

Political Elitism: Obstacle to or Opportunity for Socio-Economic Expansion and Total Independence of Africa? The Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract: The failure of most African states to achieve their total independence forms a remarkable theme in the post-colonial globalisation debate. Critics reflect how globalisation has benefited the first world countries through the burden of their capitalist free market economic system coupled with state capture cases by multinational corporations and the policies of the institutions of Bretton Woods to the detriment of under-developed countries. Although all African countries have accessed their political independences, it is a fact that their social and economic expansion and their total independence are yet to be materialised. This paper, refers to the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo to observe that, at international level, Africa is a victim of the current westernised globalisation and that, political elitism has been an obstacle – rather than an opportunity for the attainment of socio-economic expansion and total independence. Using an exploratory and conceptual research approach, the paper reviews the elitist paradigm and the elite theory and analyses the characteristics of the African political elites with regard to their political and socio-economic development roles as well as their relationship with the masses. Through public an administration research methodology, the paper proposes a conceptual understanding of political elitism to guide a conclusive research on how African political elites can facilitate the socio-economic and total independence of Africa for the continent to equally enjoy the rewards of globalisation as the developed nations.

Keywords: African political elites, Democratic Republic of Congo, Elite theory, Elitism, Political elites, Socio-economic expansion, Total independence

1. Introduction

Understanding the complexity of the political, social and economic independence or the total liberation of Africa is difficult and confusing for various reasons. A simplistic way of theorising the possibility of a total independence of Africa revolves around a vicious circle of interdependent relationships between the newly independent states and their former colonisers through globalisation in one hand, and between the governors (mostly the elite class) and the governed (communities or people or masses) through the political and governance systems within the independent states in the other hand. Considering globalisation as the political, cultural, social and economic behaviour across nations and the changes they shape worldwide, it is important to argue that, in order to actively participate in and benefit from globalisation, African states need to build and sustain strong and competitive political and governance systems and structures. Political elitism is therefore assumed to be a key facilitator of strong and competitive political and governance systems that can facilitate political,

social and economic expansion and active participation of Africa in the global market.

Although the elite theory is important, it presents a dilemma for its effective application in Africa. This paper notes that, in Africa, the unequal relationship between the elite class and the citizenry impacts negatively on democracy and consequently on socio-economic development. Taking into account the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the paper agrees with Walker (1966), who insinuates that democratic systems rely on the relationship between the wisdom, loyalty and skills of the elite class, or the political leaders or entrepreneurs who possess ideological commitments and manipulative skills; and the average citizen's inadequacies whereby the large, apolitical passive and inert class of masses or citizens or followers who have little knowledge and are less interested in knowing how public affairs are run.

This paper is based on the assumption that, traditionally, a stable democracy was the consequence of an agreement among the politically active citizenry

and their governors on certain fundamental policies and basic values, and widespread acceptance of democratic procedures and restraints on political activity (Walker, 1966). However, in analysing the characteristics of elites through four crucial epochs of the development process of the DRC (colonial era, the post-independence dictatorship dispensation, the neo-colonialism or western interference period and the current failed post-dictatorship transition), it is correct to affirm that in the DRC, political elitism has failed both democracy and socio-economic expansion. The prevalence of a dichotomy between ideological commitments and manipulative skills of the elites – most of which defend their personal and the foreign interests; and the consequent inadequacies of the large apolitical, passive and inert citizens accentuate the domination of the elite class. Walker (1966) contends that political leaders would not violate the basic consensus, or “democratic mould,” if they wished to be successful in gaining their objectives, because once these fundamental restraints were fragmented the otherwise passive public would become aroused and would organise against their offending leaders.

In most African countries, as is the case of the DRC, the manipulative skills of the elite class have not yet been tested by public resistance. Thus, the need to understand political elitism, transform the current African political elites and groom active and resilient citizenry to hold the transformed elite class responsible in implementing democratic systems that favour social and economic development. This paper is therefore a preliminary exploratory and conceptual research on elitist paradigm, elite theory and a profiling of African political elites in order to guide a complete and conclusive investigation on feasible recommendations for a positive contribution of both the African political elites and their citizenry in fostering socio-economic expansion and total independence of the continent.

2. Research Process

This paper is the result of an exploratory and conceptual process. It is a preliminary exploration of a yet to happen comprehensive and conclusive investigation on African political elites and their role in fostering socio-economic expansion and total independence of African nations. For Sandhursen (2000), the difference between an exploratory and a conclusive research is that the outcomes of an exploratory research are a range of causes

and options for solutions of research questions, whereas, a conclusive research produces final solutions or new theories to explored research questions. The research was undertaken through the adaptation of four of the six stages of research methodology in public administration by Perry and Kraemer (1986).

As an exploratory analysis of political elitism in Africa, this research analyses the elite theory and related phenomena around the elite theory in general and African political elites in particular. The research topic and questions are therefore explored without suggesting conclusive solutions to the problem of political elitism and socio-economic expansion and total independence of Africa. The research refers to the case of the DRC to understand the nuances of the elite theory in Africa. The focus on the DRC situation does not justify generalising the elitist paradigm in Africa but assists in developing a conceptual framework and motivating preliminary solutions to be explored further in a different research. The conceptual part of this research alludes to the fact that the elitist paradigm and the elite theory might not be helpful in solving the failure of Africa to develop and to achieve total independence. Thus, the research suggests that elite theory can be supplemented by class theory and analysis in understanding the role of and the relation between both the elite class and the people.

The first stage of this research was to determine the research problem which is to assess the role played by the African elite class in the failure to achieve socio-economic expansion and total independence. In this stage the paper states and explains the problem statement and research key questions. In the second stage the research delineated the problem by focussing much on political elitism, the elite theory and the role of African political elites with regards to the socio-economic expansion and total independence of Africa. This stage also focused on the case of the DRC to explore the failure of the political elites to foster socio-economic expansion of the DRC and its total independence. The third stage is the identification of variables that are linked to the problem of concern. In this stage the research described how, in the case of the DRC, the elite class was either not prepared or unwilling to contribute to the social and economic expansion of the DRC and its total independence. The fourth stage concerned the establishment of the causality among the variables contributing to the failure of

the African political elites. In this stage the research debated the elite theory and proposes preliminary propositions of solutions to be complemented in a conclusive effective research.

3. Understanding "Elite", "Elite Theory" and "Political Elitism"

From the classical elitist literature, elites are defined through capacity, personality and skills according to Lopez (2013). The term "*elite*" is important in politics and administration discourses as it refers somehow to the classification of the society into different social groups and considers the weight and impact of the power that each social group has and exercises. In such situation, the elite group is considered to be special, and with power and influence. Lloyd (1966: 4) defines elite as "those persons who were western-educated and wealthy to a high degree relative to the mass of the population". For the whole colonial period, the term elite should most properly be applied to the European residents of the colonial territories in whose hands laid political and economic power emphasises Lloyd (1967). Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels (the "elitist triad") are the precursors of the elite theory in Europe in the 19th century when "the doctrine of rule by elite superior individuals" was in vogue (Manghezi, 1976: 70). The elite triad deepens knowledge on the elitist paradigm and elite theory and facilitates debates on how to introduce and apply the elite theory in Africa. These pioneers of the elite theory argue that every society is composed of two groups of people. The first group is formed by a minority which rules or governs whereas the second group is formed by the majority of people who are ruled or governed.

The conceptual foundations of the elite triad are: the "ruling class" of Mosca, the "governing elite" of Pareto and the "political leaders" and the "iron law of oligarchy" of Michels. In his 1896 work entitled "Elementi di scienza politica", translated in 1939 as "The Ruling Class", Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) argues that "social change is determined not by class structure but by the political apparatus and an organised minority in control of this apparatus. Regardless of the type of political organisation, this minority imposes its will on the disorganised majority" (Korom, 2015:391).

Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) initiated the term 'elite' which encompasses all individuals with the highest

ranking in their social activities based on their skills and regardless of their moral and social qualities in his 1916 work entitled "Trattato di sociologia generale", translated in 1935 as "A Treatise of General Sociology". He subdivides the class of maximum performers into 'governing' and 'non-governing' sections, the first of which includes all individuals who 'play directly or indirectly a noteworthy role at the highest levels of power' (Korom, 2015:391). Robert Michels (1876-1936) emphasises the dominating political power of political leaders whereby elite fractions pursue personal interests by manipulating both the efforts and resources of ordinary party members. In other words, the elected dominate the electors. The author considers the elite's political power as an inherently oligarchic enterprise (Korom, 2015). For the author elites equal oligarchs who are characterised by a common will to action through three '3Cs' which are, (1) group consciousness; (2) group coherence; and (3) conspiracy.

The formulation of the elite theory was necessary to revive feudal notions of social hierarchy in an attempt to halt the new ideas of democracy according to Manghezi (1976). The elite theory was therefore antagonistic to democracy because it postulated that in every society only a minority rules, and this is contrary to the notion of majority rule (at least in theory) under democracy (Manghezi, 1976). Two of the three types of the organisation of the political system by Aristotle are disputed as unfit by the elite triad. The first type known as the "rule by one" is impossible because in any circumstance no one-man can be capable of ruling by himself. The second type, the "rule by the many" is also impossible because too many people will lack the ability to govern. The pertinent type of the organisation of any political system is therefore the "rule by a few" which forms the basis of the elite theory, as in any political system, only a few people can govern and exercise effective control. Thus, the elite theory was conceived as a deterrent of socialism and particularly Marxist-socialism.

From the classical elitist thesis, "the core of the elitist doctrine is explained by the fact that a minority within a society takes major decisions affecting such society" (Parry, 1969:30). Elitism is therefore a belief that some individuals (referred to as elites) form a group of people with a certain noble inheritance and or have intellectual qualities, are worthy, are well educated and have authority and influence as well

as other typical characteristics which are greater than those of others and for which their views on societal matter are considered seriously and carry more weight. Such people are considered to be wise and therefore worthy of and fit to lead and manage others. The elite class means 'the men at the top' and the future of poorer nations rests with that very small minority which holds power in political parties as well as in the civil services and in the business sector (Lloyd, 1971:128)

For Korom (2015:394), "all elite concepts, although different, have some similarities as they refer to the criteria of distinction and the sources of power of the elites". The different explanations of the term elite convergent on issues such as ownership and exercising of power, ownership of material resources, expression of intellectual excellence and occupation of higher position coupled with efficiency and a preferential high social status in institutions and society. All these characteristics are of importance when discussing the influence and the role to be played by the elite class in exercising authority to foster social and economic expansion through democracy.

From a Weberian point of view, elite theory is explained by the fact that any political action is always determined by the political manoeuvrability of small leading groups of people referred to as superior or elites. The elite theory is based on the assumption that elite action has a causal effect on a relationship between state and society especially the regime types and changes and many other political phenomena according to Lopez (2013). There are diverse versions of the elite theory based on how power, opportunities as well as psychological, sociological, intellectual, material, personal and other differences determine the authority in the society especially in social, economic and political institutions. Although there is no consensus on a standard classification of elite, a distinction of the types of elite by Mitrović (2010) makes sense to this paper. The author distinguishes three main types of elite: (1) the economy elite is the group of managers who are considered as per either meritocracy and/or technocracy); (2) the political elite are those within the politocracy, bureaucracy and ideocracy; (3) other type concerns those in the science field or scientocracy and include the scientific elite, artistic elite and cultural elite.

The notion of economic elite and political elite is essential in debating the place of the elite class in

the socio-economic expansion of the DRC. During the colonial and post-colonial eras for instance, some form of political elite was developed to the detriment of economic elite. The post-dictatorial period is experiencing the emergence of political elites and the transformation of economic, scientific and artistic elites into political elites whereby the exercise of power and influence is the game of the day and the means of success. This debate is however beyond the scope of this paper although it emphasises the primacy of political elitism over all other forms of elitism in the DRC particularly and in generally in Africa. Lopez (2013) is therefore right to argue that political elites probably constitute the most researched elite sector, and often in the literature the term 'elite' is being used as a synonym for 'political elite'. Parry (1969:30) argues that: "because the decisions taken by the minority (elites) within a society are of a wide scope that they affect many aspects of the life of the whole society makes such decisions to be regarded as political". Political elites therefore influence government decisions and at the same time formally decide policies of the day.

The current emergence of social groups and the impact of the politicisation of the public-sector administration and the political interference in the management of the non-profit, the private and the business sectors in the DRC have contributed to the proliferation of political elitism. As a consequence of such rapid and abrupt interest in political elitism, classification such as the no-developed elite, the semi-developed elite, the pseudo-elite, lumpen-elite, and developed elite (Mitrović, 2010) are building up in the DRC contributing to the ineffectiveness of the political elites to foster social and economic development through democracy. In other words, the author stigmatises that, based on the level of their ideology, elites can be either undeveloped elites (no ideology); semi-developed elites (some form of ideology that might not be applied); and developed elites (with applied effective ideology).

4. Political Elitism, Democracy and Socio-Economic Expansion

The debate on the role of the political elites in the democratisation of the independent African continent and its social and economic expansion is very rich although the result is always deceiving. It is, therefore, appropriate to agree with Mitrović (2010) that, the classification of elites on the basis of how much their respective consciousness and their

identity have formed and progressed as compared to the structure of social classes they represent are mismatched. This results in the political elites not defending the interest of the people they represent, yet such people are hypnotised by the power and influence of the political elite class.

The classical formulation of the elite theory is that society was composed of antagonistic classes based on contradictory class interests. In the case of Africa, Manghezi (1976) agrees with Lloyd that contemporary African society is divided into two main groups – the elite and the masses. The author defines the “modern” African elites as “those persons who were Western-educated and wealthy to a high degree relative to the masses of the population” (Manghezi, 1976:73). The characteristics that differentiate the elite from the masses in Africa are therefore the possession of the Western education and wealth. African political elites are in a position of privilege because of their monopoly of the essential attributes in their correct proportion. In other words, African elites represent the symbols of wealth and the western style of life. For Lloyd (1967:133) establishes that, “the Western-educated African nationalist leaders sought to gain control of their countries but the European population acted as a reference group for the African political elites, with its behaviour determining in part the African reaction to the impact of Westernisation”. Diop (2012:221) emphasises that: “postcolonial modernism in the context of neoliberal capitalism has impacted on the traditional cultures and economic life of Africa’s new elite class”. The author is of the view that the African political elites are conditioned by the inherited set of beliefs. For Manghezi (1976:75), “the Western ideas and values assimilated by the Western-educated elite are transmitted to the masses thus influencing their behaviour”. This explanation of the African political elites underrates the power and influence of the traditional rulers in tropical Africa according to Manghezi (1976); thus, the spread of the notion of comprador bourgeoisie to describe the African political elites.

Comprador bourgeoisie or the elite class is comprised of members of the society or some natives of a former colony that are ‘bought’ by the colonisers (Iqbal, Arif & Jamil, 2015) from whom they derive their influential position and status from their connection to foreign corporations or governments of developed nations. The term comprador bourgeoisie is used in critical theory to infer the domination

of a local economic development by foreign-led corporations or governments benefiting them to the detriment of the local economy. For Iqbal *et al.* (2015:10), “comprador bourgeoisie is never ready to understand and care about what people think, and what they want. All they do is what will be helpful in order to carry on their profits and their own well wishing”. The comprador class is never ready to cater about the public needs, like their colonial masters, they are always indifferent to the public ideology and their social needs because they are answerable to none, emphasises the author.

In most cases, political elites (comprador bourgeoisie) defend the interest of their foreign masters or their own selfish benefits and comforts. For Willame (1972:25), “in the case of the DRC, the colonisers insulated the ‘évolués’ (elites) from the harmful effects of colonisation by helping them maintain their petty privileges, and by reinforcing their feeling that they formed a special group distinct from Congolese masses”. This paper understands that, not only colonisation and neo-colonialisation, but importantly, foreign Western governments and multinationals play a critical role in plundering the resources of African countries by using the elite class, thus hampering African governments’ efforts in fostering and sustaining socio-economic expansion. In fact, it is correct to refer to the absurd face of globalisation in supporting useless and dictatorial regimes as long as the West (and recently the East) benefits from the wealth of Africa.

In the case of the DRC, the link between the selfish role of the comprador bourgeoisie (political elites) working for the foreign and personal interests and the failed democracy contributes to the current economic crisis. An analysis of the elite theory and the characteristics of the past and current African political elites can facilitate the design of a prototype of African political elites that could lead and drive the undeveloped social class of the peripheral globalised capitalism out of poverty and domination through an effective and efficient democratic rule as many African countries and specifically the DRC are still trapped in the vicious circle of poverty and dependency. There are many reasons why the elite class has failed to contribute to the socio-economic emergence of Africa. This paper pin-points some of the causes for the DRC. They are the colonial system and its legacy; the unsuccessful succession between the European elites and the opportunistic African political leaders during the transition from

colonialism; the neo-colonialism or neo-liberalism strategies of the former colonisers and the current failed transitional governments dominated by civil wars and instable political situations impacting negatively on peace, democracy and development.

4.1 The Legacy of the Colonial System

The failure of African political elites to facilitate the socio-economic expansion of their countries to foster democratic rule is in a great part the consequence of the legacy of colonisation. In fact, Calvocoressi (1985:31) was right that, "no colonial regime has ever undertaken the administration of a distant territory with the aim of improving the lot of its inhabitants". In the DRC, the colonial education system deprived the local population of education and opportunities. For Lloyd (1971:19), "the higher education policy of colonial governments was directed to providing a small cadre of executive officials for bureaucracy". Universities did not exist in the colonial DRC and government scholarships were not provide for higher education overseas to Congolese students. The early elite provided such training for their children from their own resources according to Lloyd (1971). In the DRC, the colonial Belgian government did not prepare the political class for the independence seeing that at independence there were no more than fifteen university graduates in the entire country. Similarly, the colonial government did not train the local citizens to assume posts of responsibility but to only occupy auxiliary (clerk) positions.

The former president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere who was the first university graduate ever produced in his country in 1961, claimed that a year before its independence, Tanzania had only two qualified engineers, 12 medical doctors for a population of nine million, 85 percent of the adult population was illiterate and there was no university in the country (Assensoh, 1998). Willame (1972:25) argues that, "in the Congo, the bureaucratic hierarchy was not merely rigid, but physically and politically oppressive". As a direct consequence, Willame (1972:1) observes that, "the decolonisation process in the DRC was atypical in that no such facades could be built. Within a month after independence, the colonial administration collapsed with the departure of the 10,000 Belgian civil servants".

In a foreword to a book on African political leadership, John Mbaku, a professor of economics, points out that African leaders inherited state structures

and economies that were not deigned with African interests, aspirations, objectives, traditions, customs, and well-being in mind (Assensoh, 1998). With an illiterate population and the workforce prepared for auxiliary positions, the social and economic systems of the colonial governments were not designed to facilitate the participation of Africans in their development. To be exact, the colonisers were not interested in developing Africans. Instead, colonial institutions were structured to advance the objectives of European colonisers and to perpetrate exploitation of African riches through repression. In fact, Young and Turner (1985), reflect four classes in the DRC from the colonial to the post-colonial epochs. The elites occupied a preferential place in that classification as they came after the imperialists who extracted the wealth of the country. The elite class is referred to by the author as the "reactionnaires" or the politician and the bureaucrats who facilitated the looting by the imperialists.

4.2 The Post-Colonial Era: Opportunistic Political Elites and the Dark Hand of the Former Coloniser

The post-colonial epoch was not as promising in term of facilitating social and economic expansion of African countries as was the colonial era. The initial belief about the struggle for independence was that, capturing the government apparatus by indigenious elites would improve the ability of the state to eliminate mass poverty and deprivation according to Professor John Mbaku (Assensoh, 1998). However, this paper denotes two major issues to characterise the failure of the post-colonial social and economic systems. The first issue is the opportunistic and corrupted political elites referred to by Professor John Mbaku (Assensoh, 1998) as "rent-seeking" (seeking bribes) and 'unscrupulous national elites' whom, after taking over from the colonisers manoeuvred the weak institutions they inherited to enrich themselves to the expense of the population (Assensoh, 1998). The second major issue is the unwillingness of the colonisers to prepare African elites and public administrators for the heavy task of leading their countries, thus the unpreparedness of most African countries to acquire their independence and consequently to effectively and efficiently run their countries without the dark hand of the former colonisers.

In essence, after the independence the Belgian government maintained a strategy or policy of

paternalism (Young, 1965). Because there were no appropriate and well-trained cadres to lead the affairs of the country, and using the immaturity of the Congolese political class, the "civilised" or elites were used by the former colonisers. This is what Young (1965) refers to as the elite satisfaction. Such satisfaction was granted in exchange to the governing of the country by the Belgian dark hand. Turner (2013) maintains that after independence was equal to before independence in the sense that the transition from the Belgian-Congo to the independent Congo inherited pre-colonial political culture which emphasised personal power and authority (by the elite for the Congolese population). The elite class was therefore not running for the interest of the population but their own and that of the former, now neo-colonisers.

The three problems that characterised the failure of the post-colonial African governments are, according to professor John Mbaku: (1) shortage of skills indigenous elites to help lead each country into post-independence democracy; (2) the institutions left behind by the colonisers did not facilitate the participation of the African people in economy and politics and; (3) the unwilling of the African political elites to engage in institutional reforms to reconstruct their states and to provide the African people with appropriate and viable institutions, structures and systems.

4.3 Neo-Colonialism

The neo-colonial relations in Africa usually involve alliances between foreign capitals and domestic political elites, bureaucrats and intermediaries who benefits from the foreign countries and Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) (Nafziger, 1988). The author regrets that, "while Africa's elites incurred debts partly to expand patronage, they respond to external pressures on debt crises by reducing social programmes, especially those for small farmers, workers, the unemployed, the sick and the elderly".

For Iqbal *et al.* (2015:6), "neo-colonialism is the indirect survival of the colonial system, a stage managed and designed by the colonial powers to give the colonised the illusion of freedom". Such illusion has resulted in relations through among other practices, foreign investment as a mean of control over Africa's resources; foreign aid and debts always granted on conditions often not beneficial to the poor. Consequently, the DRC as well as

many African countries have seen the rise of their role of suppliers of raw materials to the MNCs. This commodity trade is facilitated by the elite working for the interest of such MNCs. "MNCs exercise control over pricing and contract specifications. This is facilitated by arrangements with the political elites in exchange for financial and monetary compensations" (Nafziger, 1988:57). Many African countries have been conned by the so-called foreign aid which in realities are either debts or a means by which the donors play their influence on the poor receiving country. The foreign aid has also been used as bait to manoeuvre political elites. Nafziger (1988:61) regrets that, "aid is biased against the poor in many countries". Debts have been used by developed and former colonisers as a mean to lure political elites in many African countries. Such aids are provided with various conditions not favouring social and economic development. Nafziger (1988) observes that in many instances political elites expanded the patronage for intermediaries and contractors so fast that they lost track of millions of dollars borrowed. The consequences of the repayments of some debts which did not even reach the coffers of the state or serves the right purpose could only heavily bleed the economic system.

4.4 The Post-Dictatorship Failed Transitions and the Failed Democratisation Process

The debate around the post-dictatorship DRC is very rich and controversial when it comes to its political and economic stability. Three important views analysed by Koddenbrock (2014) are very interesting in debating the role of the political elites in the current failure of the post-dictatorship DRC. The first important view is of Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills, who arguably concluded that "the DRC does not exist" as a state because there is no sign of real governance in the way it is run.

The second important view is of Englebort and Tull who countered the first view by arguing that "the DRC state exists but it was different from other states". They supported their argument by pointing the endless negotiations and the subsequent contestations and resistances. Koddenbrock (2014:671) is correct to argue that, "in the DRC, once deals are signed, Congolese politicians (elites) would prefer to renegotiate instead of achieving what was negotiated". This argument has just been observed recently when a political accord reached under the offices of the African Union (Edem Kodjo)

on October 18th, 2016 was renegotiated under the mediation of the DRC Catholic Bishops Conference and signed on December 31st, 2016 (Saint Sylvester). Neither the October African Union Accord nor Catholic Bishops Conference Accord has been fully implemented by July 2017 making elections impossible before December, 31st 2017. Tull and Englebert qualify the Congolese elites as "economic elites" who favour transactions (or trading) over production (or implementation).

The third important view is that of Théodore Trefon who refers to the DRC politics as "malevolent" politics as Congolese actors masquerade by masking the reality and hiding the truth about their dealings in development reforms. In this last important view Trefon (2011) underlines two critical issues: (1) the prevailing practices of Congolese civil servants and the political (elite) class dominated by the culture of secrecy, oppression, and corruption. The Congo masquerade view of Trefon (2011) is appropriate to the argument of Kisangani (2012), that the Congolese elites practice strategies of exclusion whereby the same (old) actors (or their descendants) from different constellations of power, harbour similar grievances, in a weak state where the cleavages between political power, access to resources, and communal identity overlap. In fact, Kisangani demonstrates the difficulty to make distinctions between greed, grievance and creed.

5. A Genuine Elite Class for Socio-Economic Expansion and Total Independence

For Lloyd (1971:18), "social changes result from continual interactions between individuals and groups seeking, through the use of existing resources and new opportunities, to improve their position in the social hierarchy". He argues that structural change results from the actions of individuals (influenced by the elite class), yet the author cautions that some or even most changes occurring in tropical Africa have little or even nothing to do with Africans themselves but stem from external sources. It is right that, "the elite rule is inherent and inescapable in all societies, but the elites are essentially unlimited and unchecked, except by their own corruptions and weaknesses in their actions and effects" (Field and Higley, 1980:18). The elitist paradigm holds that elite ideas and action are everywhere determinative of important social change according to Field and Higley

(1980). However, Parry (1969:31) warns that, "no mechanism for ensuring the accountability of the leaders to the public, no ideology which enshrines the principles of majority will can prevent the elite from imposing its supremacy over the rest of society. Because of their power, their organisation, their political skills or their personal qualities, the members of the elite are always potentially capable of exploiting their positions so as to preserve their elite's domination".

The above statement prompted the initial question of this paper research: "whether political elites are an obstacle to the socio-economic expansion and total independence of Africa", to which this paper responds affirmatively based on the arguments of authors such as Lloyd (1971), Manghezi (1976), Nafziger (1988), Assensoh, (1998), Young (1965) and Willame (1972) and Young and Turner (1985) for the specific case of the DRC. Professor John Mbaku's argument that evidence indicates the decline of the quality of life of most Africans since African countries began gaining their independence in the 1960s and that the quality of life improved only marginally in the post-colonial Africa (Assensoh, 1998) still stands.

Lloyd (1971) is of the view that political leaders or elites can be an opportunity or can facilitate total independence and socio-economic expansion of Africa if they interact with and apply the will of the people and if they detach from the external dependency. It is therefore necessary to fix the elite theory dilemma in Africa. Assensoh (1998) agrees with researchers who believe that only drastic measures and radical changes in leadership can arrest the deteriorating economic and social conditions of African countries. To embrace this paradigm in seeking solutions to the elite dilemma in facilitating socio-economic expansion and full independence of Africa is precarious because the scientific debate of elite theory is very dubious.

While elitists consider shaping the modern politics and claim elite theory as scientific analysis of the society, there is a debate about the elite theory being an ideology (Parry, 1969). Such debate goes further in analysing the distinction between politics as the art of governing and politics as the science of government (Parry, 1969). Because, this paper is written from a public administration and political sciences paradigm, it is safe not to focus on the elite theory rather to consider the place and role of the

elite class within the theory of class. For Manghezi (1976:101), "applying the elite theory to the study of African societies discredits, refute and replace the Marxist theory of class and class conflict". The author argues that, "only class analysis can facilitate the real comprehension of Africa's socio-economic problems. However, class analysis in the African context, must be applied creatively". The author warns that such class analysis must consider the local nuances considering that many studies are generalised when it comes to African societies (Manghezi, 1976).

To respond to the optimistic view of Lloyd (1971) and the recommendations of Professor John Mbatia and Assensoh (1998) this paper agrees that: (1) the African elite class needs to be urgently transformed; (2) the transformed elites need to raise the consciousness of the African people on their role in transforming Africa; (3) the elite class needs to initiate and sustain a permanent social and political mobilisation so as to facilitate the key role of the political elite through continual positive interactions between people and groups in order to improve their position in the social hierarchy using their existing resources and opportunities as suggested by Lloyd (1971) rather than serving their personal and external interests. A separate complete conclusive research is needed on how the above recommendations as well other potential solutions can be materialised to address the elitist theory in Africa.

To transform the African elite class, Professor John Mbatia's suggestion of almost two decades, remains appealing. He said: "To prepare for twenty-first century, Africa must undertake effective institutional reforms to provide each society with efficient and viable institutions. In addition, corrupt, uncaring, dictatorial, racist, opportunistic and incompetent leaders must be replaced by individuals who are willing and able to provide the leadership that Africa needs for sustainable economic and human development in the new century and beyond" (Assensoh, 1998:ix). This suggestion is brilliant as it emphasised the role to be played by the Organisation of African Union (now African Union) to reshape Africa after independence. The crucial role to be played by the continental organ is yet to be determined and implemented. Such topic is not the focus of this paper, however, one might be tempted to argue that the elite class within the African Union is not different from the other African political elites.

To raise the consciousness of the African people on their role in transforming Africa, Manghezi (1976:92) holds that, "the concept of class consciousness plays a very important role in the Marxist theory of class. At the stage when societies break up into antagonistic strata on the basis of class interests, the degree of 'class' consciousness is very low in the exploited social strata". In practice, Manghezi suggests that political consciousness of the oppressed (the African citizenry in general) must take place for Africa to achieve social and economic expansion and its total independence. In other words, the author regrets that the elite theory has distracted the revolutionary leaders to understand the exploitation and oppression of the citizenry by the political elites in one hand and in the other hand, the need for awareness on the part of the dominated classes with regard to their position and participation that would develop their conscience of their role, thus facilitating socio-economic participative development

Class consciousness can be influenced by mobilising the citizenry according to Manghezi (1976). The combination of social and political mobilisation for public active participation that holds the elite class responsible and accountable in implementing democratic systems that favour social and economic expansion and consequently total independence is therefore paramount. Social mobilisation is seen by the author as an endlessly on-going process to raise awareness of the people on the conditions and contradictions within the society as the result of social class relations. If the citizenry is aware of the role of each social class (especially the elites and the citizenry, in this case), then harmony between the two classes can favour socio-economic expansion and total independence. Political mobilisation means involving political organisations in promoting the participation of the citizenry in the running of their own localities through different structures. It is important that public political participation be initiated from the grass-root level to the top of the government structure.

6. Conclusion

As field and Higley (1980:69) point out, "because elites are persons with more power, wealth, status and privileges than others, their presence is incompatible with freedom and equality in a society". With such condition, bringing equilibrium between the elite class and the population or the masses they

are meant to lead is very important. This paper agrees with Manghezi (1976:101) that, "the elite theory, applied to the socio-economic situation and the dependence of Africa and considering the African political elites, is conservative and misleading as it is based on and support the domination and oppression of the majority masses by the minority political elites". As a consequence of such theory, it is not possible to deal with the social and economic problems of Africa using such theory. However, this paper has clarified the elite theory and analysed the characteristics of the African political elites, who are dominated by their quest for their own and foreign gain, and their unwillingness to develop Africa, but depend on the former colonisers.

The elite theory rejected by Manghezi (1976) in favour of the pure Marxist class and class struggle, still has substance as it has paved the way to a conclusive research on the role of new African political elites in promoting socio-economic expansion of Africa and its total development.

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