



A Historical Contextualization of Botswana-Nigerian Political & Economic Relations, 1971- 2012

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Abstract: *The study examines the socio economic relationship between Nigeria and Botswana. It further investigated the seemingly inactive diplomatic relationship of both nations. The reasons for Botswana fast economic growth in context to the slow growth of the Nigerian economy.*

The study relied on documentary data. The documentary data were subjected to internal and external criticism for authentication, and then to textual and contextual analysis.

The study found out that despite its colonial links, both took different post colonial destinies, as the facts may have suggested that Nigeria is heterogeneous and found compatibility between the nationalities difficult whilst Botswana is homogeneous and to a larger extent compatible.

Keywords: *Trade, unemployment, and developing economy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Political and economic relations between Nigeria and Botswana; in between the period of 1971 and 2012 was inactive, lukewarm, unenthusiastic from their period of independence to the second decade of the 21st century. Despite the colonial link between Nigeria and Botswana; both took different post colonial destinies, as the facts may have suggested that Nigeria is heterogeneous and found compatibility between the nationalities difficult whilst Botswana is homogeneous and to a larger extent compatible.

By the beginning of the 19th Century, just one ethnic group, other nationalities has been encapsulated by this group; the Tswana (a Bantu group), dominated the land space that currently encompasses Botswana (The Guardian 2013). The Tswana's shared cultural establishments and common dialect, known as Setswana; contact with Europeans were well established as that of the Botswana state of the 20th century i.e. the trade of Ivory and Ostrich feathers with the Europeans dates back to 1805 (Badawy 2015). The Tswana's took up trade with the Europeans as a source of living and a way to obtain necessary merchandise including firearms. Botswana, has very little ethnic diversity nearly 80% of the population is Tswana. Upon independence a majority considered themselves and shared same language. Botswana was a remarkably ethnically homogenous nation (Valentin 2011).

On the other hand the people of the land space now called Nigeria remained as different nationalities throughout the 19th century and never did see itself as one group. It was the British that forcefully brought them under one umbrella in the 20th century; whereas pre- colonial Botswana was partitioned into a few self ruling communities that shared comparable social customs, each community were ruled by a chief named Kgosi. Nigeria is split between Muslims, Christians and other traditional religions, with Islam having being well established before the colonial era. Nigeria also has over 250 nationalities within its internal land space making governance to be complex.

Colonial rule in Nigeria was done in an indirect form identified by historians as indirect rule. Indirect rule simply means the art of governing a group of people through intermediaries. By this administration the British generally collected taxes, maintained peace and order and settled petty

quarrels among their colonists by using the talents and positions of the chiefs (Abiola 1977). This type of rule is often associated with the name of Lord Lugard, a Briton who later featured prominently in the political stage of Nigeria. Lord Lugard coined this type of administration when he was a governor in Tanganyika, East Africa, and later introduced it to Hongkong between 1906 and 1912 and to Nigeria between 1912 and 1919 (Abiola, West Africa History 1972). Contrary to Nigeria, British Indirect Rule in Botswana was of 'lighter version' compared to that of Nigeria (Badawy 2015).

Many factors prompted Lord Lugard to adopt this system of government in Nigeria. First, there were an inadequate number of British personnel to be employed as administrators. The reason for this is not far to fetch. West Africa was often regarded by the Europeans as 'the white man's grave' because of many diseases which infested the area (Englebert 2000). Invariably very few white men were available for employment. Since 'British men' could not be got, Lugard saw no reason why he could not use 'Nigerians'. Lugard also suffered from lack of funds. Right from time Britain had been cautious not to involve itself in any financial responsibility to any of its colonies (Abiola, 100 Questions and Answers on West African History 1977). Lack of adequate funds definitely meant not enough finance to maintain an all British administration.

The kind of administration Lugard met in Northern Nigeria prompted his choice of Indirect Rule in Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria the rulers were autocratic while the subjects were submissive. With this success in mind, Lord Lugard proceeded, after the 1914 amalgamation (of Northern protectorate and Southern protectorate), to extend it to the southern part of the country, but it was not as successful here as it was in the north, especially in the eastern part where these conditions were not existing (Abiola, West Africa History 1972). There were very few rulers, and even where these existed, they were mere figure heads and not in any way autocratic. In the same way, the ordinary men and women were not submissive; perhaps this was why it was not surprising seeing women at Aba Ngwa in 1929 rising against an attempt by the agents of Lord Lugard to create 'warrant chiefs' for the people (Ado Boahen 1986). In Western Nigeria the situation was not as gloomy as it was in Eastern Nigeria. Here the Yorubas had their own kings, but they were not autocratic and their subjects were not completely submissive (Jacob Ade Ajayi 1986).

However, for the Botswana's, because of the light version (Indirect Rule) of colonial rule and the pragmatic ways of the Tswana leaders, the clash between the British and Tswana's were minimal compared to that of Nigeria. Notwithstanding, British colonial rule impacted the pre colonial system in Botswana in three ways: First, by defining 'Tribal Reserves' for each Botswana nation, the British solidified what were formerly fluid social and lucrative processes. Second, by recognizing the 'Chiefs' as the legitimate traditional rulers of the tribes and proclaiming that they could only be removed by the colonial administration, the British ended informal systems of control on chiefs. Third, the colonial state also reserved the right to recognize new chiefs (Badawy 2015). This meant that the Tswana's and the British became the two administrative anchors of the new order.

2. HISTORICIZING AND CONTEXTUALIZING THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Republic of Botswana is a land locked country in Southern Africa which became independent after British rule on September 30, 1966. Covered by the Kalahari Desert with a flat land of up to 70%, it is bordered by South Africa to the South and South East, Namibia to the West and North, and Zimbabwe to the North East (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2014). Nigeria is situated at the Western part of Africa with a total area of 923,768 sq km. The land boundaries stretches to nearly 4,047km and coastal line stretches to nearly 853km. Nigeria is surrounded by Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2014).

Nigeria and Botswana established diplomatic relations at the highest level on the 9th of March, 1971, even though both countries had maintained contacts at various levels before then (Information 1980). Sir Seretse Khama visited Nigeria on the 7th of March 1971; he visited Lagos (former capital of Nigeria) as one of the delegates that took part in the African- American dialogue (Federal Ministry of Information 1971). On the 12th of March, he had a formal discussion with the Nigerian Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, on issues bothering on the bilateral relationship of both nations. Nigeria became one of the first countries to establish a resident diplomatic mission between the two countries in Gaborone in 1971 (The government of Botswana 2012).

Prior to 1971, after its independence in 1966, Botswana's planning and execution of economic development took off in 1967-71 after the discovery of diamonds at Orapa (Badawy 2015). The

essential precondition for the taking off, of economic development was that Botswana renegotiated its customs union with Apartheid South Africa, so that state revenue would benefit from rising capital imports and mineral exports rather than remain at a fixed percentage of total customs union income (Englebert 2000). This renegotiation was achieved in 1969. Nigeria had discovered petroleum in the 50s but became highly dependent on the product from the 70s while Botswana became highly dependent on diamond at around the same period. Additionally, the two countries began to benefit from their extractive wealth resources during the first decade after their independence. The populations of the two countries are very different; with Nigeria being the most dense and diverse in all of Africa, around 177 million people, Botswana scanty and sparsely populated about 2.1 million people.

From 1974 Botswana became one of the frontline states in the Southern African Region. The frontline states in 1980 formed the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The idea behind the SADC, largely structured by Khama, was to build a better cooperation between Southern African States and promoting development to each of the member states. Benefitting from a rapidly expanding economy in the 1970s and 80s, Botswana was able to extend basic infrastructure for mining development and basic social services for its population. The Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP) was the ruling party at independence, and was continually re-elected by the people throughout the 20th century, though the Botswana National Front founded in 1965 became a significant threat after 1969 when tribal conservatives joined the socialists in attacking the bourgeois policies of the BDP government (Valentin 2011).

In the case of Nigeria, its first six years from independence was civilian rule. The civilians were ousted in a coup d'état by General Aguiyi Ironsi, after seven months General Yakubu Gowon took power through another coup d'état that same year (1966) and remained in power for nine years (1975) (Tidy Michael 1965). General Murtala Mohammed overthrew General Gowon but he was killed February 13, 1976, less than a year that he took over power (Ado Boahen 1986). General Olusegun Obasanjo was as a result of Murtala Mohammed death appointed the new head of state for Nigeria.

During the tenure of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, Nigeria was active in Southern Africa. Nigeria extended diplomatic support to Southern African nations such as Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. In the case of Angola, after the nation gained independence from Portugal in 1975, Nigeria mobilized its diplomatic influence in Africa in support of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). In 1977, the new General Olusegun Obasanjo military regime donated \$20 million to the Zimbabwean movement against the apartheid government of Rhodesia. Similarly, Nigeria also extended diplomatic support to Southwest Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, to stall the Apartheid installed government there. Nigeria's support to these Southern African states concurs with the goals and policy of the frontline states (SADC) of Southern Africa towards the emancipation of Southern African countries from colonial rule. Nigeria also demonstrated her seriousness in improving the economy for the people and embarked on courses that support the de-colonization of the Southern Region of Southern Africa. Some multinational companies that traded with Apartheid South Africa were sanctioned and the local operations of Barclays Bank, Standard Bank, and British Petrol in Nigeria were nationalized after those companies ignored the strong call against the apartheid policy in South Africa by African governments.

Shehu Shagari took over through election from the Murtala/Obasanjo administration in 1979. Khama (Botswana) died in 1980 and was succeeded by Quett Masire, a BDP party member who had been his deputy since 1965 (Badawy, Botswana and Nigeria same colonial legacy but different paths 2015). Khama was described by Nigeria's former President, Shehu Shagari, as an ardent exponent of racial harmony, pride and equality (Information 1980). Muhammadu Buhari toppled the Shagari administration in 1984 and could only rule for just two years. Major General Ibrahim Babangida took over from Muhammadu Buhari through a coup d'état in 1985 and was able to hold on to power for eight years (1993). Following Babangida's administrations annulment of the June 12, election in 1993, a transition administration was appointed by the Military Council and it was headed by Ernest Shonekan, after three months, his Defence Minister General Sani Abacha seized power and ruled for five years (1998). General Abacha died in the year 1998. In Botswana, Masire retired in 1998 and was succeeded by the BDP's Festus Mogae (Badawy, Botswana and Nigeria same colonial legacy but different paths 2015).

In context, at independence in 1966, Botswana was the third poorest nation worldwide with a GDP per capita of nearly \$70. From 1966 to 1996 Botswana's average real growth per capita reached 8.2%. Such achievement made Botswana the world's fastest growing economy for three consecutive decades. Good fiscal policies, focus and conscious leadership have often been referred to as the reasons behind this remarkable growth (The Guardian 2013). However Botswana's economy is not free from problems: Unemployment and economic inequality are relatively high, especially in the rural regions. Botswana suffers from the highest infection of HIV in the world. However, most scholars acknowledge the fact that Botswana Post Independence progress has occurred in the context of an uninterrupted record of multi party democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Furthermore, Botswana has achieved this progress through governance complemented by the prudent and accountable management of its human capital and natural resources. Therefore, Botswana owes its advances in development to the exploitation of minerals, especially diamonds. In Botswana, all mining rights are vested in the state, and revenues consisting of taxes and royalties through direct share holding, accrued into the Botswana's national coffers. The revenues earned from diamond are reported in published Botswana government's annual report.

On the other hand, Nigeria's economy boomed in the 70s and it declined from 1980. Its economic downturn could be linked to endemic corruption among its peoples and leaders; lack of accountability and transparency and poor infrastructural development. The riches from Nigeria's natural resources benefitted the few and corrupt, condemning millions of their fellow citizens to poverty and hunger. Poor governance in Nigeria manifested itself in many forms, such as abuse of state power, violation of human rights and basic freedoms, separatist and rebellious agitations, weak institutions cum regime protection, and poor infrastructure. According to Mogae the ugly situation painted above led to unstable socio economic and political environments which engender poor service delivery, corruption and lack of certainty about the future (The government of Botswana 2012). Under such circumstances, he explained that the process of development and enjoyment of fundamental human freedoms is seriously compromised and frustrated. Mogae, therefore advocated that the role of government in governance includes the creation of a conducive policy and regulatory environment for the private sector. Mogae canvasses that Nigeria should establish a legal system that protects and enforces the constitution, laws and regulations and also provides short and long term strategic guidance. Despite this, Nigeria still has the biggest economy in Africa because of its thriving Movie and Music industry. Yet most scholars agree that despite its immense natural wealth in natural resources, Nigerians still face those teething problems that were with it at inception. Akpan Ekpo opined that the 'positive growth of the Nigerian economy has not translated into development as evidenced by very high and rising rates of unemployment, poverty incidence of almost 70% and low human development index because of the over reliance on the centre' (The Guardian 2013). Ekpo suggested the 'implementation of a developmental state economic philosophy, investment in the housing sub sector, infrastructural development particularly power, strong state sector, the need for states and local governments to be competitive and develop their own economies as well as investment in knowledge, ideas and innovations' (The Guardian 2013).

Kabir Alkali Mohammed called for a sober reflection on Nigeria's economic paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. Mohammed wondered that in spite of the fact that Nigeria occupies the enviable position of the 6th largest oil producer in the world, with a reported average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of over 6 per cent in the decade, and also acclaimed to be the giant of Africa, Nigeria remains under developed and the citizens are poor (The Guardian 2013). According to the Nigerian Poverty Profile published by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics in 2010, 60% of Nigerians live on less than \$1 per day (Okwe 2013). Youth unemployment has soared, life expectancy rate is about 49 years while the 2012 Human Development Index ranking, placed the nation at 153 of 187 countries surveyed (Okwe 2013). Without the people being the driving force of development, which governance entails, development can hardly take place and if it does, it will not be sustainable.

Nigerians have become skeptical about the expected outcomes of the various policies of different administrations, such that the initial enthusiasm that greeted the launch of various reforms appears to be turning into despair, anger and restiveness of the masses. In fact, security of lives and property has reached an all time low to underscore the anger of the hungry in the Nigerian land space. Nigeria's weak and vulnerable must not feel that they are been ignored and neglected. It is the winning of the 'weak and vulnerable' trust and confidence that is the key to development. In Botswana, its

constitution has thus remained as the ultimate guarantor of the ‘weak and vulnerable’ in terms of civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.

Good governance is about adherence to a legitimate constitution, upholding the rule of law as well as broad based participation of the people in the way they are governed. Gender equity and providing for the needs of ‘weak and vulnerable’ groups is paramount. Good governance is about establishing clear rules and procedures that facilitate speedy and timely decision making. It is about a system of checks and balances to ensure that the various arms of government operate within clear delineated limits of authority. It is about respect for human rights and rule of law. On the other hand, poor governance can manifest itself in many forms, such as freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to development, collapse of state apparatus, over centralization of power, as well as undefined systems and procedures in public policy formulation and execution.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nigeria by the evidence displayed from the above seemed to have neglected trade with an important frontline southern African state like Botswana. Idi Hong, as at 2002, asked for the revitalization of diplomatic relationship between Nigeria & Botswana which he termed to have been inactive. In the post-independence era, economic exchanges between Botswana and Nigeria were largely marginal, as non implementation of diplomatic agreements and communication barriers kept trade between the nations low; in comparison with that of the western powers and Asia.

Although Nigeria tried to woo Southern African states including Botswana during the struggle against Apartheid in the 70s; however agreements between both nations seemed to have been willfully neglected by both states. Skelemani laments that most of the agreements, since the first forum, remained unimplemented as it denied the two countries the opportunities that came out of such meetings (Okwe 2013). However, he noted that the two nations had been working together amicably in different areas of trade and investment saying the citizens of Nigeria and Botswana wanted the agreements implemented and the government officials should follow up on them.

Despite this, the citizens of the two countries still find ways to trade with each other, and visit their nations for employment, education, tourism...etc The population of Nigerians residing in Botswana is about 2,500. Some of whom work in government and private institutions as legal, medical and health professionals as well as teachers and university lecturers. Even though national diplomatic relations seemed inactive, this cannot however be said of citizens who visit any of the two nations; for instance, in 2012 no fewer than 300 Nigerians living in the Republic of Botswana were deported to Nigeria by the Ian Khama administration after the government (Botswana) refused to renew their visas. In spite of this diplomatic row, Nigeria and Botswana still have a good relationship.

According to Transparency International’s Perceptions Index, Botswana is classified as the least corrupt nation on the African continent (Valentin 2011). On the contrary, Nigeria is rated second most corrupt nation in the region of sub Saharan Africa. Botswana’s institutions are widely considered to be the least corrupt among sub Saharan nation, where the rule of law is highly respected and poverty is least severe in Africa. On the other hand, Nigeria’s political and economic institutions are notoriously famous for being corrupt. On institutional quality, among 212 world sample, Botswana ranks 53 out of 212 while Nigeria ranks among the weakest countries in terms of Institutional quality, scoring a poor 187 out of 212 (Valentin 2011).

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