

The Rentier State, Global Liberalism and Citizenship in Nigeria: Ken Ifesinachi, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the effects of fiscal crisis attendant on unearned income in citizen-state relations in the rentier state of Nigeria. The study examines the interface between personal patrimonial rule disdainful of plural democratic breaks on arbitrary power, the source of government revenue, and the neo-liberal dialectics reproducing the state and its resource dynamics. The fiscal crisis of unearned income as an alternative explanation to the prospects of governmental legitimacy and accountability, is weighted against the 'emancipatory' credentials of neo-liberal orthodoxy and popular sovereignty. The study sees authoritarian liberalism as a common denominator determining citizen-state relations in Nigeria notwithstanding neo-liberal dialectics and the fiscal crisis in rentier states.

Introduction

The modern idea of citizenship originating from the Greek and Roman states underwent transformation of the enlightenment period, the English, French and American revolutions 1688, 1789 and 1776 respectively. Nowadays citizenship is popularly claimed in international and municipal law encapsulated in the natural rights of life, liberty and property (Gauga, 2003: 270). Under liberalism, the power of taxation largely derives from the state's function of protecting private property rights of citizens. Under liberalism citizen means a national consumer of public goods, in which civil rights constitute the foundation that progressively evolves to political and social rights, social justice and allegiance to the community common heritage.

The Beveridge Report of 1942 in England pronounced the objective of the liberal welfare state to involve tackling five major problems of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness whose empirical derivatives are reflected in unemployment, sick and retirement benefits (Gauga, 2003:273). Citizenship is thus a relationship between the individual and the state in which both are linked by reciprocal rights and duties. Citizens are full benefits of their political community bearing civic, political and social rights of the welfare state. Citizenship in the modern state seems to proceed from the continuum of individualism and communalism. Liberal citizenship advances the principle of 'citizenship rights' and places particular stress on private entitlement and the status of the individual as an autonomous actor (Heywood, 2003:415).

Liberal theories tend to rationalize the defects of citizenship. These theories see citizenship in a democracy in terms of the dynamics of group competition aimed at eliminating the monopolization of power to permit the accommodation of the broad concerns of many groups. In the context the citizen is disenfranchised of the power of affirming his own essence in popular sovereignty to settle for favourable policy outcome derived from the interest matrix. Where popular power is relegated, civil society

intermediaries take over the task of shielding the citizens from the state (Ake, 1991).

In the blitz of the new phase of complex politico-economic and socio-psychological web of interconnectedness of decisions and events increasingly determining and shaping live chances on a global scale referred to as globalization, authoritarian dispositions defined citizenship in Africa. Since 1989, 38 of the sub-Saharan African countries were under the military or single party autocrats. With respect to citizenship and the changing character of capital, as colonialism got alienated by the onslaught of the self-determination agitations of the African elite it hastily sought cooperation and indulgent support for authoritarian regimes ostensibly in a development partnership. Also the search for allies during the cold war conducted human rights and citizenship to a luxury in great power confrontation politics in which African authoritarian neoliberal regimes were willing recruits (Ake, 2003:130).

What stand out clear is that in the present context, free-wheeling aggressive capitalism may not necessarily hold any political system that focuses primarily on economic restructuring success in contempt for deficiency in maintaining international standards of civil and political liberties, where the state is the repository of the preservation of private property and capitalist accumulation, the contours of citizenship is defined in neoliberal dynamics. Citizenship in the rentier portfolio of Nigeria is examined in this light. This study, thus, interrogates the trajectories of rentierism and authoritarian liberalism in the explanation of citizenship-state relations in Nigeria. It is to these issues that we now dwell.

The Rentier State and Citizenship in Nigeria

The spread of poor governance in developing countries has been controversially located on the trajectories of fiscal sociology, to wit, the sociological analysis of taxation and public finance as illuminated by Schumpeter (1991[1918]) thus:

The spirit of a people, its cultural level, its social structure, the deeds its policy may prepare – all this and more is written in its fiscal history. He who knows how to listen to its message here discerns the thunder of world history more clearly than anywhere else (Schumpeter, 1991:7).

It is therefore contended that the great historical transformation in modern Western European history is located in the transition from the domain state funded from surpluses derived from the rulers' own properties to the tax state funded through regularized tax levies on the private sector and private incomes. Fiscal sociology is anchored on the idea that dependence of governments on broadly levied taxes rather than other sources of revenue and existence of binding constraints on governments and institutionalized political representation constitute the foundations of liberal democracy (Moore, 2004:299).

The argument advanced in the fiscal sociology state model is that the degree of dependence of rulers on tax revenue is related to the emergence of representative

government. In the same vein, it is argued that deficiencies and pathologies in the political constitution of most developing states can be linked to a high level of dependence on natural resources rents from oil and other minerals and strategic rents like foreign aid. This is seen to account for why developing states are relatively ineffective and predatory in relation to their citizens.

In a fiscal state consensual taxation prevails with taxpayers jointly agreeing on a tax regime and policies for the use of revenue. Following Moore (2004:300) an organization that represented taxpayers would be relatively effective at overseeing the revenue-raising and public spending processes reducing waste and corruption. Accordingly, rulers dependent on taxes are seen to develop a stake in the prosperity of their citizens and are faced with incentives to promote that prosperity, which has a multiplier effect of generating more revenue and strengthening the state.

The fiscal sociology argument in state-citizen relations explains state stability and cohesion in terms of sources of income. Where the income is from tax, democracy thrives and where the income is from natural resources or from external aid, neglect of citizens by the state is likely to prevail. This argument gratuitously ignores the impulse of the global movement of capital and the sojourn of foreign capital in Africa and elsewhere in which tax without representation prevailed. The revolt of the thirteen American colonies was ignited on the demand for taxation based on representation. Colonialism, which relied heavily on taxation, made little headway in the democratic project in Africa and did not develop citizenship for popular democracy. The sojourn of neoliberal capital in Africa and the authoritarian protection of foreign capital and exclusion of citizens in the political process define the crisis of the state in Africa and Nigeria.

With respect to revenue generation and distribution in Nigeria, we note that the sources of revenue in Nigeria include:

1. Custom and Excise Sourced Revenue
 - a. Import duties
 - b. Export duties
 - c. Excise duties
 - d. Custom duties
2. Federal Licences
3. Federal Taxes
 - a. Petroleum Profit Tax
 - b. Companies Income Tax
 - c. Personal Income Tax
 - d. Capital Gains Tax
 - e. Stamp Duties
 - f. Airport Tax
 - g. Value Added Tax (VAT)

4. Federal Fees, Fines, Levies and Penalties
5. Royalties
 - a. Oil and Gas royalties
 - b. Tin royalties
6. Federal Earnings and Sales
7. Armed Forces Revenue
8. Interests and Repayments
9. Interests and Repayment on domestic and foreign loans to state governments
10. Reimbursement fees
11. Rent on Federal Government Property
12. Federal Miscellaneous revenues (Anyafo, 1996:171-176).

Nigeria's revenue sources indicate miscellaneous taxes, oil and gas revenues. This means that the choice of the thrust of government policies in Nigeria naturally be a product of the structural relation between the citizens and the state. Government efforts to distribute revenue ostensibly for the welfare of its citizens are also examined. In political and fiscal terms, Nigeria operated a unitary form of government between 1900 and 1946. Between 1946 and 1980, eight ad-hoc commissions on revenue allocation followed closely the rhythm of political and constitutional changes:

❖ The Phillipson Commission	1946
❖ The Hicks-Phillipson Commission	1951
❖ The Chick Commission	1953
❖ The Raisman Commission	1958
❖ The Binns Commission	1964
❖ The Dina Interim Revenue Allocation Committee	1968
❖ Aboyede Technical Committee on Revenue Allocation	1977
❖ The Okigbo Presidential Commission on Revenue Allocation	1979
❖ Allocation of Revenue (Federation Account, etc) Act, No. 1,	1982
❖ Allocation of Revenue (Amendment) Decree No. 36,	1984
❖ Babangida's revenue Allocation Formula	1990
❖ Abacha's Revenue Allocation Formula	1997 etc

Generally, the principles of revenue allocation in Nigeria include:

1. Derivation
2. Even development
3. Need
4. National interest
5. Independent revenue

6. Continuity of government services
7. Minimum responsibility
8. Financial comparability
9. Population
10. Equality of states
11. National minimum standards
12. Equality of access to development opportunities
13. Absorptive capacity
14. Fiscal efficiency

Theoretically, there appear to be a consistent attempt by succeeding governments to rationalize government expenditure on the basis of a combination of these principles. However, the neoliberal dialectics of the global movement of capital reproducing the state in Nigeria and its policies boil down to private expropriation of public resources to the detriment of citizen welfare. The point is that the analysis of the fortunes of citizens in states like Nigeria such as fiscal sociology does not articulate the implications of private expropriation and attendant authoritarian governance despite Nigeria's revenue profile. The same goes for the analysis based on rentierism which is integral to fiscal sociology. Moore (2001) acknowledges that fiscal explanations derived from European models score more highly on inherent appeal than on rigorous analysis. This argument is linked with the fact that rentier incomes have not been significantly alluded to account for the formation of contemporary European politics. Let us now reflect on the familiar account rentier dynamics in Nigeria and the effect on citizenship.

Rentier states are states that live largely off unearned income and are resourced with little organizational or political effort in relation to their citizens (Moore, 2001). Rentier states phenomenon is seen to emerge with the existence of a broadly bipolar world of rich and poor countries. A situation in which the poor countries' economies and citizens are deleteriously affected by long distance international trade, investment and financial exchanges, and by global projections of national military power and political influence of the rich leading countries. The interaction of these factors created an environment for the establishment or reproduction of direct external intervention of various in the periphery on the part of the rich core capitalist states through their MNCs and military and political support for worldwide activities (Moore, 2004:304-305).

This created opportunities in the developing countries for some local social agents to generate big economic returns in the form of rents from controlling and managing these economic and political satellite relations with the core rich countries of the North. These rents include: natural resources rents from minerals, diamonds, tropical timber and oil (Moore, 2004:305). The other is strategic rents which historically have derived from control over key naval transport arteries, canal, military alliances and subsidies, and rental of military facilities to foreign powers. In financial terms, the dominant type of strategic rent in the contemporary world is the many forms of development aid which has been the largest income source for the governments of poor countries (O'Connell and

Soludo, 2001:1527).

In the light of the above, rentier state theorists argue that state citizen relations in states relying on large oil rents is driven by financial resources obtained by government through rents (whether as royalties, taxes or surpluses from state corporations). Typically from a valuable, physically concentrated source that:

- i. is extracted, transported, processed and exported in an integrated fashion by an organization or network of linked organizations using dedicated physical infrastructure that has few alternative uses;
- ii. is very vulnerable to disruption, and
- iii. therefore tends to be heavily protected (Moore, 2004:305).

Following Chaudhry (1989, 1997), Gallo (1991), Anderson (1994, 1995), Karl (1997), Vandewalle (1998), Ross (1999), Acemoglu *et al* (2003), Moore (2004) draws on the literature on rentier states to argue that the dependence of a state on oil revenue has been associated with certain political pathologies:

1. **Autonomy from Citizens:** the State apparatus and the people who control it have a "guaranteed" source of income that makes them independent of their citizens. The argument being that the government is not subject to democratic appraisal nor does it use scarce administrative resources to promote broad economic development since the state feeds on mineral revenues, the government tends to use some revenue to buy off those citizens likely to cause trouble and more of it to support a powerful army and intelligence apparatus that will keep the others in line.
2. **External Intervention:** concerns about security of supply of strategic minerals like oil have been seen to continually motivate substantial political and military intervention by the wealthiest nations in the governance of oil-producing states (Yergin, 1991). This produces a relationship that increases the autonomy of oil states in relation to their citizens most directly through external military and political support for regimes that enjoy little popular legitimacy.
3. **Coupism and Counter-Coupism:** oil revenue is seen to tempt those not at the centre of power to try to take over the state by force. Politics in mineral states are seen to tend to coupism since the rewards are very high and foreign support available. Such states however, are seen to respond by using a great deal of its resources to protect against coups, by sometimes bringing in foreign mercenaries who are less likely to lead a coup. Those in power are reluctant to cede any influence to other groups lest this become a foothold for a complete take over of the state.

4. **Absence of Incentives for Civil Politics:** dependence on oil revenues is seen to affect the general tenor of civilian politics, and reduces, through two very different mechanisms. The likelihood that citizens will engage in politics, in a "civic" (deliberative, institutionalized, and compromise-prone) fashion. This is based on the impression that the citizens are not motivated through a sense of right to influence the use of "their" own money. Similarly, political question over mineral revenue is seen to increase the space for conflict over fundamental issues of morality and values that are more likely to generate permanent differences and ill-feeling among people, and are less subject to compromise than are questions of who pays how much tax for what purpose (Anderson, 1994:439).
5. **Vulnerability to Subversion:** the inability of the government to mobilize the bulk of the population under the ambit of regular civilian bureaucracy leaves the state vulnerable to the armed organizational challenge competitors: guerrillas, private armies and non-state movements of various kinds. The argument being that the state machinery is not kept alive and active at the grassroots through active revenue raising, thus, the decay of the revenue-raising function leave the state vulnerable to more committed and organized predators.
6. **Non-transparency in Public Expenditure:** where public revenue come from a small number of concentrated sources such as a few foreign oil companies or a public mining enterprise, it is relatively easy for revenue and expenditure to be hidden from view. The state oil corporation then becomes a fiscal and political state within the state (Winters, 1996:162-163).
7. **Ineffective Public Bureaucracy:** there exists little incentive to establish an efficient public meritocratic bureaucracy. The task of raising revenue from the mineral facilities requires few specialists and these may be imported to make them easily controllable. In the bureaucracy, jobs are given mainly for patronage purposes and for political reasons. Effort is rather concentrated on an efficient military and intelligence apparatus.

What seems to be clear is that political authoritarianism underlines the political pathologies associated with the rentier state argument. The argument also implies that the defects detected are products of the revenue source. The point however is that the neoliberal dialectics of the global movement of capital created peripheral capitalist economic enclaves in Africa under colonial authoritarian control and later neo-colonial authoritarian control. Democracy and effective citizenship hardly determined the more than century sojourn of foreign capital and its political absolutism and arbitrariness.

Even the effortful analysis of other political pathologies of oil regimes by Ross

(2001a, 2001b), Wantchekon (2000) and Esanov *et al* (2001) fail on the same count to indict oil rent or revenue source as purveyors of the authoritarian stance of rentier states. These scholars also argued that rentier states are likely to be relatively undemocratic (Ross, 2001b; Wantchekon, 2000), is likely to suffer from weak rule of law and is likely to exhibit higher levels of malnutrition, mortality and illiteracy (Esanov *et al*, 2001; Ross, 2001a). The point is that the postcolonial state in Africa typically operates a brand of liberalism tragically determined by the sovereignty of external economic and political forces rather than citizenship sovereignty. Rentierism and resource curse argument merely makes a fetish of revenue source to create a theoretical fugitive for the intellectual onslaught and rising popular egalitarianism against authoritarian liberalism in all its ramifications. It is the dialectics of neoliberalism producing the state in Africa and Nigeria that we now turn.

Neoliberal Dialectics and Authoritarian Liberalism in Nigeria

Liberalism contrasts the involuntary character of society with the exclusive monopoly of coercion in the state's role of law enforcement. The liberal Lockean state envisages individuals unanimously agreeing to set up certain central institutions with limited powers of protection and law enforcement. The state is seen to be bound by natural law and citizens retain a right of resistance against it (Barry, 1981:49). Liberalism in this light conceals the relationship between the rules and institutions of a society and the historicity of its production and distribution relations. The neoliberal capitalist thrives on compulsory law, protection of the individual; producer and consumer with the bulk of social and political relationships are governed by economic forces actuated by the rule of law and enforcement mechanisms. The neoliberal capitalist state has been aptly captured as "the great fictitious entity by which everyone seeks to live at the expense of everyone else (Bastiat, 1964:144).

In Africa unfortunately, the state project commenced with the 19th century predatory onslaught of neoliberal economic forces culminating in the scramble and partitioning of Africa in which large societies of African territory were carved up by European business entrepreneurs. The requirement of extraction of economic largesse by colonialism conduced to a repressive state apparatus. The colonial order established by conquest, violence and force measures found selective justice and morality compelling for winning the secondary war of pacification, cooptation and accommodation of the African native elite in the imperial enterprise. This enthroned arbitrary rule, lack of accountability and a culture of impunity (George, 2004:2). Democratic dissent was crushed with tremendous coercion and vehemence while authoritarian rule was sustained with ethicized geopolitical power. The powers of civilian political citizens were rendered redundant and the citizens viewed the state and its alienatory political processes with hostility.

Typically, the colonial African state and its postcolonial clone lack organizational clarity and its functional role as a social manager is farcical and fortuitous. The state was thus suspect as a manager, facilitator and catalyst for development for failing to prioritize legitimate authority (George, 2004:4).

With respect to neoliberal dialectics and the role of globalization in advancing a culture of rights and citizenship, it is to be noted that the United States' government as the modern imperial hegemon has ratified the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights but is yet to ratify its logical extension in the UN Covenant on Economic and Social Rights. The implication is that the international community as a guarantor of economic and social justice is suspect. It follows that the impact of the asymmetries, discontinuity and market imperfections of the global economic environment cannot be underestimated in explaining the crisis of citizenship and democratic credential of neoliberal states like Nigeria.

The point is that global liberalism has proceeded with efficient dictatorship within the neoliberal macroeconomic framework. Neoliberalism embraces certain redeeming feature in dictatorship as discipline, accountability, predictability and lawful competition. Authoritarian liberalism thus portrays, harbours and mimics some critical though imperfect democratic tenets giving spur to economic growth. The existence of limited democratic values in authoritarianism necessary for economic progress is in reality fortuitous. Political authoritarianism has its own specificity which markedly affects its consequences. In Nigeria's brand of authoritarian liberalism, the institutions of the state are essentially privatized to conflicting ethno-regional indigenous groups. The contending groups vie for the appropriation of state power in an anarchical political warfare of dedicated self-seeking (Ake, 2003:128).

The violent assault of neoliberalism on indigenous society directed loyalties to primary groups in forging the states in Africa and in the coercive post-independence state building. Under authoritarian liberalism, the state in Nigeria constitutes a plurality of informal primary groups that are largely the repositories of loyalties and citizenship. This unleashes powerful centrifugal forces that render the polity incoherent and unable to establish common basis for citizenship.

Altogether, citizenship in Nigeria evolved from the dialectics of Neoliberalism and projected by the authoritarian stance of the Nigerian state.

The State and Citizenship in Nigeria

Citizenship is the hallmark of the modern international identity of members of sovereign states. In this context, a citizen is a person who by birth or naturalization belongs to a state. While international covenants domesticated in states prescribe that all citizens are equal and should be treated so, the antinomies of neoliberal dialectics as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, state indigeniety, prebendalism and authoritarianism reproduce discriminatory citizenship and inequality.

The sociological component of a citizenship by differentiation is inscribed in the antinomies reproducing the state in Nigeria. Citizen differentiation is thus the structural imperative of Nigeria federalism which politicizes horizontal and vertical social distances and protects them as indigenes interests in the federal framework of sub-unit citizenship and non-indigene discrimination. The modern state, social and historical materiality dynamics produce archetypal centralized coalescence units which do not define

citizenship primarily by birth. In this case, residency and indigeniety status create hindrances and discrimination in mobility and unfettered access of citizens across the states of the Nigerian federation.

Beginning with the Nigerian 1963 Republican constitution, Section 7:

Every person who having been born in the former colony or protectorate of Nigeria was, on 30th day of September 1960, a citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies or a British protected person ... was a Nigerian citizen.

Section 11 further states: "Every person born in Nigeria after 30th day of September 1960 shall become a citizen at the date of his birth".

The Nigerian 1999 constitution defines citizenship in Section 25(1) as:

- (a) Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to community indigenous to Nigeria;
- (b) Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and
- (c) Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

The indigeniety requirement, thus, excludes immigrants who have settled in Nigeria for a long time. Indigeniety implies that those born after independence are Nigerians because either of their parents belongs to communities indigenous to Nigeria. It follows that a Nigerian citizen is not just a person either of whose parents or grandparents is a Nigerian but that an individual belongs to Nigeria through belonging to an indigenous group. What follows from this conception is that indigeniety flows from the groups which belong to the parcel of influence and sovereignty hoisted by the British imperial rule (1860-1960) irrespective of their historical origin even outside Nigeria (Hodgkin, 1975). Citizenship in Nigeria thus derives from the primordial group.

Bendix (1969) distinguishes between functional representation and plebiscitarian principles of a citizenship. Under functional representation, there is no direct relationship between the individual and the state; the individual is a citizen because the group to which he belongs is a part of the state and representation is by the rulers or leaders of the group. The plebiscitarian principle eliminates all powers intervening between the individual and the state for all citizens possess equal rights before the sovereign national authority (Bendix, 1969:90). This implies that citizenship constitutional equality is plebiscitarian and belonging to an indigenous group functional.

It follows that citizenship in Nigeria sociologically defined in primordial primogeniture exclusive groups which determines the status of the individual. Typically individual citizenship status emerges from either majority or minority ethno-regional

origins that have differential relevance and access to power (Osaghae, 1987:65). In view of this, the separatist and mutual exclusivity dynamics of ethno-regional citizenship unfortunately hamstrung citizenship equality by birth. The effect is that the Nigerian state falls short of an all inclusive citizenship setting for mutually exclusive indigeniety citizenship.

The point remains that indigeniety denies free mobility, access and right of participation. Outside one's state one is not a citizen, length of domicile and taxation duties notwithstanding and does not receive reciprocal returns for duty performed. Indigeniety erodes the allegiance of the excluded and denies the states the moral authority over the citizens leaving conformity by coercion. It is remarkable that imperial native authorities established and enforced local jurisdiction and the autonomy of indigenous groups as a deliberate policy of divide and rule. The institutionalization of Nigerian federalism on ethno-regional protectionism and on neoliberal economic cartel gave concrete expression to the separatist suzerainty of the Native Authority. The distinct constitutional autonomy of regionalism laid claims on the loyalty of its members just as the states displacing overarching loyalty to the Nigerian federation. The cataclysmic dynamic of differentiation and hostility is part of the root of endemic crisis reproducing authoritarian liberalism in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Citizenship in Nigeria, rather than the outcome of neoliberal dialectics and the fiscal crisis in Nigeria's rentier state is a product of class antinomies of authoritarian liberalism. In this context, citizenship is divorced from rewards and concessions of civic rights engendered by class struggles. As against mainstream neoliberal political economy, the trajectories of authoritarian liberalism which entails governing a peripheral capitalist economy with authoritarian political structures buttressed by the sovereignty of external economic and political forces, the historicity and materiality of the state in Nigeria in consecutive phases dissociate rights and duties in the conception of citizenship. With respect to indigeniety solidarity and loyalty ones relationship is associated with duties. However, one expects only benefits from the Nigerian federal state whose only basis of existence is the largesse it confers on the basis of consociational politics and political repression. Following Mamdani (1996:286), authoritarian liberalism in its distinct phases in Africa moved from rejuvenating to conserving society, from the advocates of individual freedom to a custodian of the primordial integrity of repressed groups. The study also moves beyond the perceived pathologies of fiscal sociology, unearned income and rentierism to explain the dynamics of the crisis of citizenship in Nigeria in terms of the structures of authoritarian liberalism reproducing the state in Nigeria.

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