

STORIES FOR CHILDREN, HISTORIES OF CHILDHOOD
HISTOIRES D'ENFANT, HISTOIRES D'ENFANCE

Coordonné par Rosie Findlay et Sébastien Salbayre

The place of the child and childhood in our culture and his/her legal status is a subject which touches a sensitive nerve and triggers passionate responses just as much at the start of the 21st century as it did two hundred years ago. Curious then to note that the academic study of childhood had long been neglected by social historians while its literature, with a few notable exceptions, had too often been relegated to a minor category when not simply dismissed as "pulp fiction". Over the last two decades or so pioneering research has begun to redress this balance and paved the way towards a reappraisal of the child and childhood as a valid field of study. At the same time, by highlighting the areas which still require exploration, it has underlined the distance we still have to cover in order to achieve a balanced integration of both the child and childhood into the social and cultural "story" of our past. It is hoped that the papers published here will, in their own modest way, contribute to this ongoing process of replacing the child inside a culture which proudly claims to have created the golden age of childhood.

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TOME I - CIVILISATION

Textes réunis et édités par Rosie FINDLAY et Sébastien SALBAYRE

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GROWING UP IN PAINS: CHILDHOOD RUPTURES AND CRISES IN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION:

Production and reproduction are two essential perquisites necessary for the continued existence of every human society. While production is concerned with the provision of the material variables required by man for subsistence and mastership over the environment, reproduction, on the other hand, is the biological production of the human elements that are the essence of society and the reason for production. The fact that the two are mutually reinforcing cannot be over-emphasized.

The organization of social production differs from place to place. Social organization of production is not *prima facie* given, rather, it is a function of the power structure in society, and with globalization, it is to a very large extent conditioned by the global social relations of production, that is, the position occupied by individual countries in the global power network, and the relative strengths of the domestic ruling class in relation to international corporate capital.

Countries are both producers and consumers. However, there are differences in the preponderances of their productive or consumerist orientations. While some are largely producers of technological goods, others are conditioned to producing primary goods all depending on their relative positions in the international division of labour. This has implications for nation's power or powerlessness, independent or dependent status. Hence, the organization of social production within a state, and the pattern of insertion of a state in the global capitalist economy, has serious implications not only on the reproduction of the human elements in a state, but more importantly, on the qualitative development of the human elements, especially children, who are naturally powerless

and dependent on the social positions of their parents, and the welfare profile of the state in which they are citizens.

The last two decades in Nigeria have witnessed the progressive immiseration, pauperization, disempowerment, and underdevelopment of the state and the Nigerian people is saying the obvious. The militarization of the polity, bad leadership, corruption, privatization of the state, and the ascendancy of neo-liberalist developmental ideology are part of the reasons for this negative development. The greatest victims of this situation are children; defined as persons between the age of 0 and 18 years, who are victims of child abuse and neglect, child labour, child sexual abuse, child trafficking, illiteracy, and a host of other negative conditions.

There is a sense in which it can be said that there is a parallel between economic crisis of the state and childhood disempowerment and underdevelopment.¹ With the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, a common practice is for parents to depend on their supposed dependants, that is, children, for survival. This has led to the increased cases of out-of-school children, child hawkers, child prostitution, child sexual abuses, area-boys and girls, child enslavement as houseboys and housegirls, early marriages, child criminals and drug addicts.²

Children, as Babawale³ opines: "constitute a vulnerable segment of the population since they have no means of cushioning themselves against the negative effects of the underdevelopment of the state." It is to this end that we argue that childhood crises and ruptures are part of the crisis and contradictions of the Nigerian state.

In the rest of this paper we shall explicate how the contradictions and crises of the Nigerian state, leadership crisis, and the underdevelopment of the productive forces contributed to the childhood pains and ruptures in Nigeria. We shall also proffer suggestions on how to deal with the situation.

THEORETICAL PARADIGM:

Our point of departure in this paper is the political economy theoretical framework. This modality of social theorizing has a number of heuristic advantages. First, it examines the role of power in the production, distribution and exchange. This entails the study of social relations and social outcomes in greater details, vis-à-vis their

¹ Amele, 1991: 125-133; Fadahunsi, 1993: 47; NPC and UNICEF, 2001.

² Momoh, 2000; Vanguard, 2004; Nwanna, 2005; ILO, 2005.

³ 1999:3.

historical trajectory, evaluates them according to the standard of political justice, and helps to bring about a more just and democratic world. Second, political economy also encompasses the conflicts that arise over who benefits from control over state resources, in this way, it examines the relationships between social classes, and how the market shapes power exchanges between classes, both within the domestic economy and the global context (Mosco, 2003: www.carleton.ca/~vmosco/vm).

What these point to is the potential of political economy to critically analyze power, and its uses and manifestations as public policies and actions within a state. As Ryndina (1985) opines, "political economy penetrates deep into processes and policies, lay bare their essence and then explain concrete forms of their manifestations in every day life". This informs Momoh and Hundeyin's submission:

Political economy relates the macroscopic to the microscopic and the objective to the subjective, it comes to terms with the complexity of relations or the forms that characterize society in a self-consistent manner.

This assists in analytically distilling the character of social production, and how the state and its processes allocate wealth and values from such social production relations authoritatively. In a sense it becomes possible to determine "who gets what, when and how of society's limited resources."

That the Nigerian state project has run into problems in the last two decades is saying the obvious. This crisis of statehood has its internal and external dimensions. A proper understanding of the nature and character of this crisis and its implications for childhood developmental problems and survival chances require a contextualization within the parameters of the political economy framework; first for the possibilities it accords us to historicize our theory and theorize our history, and second, for its utility in enabling us to discover the interplay of forces that inform the historical condition under analysis.

THE NIGERIAN STATE: THE ANATOMY OF CRISIS:

The 1980s to date have been years of profound crisis for the Nigerian state. This crisis which has a deep historical origin also has

⁴ 1999:54

internal as well as external contours. It is the historical context and the dynamics of power play in this historical contestations and how these interfaces shaped the nature and character, as well as the crisis and contradictions of the Nigerian state that is our concern in this section of the paper.

The Nigeria state is a project of British colonialism capitalism. Contrary to the civilizing mission thesis by the colonialists, colonialism was a product of capitalist crisis, and *ipso facto* an accumulative project. The integration of the Nigerian economy into the global capitalist network, was not only unfairly done, it was highly distorted and incomplete⁵. Not only was the capitalist mode of production done half-heartedly, the existing traditional and pre-capitalist mode of production was destroyed in a systemic manner, making way for the dominance of foreign capital and capitalist relations of production in Nigeria. The exploitation and appropriation of the resources and wealth of an unwilling people by a foreign power cannot be achieved within democratic parameters. This informs Ake (2001) submission that: "the power of the colonial state was not only absolute but arbitrary, both in practice and in principle."

Therefore, colonial rule in Nigeria, like elsewhere, entails authoritarian rule, the disempowerment of the people, the integration of the Nigerian economy into the global capitalist system as a producer of primary products and a dependent peripheral country. Further implications include the disarticulation and deindustrialization of the domestic economy, the centralization of foreign capital in the economic processes, the expropriation and disempowerment of peasant from their means production thus engendering the proletarianization of the peasant population. The creation of a class of elite subservient to western capitalist interests, the hegemony of western developmental ideology, the underdevelopment of productive forces, and finally, the fragmentation of the society along ethnic lines through the policy of divide-and-rule, which foreclosed the possibilities of class alliance and state transformation even after independence (Ake, 1981), are other fallout of colonialism in Nigeria.

The net effect of the above process was the impoverishment of the Nigerian people, the low development of entrepreneurial class or a national bourgeoisie class, the development of an elite lacking in the control of the means of production, and the alienation of the state

⁵ Williams and Turner, 1980:73.

from development of the citizens. The state played a pivotal role in the accumulative and predatory activities of the colonial regime, thus underscoring its centrality and the *desideratum* of power became as a foremost resource for the domestic elite⁶. For instance, the state ensured that capitalist production reduced the development of peasant and petty commodity production. As Williams (1981: 46) opines, "the transfer by the state of resources from agriculture and the rural economy to itself and to capitalist production and the urban economy reduces the returns on rural labour and investment, which impoverishes farmers and encourages the transfer of private resources, including skills, from the rural to the urban economy". Williams (1981) further declared: "capitalist development is parasitical on peasant and petty commodity production. Control of state policy and relations of exchange enable capitalists to determine the conditions of production of peasant and petty producers".

The struggle for independence in Nigeria was a subverted project. What happened at independence was the transfer of power by the colonialist to the most trusted of the competing Nigerian elite. At independence, the colonial state and its decadent institutions were left intact, and continued to be used as before. To this end, independence for Nigeria evidenced changes without change. It was largely ceremonial and symbolic, without substantial or concrete transformation of relations of power, and the character of the state and its relations with both the domestic population and the international power arrangements. Given the organic alliance of the succeeding elite as domestic representatives of foreign capitalist interests, the arrangement was never contested.

Consequently, the state usage as an instrument of oppression, exploitation, disempowerment, immiseration, and pauperization continued to be reinforced. As a result of these conditions and the deliberate use of the pretense of development as a tool for the consolidation of exploitative capitalist social relations of production, the oppressive hegemony of foreign capital, and the desperate needs of the domestic ruling elite to build their own material bases through primitive capitalist accumulation, the people became progressively disempowered, demobilized, alienated, and divided.

According to Ihonvbere⁷:

⁶ Ihonvbere, 1999; Ekeke, 1986.

⁷ 1999:3

The character of the Nigerian state continues to be directly responsible for reproducing the country's deepening socio-economic and political contradictions. In fact, the state seems to worsen the country's predicaments with every policy action or inaction it initiates or fails to initiate in the process of trying to consolidate the interests of its custodians. The state has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians, ensure some discipline within the ranks of the elite, manage the economy in the interest of the people, or construct the much needed platforms for inclusion, tolerance, and participation.

Babawale⁸ also puts it more perceptively:

The Nigerian post-colonial state was thus characterized by structural imperfections such as a mono-cultural economy, a weak and productive but comprador bourgeoisie and an economy oriented towards the external market, lacking internal stimulus for growth. These characteristics became endemic causes of instability as the state which presides over the allocation of values becomes an arena of class struggle and inter-elite conflicts

Our thesis in this respect, is that, the non-neutrality of the state in the class struggle, the impossibility of social transformation, the disempowerment and impoverishment of the masses are logical outflow of the nature and character of the state, and the orientation of its managers. To this end, we argue that the developmental transformation of the state, the empowerment of the people, the eradication of poverty, and the ordering of the relationship of the Nigerian state in the global capitalist division of labour is understandably not a programmatic agenda of Nigerian state managers since it is antithetical to their organic interests. This, we contend, is at the root of the crisis which leads to generalized poverty, high level corruption, nepotism, inflation, underdevelopment of the nation's productive forces, political violence, ethnic conflicts, diseases, squalor, and other social anomie, which characterized the first few years after the nation's post-independence era, ultimately leading to the intervention of the military.

The military intervention on 15th January 1966 turned out to be a class action to prevent the Nigerian state from being hijacked by

⁸ 1996:22

revolutionary elements and people centered leadership. Military rule not only failed to resolve the crisis of the Nigerian state, it complicated and compounded the contradictions. Neo-colonialism became entrenched in Nigeria by a tripod alliance of the military, the political and bureaucratic factions of the Nigerian ruling elite, and foreign capital.

According to Ihonvbere (op. cit):

The military not only concentrated power in itself and the center, but also ensured that the states were reduced to administrative units taking orders from the centre. The excessive centralization of power, resources, and opportunities also encouraged the rise of authoritarianism and other forms of despotic rule, and the negation of democratic values. As well, the personalization of power and resources under the military made possible by the centralization of power and resources at the centre.

The fallout of this was bad governance, reification of violence as a preferred tool of governance, mismanagement, and the institutionalization of a culture of impunity, disregard for constitutionalism, corruption, amongst others. During his inauguration as the civilian President on May 29, 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military Head of State observed that "one of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everyone to see". The discovery of oil and its peculiar modality of production and appropriation exacerbated the phenomenon of corruption in the country.

The oil boom of the period, coupled with the absolute powers of the military and their unity commandist structure facilitated the centralization of resources and expansion of the public sector, and the primitive capitalist accumulation of wealth by the various factions of the Nigerian ruling class. Rather than promoting the development of the Nigerian state and the people, oil has turned out to be more of a curse for the nation. The primary reason for this can be located in the transformation of the country into a rentier state.

Oil has ensured the overdevelopment of the allocative capacity of the Nigerian state⁹, without any corresponding development in productive capacity. In fact, it relegated the issues of

⁹ Obi 2000:206.

the production of the national wealth to a secondary position through the underdevelopment of the productive forces. The need for the development of an enabling environment and technology for production was totally foreclosed. Oil and military rule promoted the politics of allocative and distributive federalism. As such, the politics of allocation is heavily dominated by the rentier nature of oil revenues. It also implies, that 'capacity to allocate', is divorced from control over production, just as it makes the location within, or access to state power a very important issue. This explains the emphasis on politics and power, instead of development. Factional in-fighting amongst the domestic elite, increased development of the coercive machineries of the state was a direct consequence of the advent of oil.

As Mkandawire (2002) rightly notes, the rentier states are much more prone to rebellion than the merchant states. The reason for this is the enclave and exclusivity, which characterized the social system of accumulation which provokes popular resentment and discontent, thus leading to revolt. By implication therefore, the rentier state is *ipso facto* an authoritarian state. This is so because the maintenance of a system of economic exclusion demands the deployment of the coercive powers of the state in order to sustain the system of unjust advantages. It is in this sense that we agree with Bangura (1992: 40): the way production and business activities are organized have implications for the organization of civil society and state power. Authoritarianism and democracy represents opposing modes of regulating conflicts thrown up by the dynamics of accumulation and development.

The rentier state with its characteristic injustice, and disproportionate spatial spread of resources within the context of Nigeria's distributive federalism, evident the institutionalization of what has been described as "competitive modernization"¹⁰. The idea of "competitive modernization" though right to the extent that the different ethnic formations struggle for access and entry to modernization imperatives, it gave the mistaken notion that the struggle is within an open market context of equal strength.

It is for this that we consider Young's (1976:41) concept of "differential modernization" as more appropriate, as it conveys the discriminating nature of the modernization process, and consequently explains the logic of the ethnicity as an equalization formula. The competing ethnic groups perceived one another in this struggle as

¹⁰ Melson and Wolpe, 1979

predators to be violently liquidated. Despite the very rich academic research and publication in the area of ethnicity, no conscious attempt was made to research and problematize the link between the prevalence of ethnicity and underdevelopment in different parts of the country. Ethnic violence not only leads to the destruction of existing infrastructures, it has profound implications for ill-health, the death rate, resource wastages, economic disruptions, political instabilities. In all these crises, children and women are the most vulnerable groups. The ethnic camouflage of the contradictions of the Nigerian state assists the ruling elite in ensuring that the national question in Nigeria continued to be posed by the oppressed as an ethnic question. This not only keeps the masses divided, it ensures that the struggle for social justice becomes problematic.

The fall in the price of oil on the international market exposed the vulnerability of the Nigerian economy, and threw the state into serious balance of payment crisis, such that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was adopted as a bailout formula. SAP involved the devaluation of the national currency, financial and trade liberalization, privatization, withdrawal of the state from the social provisioning, commercialization of education, and the surrendering of the state to the dictate of private capital. In these ways, corporate interests take precedence over the interests of citizens, and profits come before welfare matters. The people were however unable to form a united opposition to the state sponsored exploitation and disempowerment due to the lack of class consciousness and the deliberate ethnicization of social issues amongst the Nigerian people.

Bad leadership and corruption compromise development in a multiple way. They lead to inefficiency in resource allocation, misallocation and waste of care resources, inequality in income distribution, corruption and underdevelopment. Other negative implications on the state include: insecurity, gender injustice and miscarriage of justice, difficulties in property rights enforcement, lack of investors confidence in the economy, bureaucratic delays in service delivery, poor service delivery etc.

The result is increased unemployment and underemployment, inflation, retrenchment, deindustrialization, underutilization of productive capacities, economic stagnation, starvation, poverty, diseases, and illiteracy. As it pertains to the children, this is evident in cases of increased maternal and infant mortality rates, malnutrition, increased death from preventable diseases, ethnic

militia, juvenile delinquencies (Area boys and girls phenomenon, *Yandaba* phenomenon, *Almajerri syndrome*), cultism, child abuse, child trafficking and slavery, sexual perversion and prostitution, increased rates of school dropouts, examination malpractices, advance fee fraud (419), drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, and other criminalities.

CHILDHOOD PAINS AND RUPTURES IN NIGERIA:

As argued above, children are dependent and powerless social categories. Their life chances are dependent on the prosperities or otherwise of their families in particular, and the nation in general. Increased impoverishment of the household therefore has serious developmental implications for children and their survival. The debt profile and the huge amount used for debt servicing the country's debt in the last few years tell the story of the macro-economic crisis of the Nigerian state.

According to UNICEF¹¹:

Over ...16 years period, beginning when the oil bubble of the 1970s began to burst, the proportion of the population living below poverty line (set at N 11, 293 annual per capital expenditure, or about \$1.40 a day, at 1996 prices and exchange rates) rose from 28 to 66 percent in absolute terms, the number of people living in poverty rose during this period from 18 million to 67 million.

The same report has it that malaria accounted for 30% of diseases and deaths among Nigerian children. Similarly, death as a result of vaccine preventable diseases (VPD) 22%, diarrhoea 19%, acute respiratory tract infections (ART) 16%, typhoid fever 3%, malnutrition 2%, others 8%. (UNICEF, 2001). Over 12 million Nigerian children are reported to be out of school¹². According to the International Labour Organization¹³, 15 million Nigerian children are working, and 2 million exposed to very hard labour.

The following survival concerns were identified as key issues with regards to early childhood by the Nations Children Fund¹⁴: rising incidence of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS; very low, though rising, high prevalence of Vitamin A

¹¹ 2001.

¹² *Vanguard*, 2004.

¹³ ILO, 2005.

¹⁴ UNICEF, 2001: iii.

deficiency; high prevalence of stunting and wasting, in the context of large-scale deepening poverty and household food insecurity; high prevalence of sickle cell anaemia. Other survival issues which the report noted include: weak primary healthcare system, with endemic drug shortages, lack of equipment, poor service, and financial barriers to access from poorly designed cost recovery mechanisms. Also important as survival factors are: lack of effective community participation or real decentralization, weak referral linkages to secondary and tertiary care, many overlapping vertical programmes, weak information systems and planning, low national funding and overdependence on donors.

In terms of developmental issues, UNICEF (2001) studies also identify the following: negative impact of nutritional deficiencies and poor health on physical growth and cognitive development; worsening condition of early child care in the home due to the decline of the extended family in urban areas. The increasing involvement of women in the labour force and reduced options of child minding; negative effect of gender differentiation in child-raising and socialization; lack of involvement of fathers in care-raising; lack of books and toys for mental stimulation; and inadequate number and poor quality day care centres and pre-primary schools, high fee, creating barriers for the poor, were part of the problems identified.

Using facts based on the Human Development Report (1996), Onyeonoru¹⁵ notes that: "the state of poverty in Nigeria was related to the cost of living following high inflationary rates and the gross devaluation of the currency under the Structural Adjustments Programme (SAP)". The neo-liberal economic reform led to an increase in inflation rate from 5 % in 1986 to about 45% in 1992, while 1990 real wages had fallen to 40% Onyeonoru (2003). Relying on the Federal Office of Statistics, and using 1995 as the base year, Onyeonoru (2003) further notes, "the annual average price index for all urban centres in Nigeria increased from 113.25 in 1986, to 310.69 in 1989. By 1994, it shot up astronomically to 1,282.40. The rural areas experienced similar inflationary pressure". Let us add that the situation between 1999 and 2005 has been worse.

Nigeria's unconscious embrace of globalization has seriously compounded its developmental problems, and heightened the contradictions between the state and the people. Globalization has not only limited social production and consumption, it has also

¹⁵ 2003.

created a condition whereby the surplus generated within the domestic economy is not invested, but goes out of the country through capital flight and bogus payments, thus aggravating the poverty situation in the country.

A major fall-out of this state and globalization-induced poverty nexus is commercial sex work amongst Nigerian girls. Nigeria has become a major exporter of sex workers to many European countries, such as Italy, Germany and France. These countries have benefited from the services of Nigerian commercial sex workers who are often lured into the business with fantastic offers, but end up in servitude and bondage. According to Onyeonuru (2003) there are about 20,000 Nigerian girls engaged in commercial sex in Italy, with about 3,000 in Turin alone! These commercial sex workers, who are mostly adolescent girls, are in this business through the active collaboration of their parents. Evidence from Nwanna (2005) on child trafficking shows the active collaboration of parents and care-givers. Most of the girls trafficked end as child prostitutes. The figures of young girls in our various higher institutions engaged in this sex-work is also on the increase, while the rate of street children and child labour has equally quadrupled.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the youths no longer have confidence and trust in their leaders, and begin to take their destiny into their own hands. Having been nurtured under military authoritarianism, and the desperate need for survival under serious economic conditions, force, violence and militaristic orientation began to inform the response of Nigerian youth, from Lagos to Odi, Kano to Ondo, Kaduna to Sagamu, Umuleri-Aguleri to Taraba, Aba to Zango-Kataf, Ife-Modakeke to Warri, to their perceived oppression, marginalization, hopelessness, unemployment, deprivation, and exploitation. This has had serious implications of childhood lives and development.

The commercialization of education, which saw many children and youths out of school, coupled with the lack of recreational facilities amongst others, has led the youths into a life of crime, prostitution, drugs, cultism, etc. Youth restlessness in Nigeria has increased due to: total lack of infrastructural facilities, marginalization and exclusion of youth in development programmes, lack of honest programme of economic empowerment, bad leadership, reforms without social net, unemployment, increased poverty and hopelessness.

As Momoh¹⁶ counsels the "Area boys and girls" phenomenon in Lagos, rather than criminalized should be understood as part of the social and ideological contradictions of class politics played out in the urban context. In a similar study, Ya'u (2000:182 – 199) sees the *Yandaba* identity in Kano, as a product of the economic crisis in the country. Ya'u's characterization of the *Yandaba* is that of adolescence gangs opposing social backgrounds, which they find repulsive. They are also involved in violent group activities against individuals perceived, however vaguely, as being responsible for their situation (some children of rich parentage have now joined). They live mostly on the fringe of society, spending most of their time in theft.

As he further notes, their lifestyle is typically that of a strong group solidarity "as each is ready to sacrifice everything, including his/her life in defense of (or revenge for) others. They have deep aversion to formal authorities. To underscore this aversion to, or their rejection of formal authorities, they adopt a street culture of using drugs, gambling and sex" (Ya'u, 2000).

Interestingly, both the area boys and girls and the *Yandaba* phenomenon in Lagos and Kano respectively share similar characteristics: they have political origins, they are anti-establishment, they deploy violent tactics, they underline counter-cultural tendencies, they operate on society's fringe, they are mostly youths who are unemployed, disempowered, frustrated and seek revenge against what they perceived as an irresponsible society. Both have been criminalized by society. Paradoxically, as Ya'u (2000:189) notes:

The irony is that the logic of criminality gave the *Yandaba* fresh impetus to the violence they unleash on society as they try to protect their space and autonomy. Because the police are ruthless with them when caught, they became more ruthless with their victims. Their daring acts and ability to "outsmart" the law-enforcement agencies made the *Yandaba* identity a major attraction to the increasing number of unemployed drop-outs who found in the *Yandaba* activities the possibility to live an adventurous life and take their revenge on society that has failed to provide a decent living for them.

¹⁶ 2000:203.

Ya'u (2000) also notes that the dividing line between the *Yandaba* and other criminals is fast disappearing as *Yandaba* venture into other criminal activities. The emergence of the Bakassi boys in the East, the Egbesu boys of Africa in the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, also in the Niger Delta Areas, and the Odu'a Peoples Congress (OPC), all known for their violent enterprises was not unconnected with inadequacies and failure of the state in Nigeria and the impoverishment of the Nigerian society, especially the children and youths by the logic of globalization and the preeminence of an irresponsible state. These factors have combined to promote in the youth a revolution of "rising expectation and rising frustration". The good life, which they see on the Internet and television reinforces this frustration and provokes drastic reactions against the state and society, especially given the fact that Nigeria's is a case of the paradox of poverty in an ocean of wealth.

A more elaborate articulation of the linkage of globalization to all these crises is important at this point. We shall presently demonstrate how globalization interpenetrates, reinforces and consolidates the crisis of the state and compound the material conditions of the youth, which engenders militaristic, anti-social, and untraditional tendencies.

At the political level, globalization has ensured the weakening of the state, while promoting the hegemony of the market. It is in this sense that globalization ensures the worldwide institutionalization of commercial hegemony of the corporate behemoths through the preponderance of market forces and the relegation of governments in areas of critical decisions.

As Hertz¹⁷ observes:

It is a world in which, as we see, corporations are taking over from the state, the businessman becoming more powerful than the politician, and commercial interests are paramount.... Protest is fast becoming the only way of affecting the policies and controlling the excesses of corporate activity.

As she further notes, "market gained at the expense not only of politics but also of democracy. Politicians offer only one solution; a system based on laissez faire economics, the culture of consumerism, the power of finance and free trade. They try to sell it in varying shades of blue, red or

¹⁷ 2001; 3-4.

yellow but it is still a system in which the corporation is king, the state its subject, its citizen's consumers. A silent nullification of the social contract¹⁸."

Nowhere is the above qualification more perceptive and relevant than Nigeria. From what we have said in the foregoing pages concerning the status of the Nigerian state as an authoritarian and unresponsive state, the subjection of the state, hitherto dependent and subservient to foreign capital, to the overwhelming dictate of corporations, has serious but negative implications for the Nigerian state, and has compounded the childhood ruptures and crises in Nigeria.

The implications of economic globalization are not in the least worrisome. Given its logic rooted in market fundamentalism; liberalization, deregulation and privatization, not only are pro-poor policies jettisoned, the state is deliberately being privatized and the competitiveness of the people drastically reduced when faced with products and services from industrialized countries with better technology and production advantages. Referring to a recent study of poverty by the World Bank in Nigeria, Tomori et al¹⁹ identifies the youth as an important segment of the society that are seriously affected by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). As Tomori et al (2001) further notes:

The contraction of national resource base and opportunities has meant that enough resources are not available for commitment to youth development. The inadequacies have impaired the ability of youths to realize their full potentials in recent times. The inadequacies led to manifestations such as: marginalization and under funding of educational institutions and other social amenities; poor or lack of standard recreational facilities; and contraction or lack of employment opportunities.

The sad thing is that the primary areas that are affected by the imperative of globalization and the crisis of the state are areas that directly affect the well-being of children and youths: education, sports, social development, etc. Given the youth propensities for innovativeness, restlessness and flexibility, they found space for self-

¹⁸ Hertz, 2001: 4-5.

¹⁹ 2001: 119.

expression within the parameters of social globalization. Unfortunately, this zone is laced with highly destructive landmines if not regulated.

The paradox of social globalization in Nigeria is that it gives hope for youth embedded in a hopeless environment, by providing an easy escape from the daily existential reality of oppression, exploitation, disempowerment, unemployment, underemployment and exclusion. Each day, thousands of Nigerian youth queue up at the gates of foreign embassies looking for visas. Some others are perpetually logged-on on the Internet browsing pornographic sites, chatting with faceless people, sending scam (419) mails, searching for partners from rich and developed countries, watching violent films, and football matches, and engaging in numerous but negative activities that would make them forget or overcome their precarious existence. Only a very negligible number are engaged in purposeful use of the Internet and other globalization media to tap from the knowledge economy it represents.

All these are not without serious cost. One of the implications of the unprotected embrace of globalization is the ascendancy of materialistic and individualistic values, as against the communal and solidaristic values which characterized Nigeria's traditional societies. The flow of new products and services reinforced with mega-advertisement continue to engender unnecessary wants and demands, leading to further complications of the foreign exchange crisis of the country. The good life and western images and values with which the globalization medium bombarded our youth daily, has seriously affected the morals and the entire social fabric. Our girls now dress naked in public, just as sex, usually an African taboo, has not only been demystified, but has become an open business engaged in with reckless abandon.

Nigerian girls are shown all over the world through the Internet in sexual orgy with expatriate oil workers in the oil rich Niger Delta who easily lure them with dollars. Gone are the days that the family plays a meaningful role in the choice of the future partners of their wards; it is now more fashionable to scan pictures on the Internet in a shameless global advertisement for dollar-rich partners. The implications of this would wait till the future to manifest. Lest we forget, the villages have become emptied of young and able-bodied men who can work on the farms. They have all left for the cities in search of the good life. Consequently, the cities are now faced with serious food crises; many people are dying of starvation

and malnutrition. With the city-migrants meeting with disappointments in the cities, they have turned to a life of crime.

Social globalization has not achieved the homogenization of the world; it may in fact not achieve that, there is no denying the fact that globalization constitutes American cultural imperialism. Globalization has consequently created an involuntary cultural dependency and hegemony given the skewed power of the media in the favour of the countries of the north, especially America. This became more germane given the commoditization of culture.

While it is true that Nigeria due to its technological backwardness still has a very low cyber-density, its television density is enormous. There is hardly any household, especially in the urban areas without a television set. Even in the rural areas, possession of television set is a status symbol. The combined effects of audio-visuals have made television an unrivalled popular media of choice for entertainment, information, relaxation and education.

As Baker²⁰ notes: "the television is unrivalled by any medium in terms of the volume of cultural texts it produces and the sheer size of its audiences." The transnationalization of television under the regime of globalization and the advancement in telecommunication technology has profound cultural implications for developing countries like Nigeria, that are predominantly consumers of the outputs of such media like: CNN, BBC, Skynews, Supersport, Fashion TV, Discovery, Cartoon Network, Magic Movies, Channel O, etc.

The competition is so strong that even local television stations, in order to survive and retain their audience, mostly children and youth, have been forced to restructure their own programming, giving prominence to foreign programmes. We are reminded by Baker (2003) that television under the globalization imperative is; (a) a question of technology, economics, institutions, and culture; and that, (b) the globalization of television is an aspect of the dynamic expansionist logic of capitalism in the quest for new commodities and market; television is a tool of cultural imperialism.

While arguments have been canvassed concerning the fact that television does not have homogenous impact on all audiences, that is, the messages are mediated, deconstructed and reconstructed against individual socio-cultural orientations, we must remember that the audience is largely children and youth; highly impressionistic, adventurous, daring, flexible, excitable, bored, and in the process of

²⁰ 2003.

being formed and battling with serious identity crisis peculiar to their age. In the same vein, as Baker (2000) perceptively argues: (a) meanings are bounded by the way the text is structured and by the domestic and cultural context of the viewing; (b) the processes of meaning construction and the place of television in the routines of daily life differ from culture to culture and in terms of gender and class within the same cultural community.

In Nigeria, the television is a tool for intermediation between alienated and disempowered masses, on the one hand, and their rulers, on the other hand. People get to know what is happening in government and the country mostly through television. Given the state's withdrawal of subsidies in tandem with the conditions of globalization, resulting in unemployment and other related problems already discussed, the television has been transformed into an important theatre for entertainment, a school for education, a stadium and club house for recreation, and finally, a library for information. The possibility and simplicity of dominating the lives of people have not been so real. With the commercial orientation of television and the desperation of corporate managers to make more profit, messages, images, goods and services with potential negative cultural values are aired daily with the concomitant negative effects on children and youth socialization. This is possible because the heterogeneous pleasures and representations of contemporary urban life are increasingly derived from a growing electronic culture. (Baker, 2003: 307)

It is now possible given the unlimited flows of images, sounds, news and information to live a highly individualistic and dissociated life, contrary to the communal living that defines the African cultural space, and yet not be bored or lonely. Voices, images, sounds, ideas, games, colours, news, from countless television, Internet and telecommunications are ever-present companions. (Castell, 1985:34 cited in Baker, 2003: 370).

From the foregoing articulation, children and youths are no doubt the victims of the underdevelopment and crisis of the Nigerian state. There powerlessness is further compounded by the imperative of globalization, which has not led to the privatization of the state, but exposes children and youths to many things, which though harmless on the surface, has the potential of negatively affecting their physiological, socio-cultural, and psychological development.

THE WAY FORWARD:

First, the need to restructure and transform the state in Nigeria, as it is presently constituted should be topmost on any agenda serious about improving on the existential conditions of the Nigerian children and youths. In this respect, the ongoing reform programme, which is informed by an anti-people development agenda, should be stopped. The privatization programme, which is designed to accelerate the debt repayment, rather than ensuring increased productivity need a serious breathe. Purposive programmes that with breath life into the productive sectors and deemphasize politics and power in place of development and people should be put in place. Second, there is a need to transit from the era of electoralism to popular democracy. People should be the foundation of government. In other words, urgent attention must be given to the need to mobilize, empower, and reintegrate the people as the central concern of governance. Power must be derived from the people, and the youth must be involved in decisions that will impact on their future.

Third, the pervasive corruption which has come to define Nigeria and its people must be fought with all seriousness, and this cannot be achieved when the rule of law and constitutionalism are sacrificed at the altar of political considerations. Fourth, the over-reliance on oil, and the injustices associated with revenue allocation must be redressed. Similarly, the country must invest in research and development, with the objective of having domestic control of the instrument of labour and reduction of its dependence on the west. This would effectively reduce poverty, unemployment, diseases, idleness, malnutrition, and assist in the general empowerment of the youth.

A deliberate attempt to invent a developmental state in Nigeria is a categorical imperative. The point here is that the state has a central role to play in the development of Nigeria and its people. This role cannot be left to the corporate capitalists, domestic or international. As Stiglitz (2002) pointed out:

Government can, and has, played an essential role not only in mitigating these market failures but also in ensuring *social justice*. Market processes may, by themselves, leave many people with few resources to survive. In countries that have been successful, in the United States and East Asia, government has performed these roles and

performed them for the most part, reasonably well.
(Emphasis original).

The idea behind the reengineering of the state is to make it productive and very competitive. As noted by Babawale and Odukoya (2004:89):

For the economy to be competitive, it must be transformed into a modern economy characterized by:

Effective infrastructure and utilities;

A stable exchange rate regime and enhanced capacity utilization in manufacturing industries;

A repudiation of some of the country's questionable external debts and declaration of a moratorium on external debt servicing;

An urgent but coordinated nation-wide programme of poverty reduction and employment;

The immediate adoption of a socio-economic development programme paradigm that would put people's welfare first;

A greater concentration on the non-oil sector for revenue generation.

With the reengineering of the Nigerian state by a developmental oriented state leadership, the development and empowerment of children and youth are possible, and their resocialization of the Nigerian can commence in earnest. Nigerian's would be lovable, and there would be no need to sermonize concerning the need to love them. It is when this has been done creditably well that Nigeria given a strong economy, patriotic and loyal citizenry, virile youth and civil society, coupled with a focused and committed leadership, can determine and negotiate the conditions of its insertion and participation in globalization. At this stage, it would equally be possible for Nigeria and other countries in the developing world to cooperate and collaborate to redress the imbalance that has come to characterize globalization.

While the action of the Federal Government in passing a Child Rights Act is highly commendable, the mechanisms for popularizing and implementing this all-important legislation must as a matter of priority be put in place. The validation of this legislation should cover the whole country. The argument that State Houses of Assemblies must domesticate the Act to be operative in their state is contrary to the Constitution of the country. When there is a conflict between the laws of the Federation, and that of any parts thereof, on issues on which they have concurrent legislative competence, that

pass by the centre shall prevail. The civil society has an important role to play in this regard.

Civil society activism in the area of child rights and social provisioning for the family, through campaigns and support for the right to work, adequate housing, the right to health, the right to a liveable environment, and education. However, for all this to work, corruption has to be confronted more seriously. In this way, deliberate action at sanctioning corrupt officials, so that the disproportionate rate between the cost and benefits of corruption can serve as a deterrent to people.

Democracy should also be used as an instrument for social mobilization, popular participation and empowerment. To this end, democracy must transcend multiparty electoral system and power, and become people centered, and developmentally oriented. In this regard, what is required is democracy of empowerment, and not the market based democracy that is presently being inspired by the international financial intermediaries, that is, the World Bank and the International Monetary Funds (IMF).

Constitutionalism, rule of law, accountability, justice, and people should be the guiding principle of governance. This would mean the involvement of civil society as developmental partners, and the relegitimation of the state, by its deliberate and purposive faithfulness to the social contract with the people. This is an agenda for state reconstruction. Finally, children and youth, given the fact that they are the resources and social capital for a purposeful tomorrow must be accorded a central position in national planning and developmental policies.

CONCLUSION:

In this paper we have critically analyzed the existential conditions of the child in the context of the crisis and contradictions of the dependent capitalist state in Nigeria. We argued that in the last two decades the conditions of children and youths reflected the underdevelopment, crisis and contradictions of the Nigerian state, leading to the increased cases of child abuse and neglect, child prostitution, sexual abuse, malnutrition, increased death from preventable diseases, increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, drugs and substance abuse, area boys and girls phenomenon, urban violence, and a host of other developmental problems. We also made some suggestions concerning the transformation of the Nigerian economy, and the relegitimation of

the state, and ultimately the empowering and engendering the life chance of Nigerian children.

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