn from Malaysia because it is a developing country like it. According to the World Bank (2013), Malaysia is one of a few developing countries that successfully converted an abundance of natural resources into long-term sustainable growth and it was able to do this through the following:

- Sound policy choices ensured revenues from resource extraction were reinvested in the economy in the form of machines and buildings to generate sustainable economic growth.
- Reinvesting natural resources revenues into productive non-oil assets, such as infrastructure and education, ensuring that future generation will benefit from resource wealth. Malaysian

economy has been diversified horizontally from commodities to non-commodities. Openness to foreign investment and labour helped promote the development of non-resource industries. Malaysia has also diversified vertically, from raw commodities to processed goods.

- The diversification of the economy helped Malaysia avoid volatility from commodity price booms and bursts. The exchange rate also remained competitive.
- The economic growth harnessed from natural resource was shared among Malaysians, raising the average incomes of the bottom 40 percent of rural households by 7.2 percent a year on average over two decades while poverty rates plummeted.

The virtues of good leadership, stressed Manjurul and Nilufar (2019), are the keys to Malaysian success, to metamorphose from a poor to a rich country in short period; Mahathir Mohammed from example was a patriotic and multitalented leader whose dynamic reforms modernised Malaysia, touching all sectors and aspects of the whole country. From the above, it thus becomes clear that Mahathir touched all aspects of Malaysian life as a whole and not one area. Suffice it to assert therefore that good leadership is the key to avoiding and by extension, breaking the resource curse. Malaysia has proved it.



Although Malaysia is second to Indonesia in palm oil production, why it is attracted to this paper is that while palm oil and other agricultural resources were the mainstay of Nigeria's economy in the colonial and early postcolonial eras, they were eventually abandoned due to wrong resource diplomacy approach arising from the discovery of earth oil in the late 1950s and the boom of the early 1970s. So, the fact that colonialism also took place in Malaysia goes a long way to prove that Nigeria's blame of the colonial web as a major reason for resource curse dilemmas is to be discountenanced. Rather than blaming colonialism Malaysian leaders adopted potent resource diplomatic strategies that are people-oriented and minded, diversified the nation's opportunities to benefit adequately from the nation's resources. For instance, it came to Nigeria, collected its palm fruits and went back home to plant them and today is one of the two leading palm oil producers and exporters in the world. Palm Oil has helped Malaysia in the diversification of its economy and generation of many jobs, as well as foreign currency (Delabre & Okereke, 2019). This is an example of potent resource diplomacy. Now that Nigeria has new oil in the northeast zone it should learn from Malaysia that virtues leaders and diversification of the economy are major keys of avoiding resource curse and out of resource curse dilemmas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, evidence in the paper so far has really shown that Africa's natural resource curse is a by-product of impotent resource diplomatic tools arising from selfish leadership and poor policy implementation. However, the position of this paper is that Africa still has the chance of making the abundant natural resources a blessing and not a curse. It argued that if Malaysia, a developing country in Asia was able to escape the resource curse, nothing stops the other countries in Africa especially Nigeria from following suit. The major challenge however is the sincerity and willingness of the leaders to change the policies that are supporting the resource curse such as rent seeking, the Dutch Disease and their like and put the interest of all the owners of the resources, Africans at the centre. The question here is, how possible is this considering the benefits that the leaders enjoy from the resource wealth misappropriation? History as we know has shown that those capitalists that love wealth, fame and prestige above human lives do anything within their reach to maintain the status quo. Mummar Ghadafi of Libya, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, Mobutu Sese Seko of DRC, Idi Amin of Uganda, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe are some of these leaders who died while refusing to make their people the main focus of their resource diplomacy. Although some of them may be argued to have died because of international conspiracy, the most acceptable argument may be because they have not laid the foundation for the

breaking of resource curse in their countries.

Recommendation

This paper is of the view that if Africa's nascent democracies can be sustained for a long time and then become more mature to the point of entrenching good governments that are accountable to the people, the natural resource curse can be upturned. This achievement to say the obvious is not possible without the people themselves taking action. This can be called revolution in the sense that if the people are determined to entrench good governance they can do it through the ballot boxes. Look at what happened in some North African countries recently where the people – led revolutions changed most leadership there and in Nigeria where for the first time an opposition candidate unseated an incumbent President, all these happened because the people remembered that power belongs to them. Regrettably, these revolutions are yet to yield the expected results which eventually shall lay the foundation for deep-rooted democracy and then good governance in their respective states. This, nevertheless, shall not deter the people from continuing to retake what belongs to them, which is the political power. Resource curse is man-made; it is a product of selfish politics and should be reversed by political means. The paper therefore recommends that what the people should try to achieve is enthroning critical thinking leaders through the ballot boxes who shall move away from pursuing parochial and

selfish interests against the social contract tenets aspire to emulate other leaders like those in Malaysia. This is a message of hope to all Africans because of the strong belief of this paper that something being difficult does not mean it is impossible to be changed. The people should be resolute, committed and consistent in their effort, with time, no matter the time; provided it is within the second decade of the 21st Century, they will achieve this onerous task.

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