

RESOURCE CONTROL: A TRANSLOCATION OF THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The Scramble for Africa, also known as the partition of Africa, was conducted among Europeans sitting at the Berlin Conference of 1885 -85. It was consummated as the colonization of African countries by these powers. The era of colonialism ended about 1980. But the seeds of discord sown in that epoch have since germinated and developed into a tree, of which one of the most notorious and reprehensible fruits is today's resource control crisis in Nigeria. Adopting a theoretical framework successfully adapted from the biological and medical sciences, namely; translocation analysis, the paper traces the ancestry of the present resource control problem to the scramble, first, and then, the use of fiscal and revenue allocation commissions during the colonial era, and the miniaturization of solutions to fiscal acrimonies and bad blood in the post-colonial era. The paper acknowledges that the creation of the OMPADEC in 1992, the NDDC in 1999, the concession of 13 percent derivation in 2001 and the abrogation of the onshore-offshore dichotomy in 2003, are measures calculated to reduce the resource control disturbances to manageable proportions. But that armed confrontation and hostage taking have persisted and remain intractable indicate that more fundamental solutions are called for.

Key words: Resource control, translocation, scramble for Africa

INTRODUCTION

According to Nnadi (1997), natural resources are those amenities and facilities, which owe their existence either totally or predominantly to natural processes occurring autonomously independent of man's action.

A nation's development potential depends on its natural resource base (Salau, 1992).

The phrase resource control has come to be associated with a negative connotation in Nigeria. This is not unexpected. Resource control as applied in Nigerian national socio-political vocabulary, is a description of the totality of militarized aggressive behaviour, deft and crafty political scheming and maneuvering, acrimonious verbal brouhaha, and other despicable and reprehensible elements of the so-called Nigerian factor exhibited in the tussle for right to dictate the pace of exploitation and direction of application of the country's endowment of natural resources, especially petroleum.

The resource control palaver is partly predicated on how efficient the various types of natural resources are being exploited and how the diminishing stocks can be managed and conserved for the future. It is also triggered by the problems of environmental degradation and management occasioned by the activities bordering on exploration and mining of subterranean natural resources. The on-going resource control controversy is quite vehement because the depletion of natural resources has serious economic and social consequences. It reduces capacity for production and has the potential of reducing the income of the population of a particular region, which may lead to out-migration. The negative economic implications of an excessive rate of out-migration, leading to the phenomenon of brain drain, have been adequately analyzed by Gbosi, (1995), Nnadi (2000) and Nnadi (2002).

The resource control crisis of today is, without controversy, a scramble. And, the word 'scramble' is already well documented and prominently placed in the political and economic history of Nigeria, nay, Africa. Any encounter with the word 'scramble' on the Internet will definitely pop up 'the scramble for Africa'.

The Scramble for Africa, also known as the partition of Africa refers to the epochal events of 1884-5 when European powers defined Africa as a resource and then embarked upon a scramble for the control of the coveted resource. The European powers involved are, namely- Britain,

Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. The Scramble thus had economic motivations and undertones.

From the chronological standpoint, the scramble for Africa has come and gone. But, it has been translocated in time and spirit, into today's resource control fracas. The concept of translocation provides the theoretical framework within which the progression from the scramble for Africa to resource control is studied.

The Theory Of Translocation

Translocation literally means to move from one place to another. In Physiology and Biochemistry, it is usually applied in the passive sense to mean the transportation of a dissolved substance within an organism. This occurrence is especially in the phloem of a plant or actively across a cell membrane. In Biology, translocation refers to the movement of a portion of a chromosome to a new position on same or another chromosome. Reciprocal and non-reciprocal translocation have been distinguished by Banker and Allen (1971) and Stine (1977).

Translocation is also a germane concept in the discipline of Genetics. Here, it is defined as the process by which a section of chromosome may become detached, and then unites with a different chromosome or a different part of the original chromosome.

Translocation has a twin concept known as inversion. Inversion occurs when the detached section of a chromosome reattaches to the chromosome at the same point. The concept of translocation is also central in the medical analysis of the disease condition known as Down's syndrome. In this specific application, translocation is a type of Down's syndrome in which the extra chromosome 21 material is attached to one of the other chromosomes.

In the social science disciplines translocation has been applied in studies in Social Anthropology. In an article on the "Andaman Islanders" published in the ENCARTA 98 ENCYCLOPEDIA, Banerjee uses the concept of translocation to describe the combination of nomadic and sedentary behaviour exhibited in the Negrito tribes of hunter-gatherers

who live in the Andaman and Microbar Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, part of the Union territory of India. According to Banerjee (1998), the dry and the wet seasons are the major determinants of the translocatory pattern of these tribesmen. In the dry season, they are coastal dwellers and live in clan huts by the sea; in the wet season they become inhabitants of forests.

It may then appear that, basically, translocation is not part of the vocabulary of economics. It may rather be ascribed in the main to the natural and applied sciences. Be that as it may, translocation is being used in this paper to describe the movement in time, from the international economic relations of the nineteenth century to the domestic economic relations of the twenty first century in Nigeria. The former found concrete expression in the scramble for Africa while the latter manifests as the on-going acrimonious contest for resource control, especially in Nigeria's delta region.

Economic Analysis Of The Scramble

The scramble for Africa is dated 1884-85 by historians, including Crowther (1968). It involved formal, round table, protracted discussion involving Britain, France, and Germany, the foremost contenders for the control of the conjointly defined resource, Africa.

Analysis advanced by Nnadi (2004) shows that the dominant calculation of the Europeans was of an economic bias. First, there is the Leninist-Hobson's thesis which propagates the idea that the invasion of Africa politically and economically by European powers was with a view to secure profitable outlet for surplus capital generated by the industrial revolution. Europe had become saturated with capital and a bit unsafe on account of on-going predatory capitalism.

The second economic explanation for the scramble was the need to obtain commercially viable sales outlets for goods and services of European extraction. Campaigns to expand market shares at home had slowed down to snail speed as a result of the inundation of the home market with massive industrial output. Sequel to this, European merchants from France, Britain and Germany, the notorious three, overran the

coastland of West Africa with their wares. The ensuing competition became so intense that sustaining prevailing profit rates became problematic. From this emerged a momentum to forage into the hinterland. No sooner had these foreign merchants got inland than they ran into a head-on collision with native African middlemen whose constituency of expropriation, exploitation and profiteering was now under threat. The resulting mutual suspicion, resentment and rivalry soon provided occasion for conflicts and flashpoints. European firepower turned matters to their advantage in these resource control clashes.

Protectionism, whose eerie spirit was dreaded all the while it hovered at the Berlin conference of 1884-5, a euphemism for the more pejorative phrase, scramble for Africa, was itself a necessitating element for eventual colonization. Protectionism is the policy of adopting tariffs and quotas and other prohibitive practices to restrict trading and reserve captive markets to oneself (Gilpin, 1977; Bannock, Baxter and Rees, 1977). France, in particular, had been exhibiting a mentality conducive to protectionism. To forestall the actual materialization of this situation, colonization was embarked upon.

Thus, the Scramble for Africa was an early case of resource control crisis. The situation of resource control from its earliest form in the scramble for Africa to its present hostage taking, militarized from in the Niger Delta can be depicted as follows:

	Resource Contenders	Resource In Contention
1.	European missionaries of different nationalities in pre-scramble era.	African souls trapped in paganism and animism
2.	European merchants of different nationalities in the scramble era.	African Coastal economies and markets
3.	European merchants and African middlemen in the scramble era.	African hinterland economies and markets
4.	European powers and	Political sovereignty and

	African nationalists in the colonial era.	economic independence
5.	Western capitalism and African middle class in the neo-colonial era	National economies and emergent markets in Africa
6.	National governments and resource host communities in the full independence era	Natural resources, remarkably in the case of Nigeria, petroleum

The Nigerian Resource Control Crisis

The resource control crisis in Nigeria is not the only such case in the world. In the United States there is currently raging a resource control problem on the issue of Indian Reservations - tracts of land set aside for the use or ownership of particular native American tribes. As some reservations include rich deposits of coal, uranium, natural gas and oil, the controversy is whether the tribes or the government should control access to these resources. What has elevated the Nigerian case to a notoriety of spectacular dimensions is the phenomenon of hostage - taking, involving a full miniaturization of both the personnel and process. This aspect of violence that is now threatening national unity is actually of recent origin.

The ancestry of the resource control problem in Nigeria can be traced to 1914 when the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated. According to Nnadi and Falodun (2003), the South, which had been fiscally self-reliant from duties on spirits, nearly suffered fiscal strangulation when, following the amalgamation, custom duties were transferred to the central government. The state of affairs degenerated in 1939 when the South was divided into Eastern and Western provinces. It was alleged that the East contributed least to the central pool but claimed the most from it.

The widespread discontent occasioned by these issues led to the emergence of the attitude that regions, states or provinces should control their own resources. But, given the uneven endowment of different parts of the country with natural resources and, therefore, income generating

capability, it was felt that such an atmosphere of laissez faire will give rise to serious developmental disparities in the long-run, which will be detrimental to national economic integration and political unity. To redress the situation, revenue allocation commissions and committees have been used over the years to limit problems within manageable proportions.

But the committees and their recommendations have been causative to a lot of resource control polemics themselves. The first of these fiscal commissions - the Phillipson Commission of 1946, tacitly recognized the resource control tussle under the terminology of "derivation", as did its successor, the Hicks Phillipson Commission (1951). The Chick Commission of 1953 blatantly and overly attributed 100% of mining rents and royalties to their regions of origin, in a bid to redress national injuries inflicted by the resource control combatants.

Economically viable deposits of oil were first discovered in Nigeria in 1956, while the first export shipment took place in 1958 (Nnadi, 1997). Just then, the Raismans Commission (1958) sowed the seed of discord whose major fruit is the on-going fierce resource control face-off. The commission reassigned 30% of mining rent and royalties to the Distributable Pool Account, fiscal ancestor of today's Federation Account, at a time these monies were both becoming significant in proportions and strategic to the fiscal survival of host regions and communities. The deprivation worsened when the Binns Commission attributed 35% of mining rents and royalties to the Distributable Pool Account. From 1967 to 1977 revenue allocation was by military decrees which totally disregarded the feeling of host communities of the petroleum resources on which national life had almost come to be totally dependent.

Meanwhile, as the deprivations increased, the feeling of cheating and discontent kept rising in the Delta areas, domicile of the Nigerian oil industry. This grievance snowballed into agitations, which found expression in many violent outbursts and explosions. As the flashpoints

proliferated, turning Delta areas into a ring of fire, the federal government inaugurated some mitigating measures.

One such bold measure was the creation of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 with an initial capital of N3.7 billion (Nnamocha, 2002). In 1999, this was replaced with the Niger Delta Development Commission. Then, in 2002, government conceded 13 percent of revenue from mining rents and royalties to the eight oil-producing states, to be shared on derivation basis. Further progress took place in 2003 with the abolition of the onshore – offshore dichotomy to the benefit of the littoral states. It is regrettable that even the dichotomy abolition law is currently being challenged in the courts by a coalition of all nineteen northern states and three southwestern states. Yet, it remains true that, as far as the resource control issue is concerned, "aluta continua" - the struggle continues.

CONCLUSION

The phrase 'resource control' is a dubious phenomenon in the current political vocabulary of Nigeria. Most Nigerians recognize it as the factor at the bottom - line of the acts of aggression meted out to operators of the upstream sector of the Nigerian oil industry in the eight oil producing states traversing the south east, south - south and south - west geopolitical zones of the country.

The protagonists of the crisis consider it as a liberation struggle, a two-pronged effort both on the political and the coercive fronts to free their God-given resources from undue exploitation and devastation by non-natives to the detriment and systematic impoverishment of the natives. The antagonists, on the opposite side of the divide, see the resource control agitation as being orchestrated by a parochial and self serving class who must be subdued, if need be, by sheer military and armed intimidation.

The paper has presented the matter as not being of contemporary origin, but rather, with historical antecedents traceable back to the Scramble for Africa, an epochal resource control phenomenon in its own

right . The conclusion which follows from the analysis which borrowed heavily from an analytical framework located. in the natural sciences, is that the on-going resource control palaver is a translocation of the historical Scramble for Africa.

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