

Prioritising Decolonisation to Encourage Full-Scale Trade Among African Countries

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Abstract: This paper explores ways and means of enhancing full-scale trade among the African countries. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature. Interviewing techniques and document analysis were used to collect data from three African countries regarded to be the economic superpowers of Africa, namely, Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria. Research findings revealed that firstly, the vestiges of colonialism are preventing African countries from involving themselves in full-scale trade with one another. Secondly, failure to conquer the learnt colonial thoughts and practices by the many African countries prevents full-scale trade from occurring. Thirdly, taking decisions devoid of foresight and sustainability obstruct full-scale trade among the African countries. Fourthly, ignoring the decolonisation philosophy as a 21st century gateway for African countries to free themselves from subjugation of previous years delays full-scale trade from occurring. Lastly, under-development, in the form of unavailable infrastructure, serves as a hindrance towards full-scale trade among the African countries. The researcher recommends that all African countries should regard this century as an African century where trade among them (African countries) has to soar despite the continental and global challenges they face.

Keywords: Conquer, Decolonisation philosophy, Foresight, Subjugation, Vestiges

1. Introduction

The master-slave relations take ages to sever if ever such ties indeed do unbundle (Fomunyan, 2017). This is figurative referring to how most African countries continue to be connected to their former colonisers instead of themselves as countries on the continent of Africa. The more African countries are being recognised by their foreign allies, the happier they feel other than when being acknowledged by their fellow African countries. This denotes self-hate by African countries (Freire, 1990:170). Such a practice perpetuates subjugation against African countries by their foreign counterparts. Such occurs in a subtle manner which makes it difficult for everyone to notice. This can be explained in terms of the vestiges of colonialism, which many of African countries still suffer from and endure as part of their historic baggage. Nkuna (2015:120) reminds that colonialism instilled in African countries a sense of self-hate and inferiority complex. That is why they despise everything that is of African origin, while anything that is European in origin, is hailed to be of quality and highest class and standard. Colonialism was more of a psychological warfare against Africans than only an exploitation of mineral resources.

As a result of colonialism, full-scale trade among African countries becomes difficult to sustain. As

much as African countries attempt to trade with one another, their souls and spirits are not in the African trade but with their erstwhile masters (Yukl, 2006). As such, there is no proportionality in the way African countries demonise their commodities in a desperate endeavour to impress their former colonisers overseas. Neglecting markets offered by fellow African countries could better be comprehended in the context of African people and their countries not being mentally liberated from the yoke of colonialism, which they had been subjected to down the years. (Modiba, 2017). African people are yet to realise that they are victims and that they need help. The fact that countries that are regarded as the economic superpowers of Africa, such as Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria trade less with themselves and more with their erstwhile colonisers, has to be a cause for concern for Africa as a continent. This is embarrassing and frustrating and evinces those countries to be enduring the vestiges of colonialism although it is a while since colonialism has been de-legitimised (Hlongwane, 2016). Embracing the decolonisation philosophy is likely to re-focus African countries to reconsider involving themselves more in full-scale trade among themselves. The practice by African countries of despising one another with regards to continental trade, in favour of taking their goods to foreign markets, has devastating effects. One of which is the failure by African countries to push back

the frontiers of poverty, unemployment, inequality and diseases affecting their citizenry.

2. Theoretical Considerations

Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005:12) assert that a theory represents a mental view of a phenomenon or a system and that it normally forms the basis for a chain of reasoning. Advancing a particular argument on a phenomenon, such as how prioritising decolonisation stands to enhance full-scale trade among African countries, with a theory in place, one's argument is likely to hold substance. The Critical Theory underpins this paper. Its choice rests on its relevance in illuminating issues of the vestiges of colonialism and how they obstruct full-scale trade among African countries. Apart from enabling the framing of this paper, the Critical Theory helped in making meaning from the whole notion of full-scale trade among the African countries as triggered by the prioritisation of decolonisation among the African countries as against their counterparts in Europe.

Higgs & Smith (2010:67) advise that knowledge and how people understand truth, including scientific truth, moral truth and historical truth need not be separated from everyday life. This implies that comprehending the trend of how trade occurs within countries of the world, the context of the manifestation of that trade is as essential as the state of affairs itself. The Critical Theory assisted in arriving at the cause of trade imbalance among countries of the world (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009:12). The other relevance of Critical Theory relates to its emphasis of business ethics. In the context of this paper, that would imply the study of good and bad trade behaviour by countries of the world, particularly African countries among themselves in relation to how they interrelate in the process of trading. The Critical Theory was found to be having a potential of uncovering whether the process of carrying out trade among countries is characterised by lack of moral compass of what is right and what is wrong or not. The Critical Theory exposed the vestiges of colonialism that obstruct adequate trade among African countries. In addition, it stands out when advising against separating "real life testing" from scientific theory. The meaning thereof is that scientists are bound by social reality and norms as much as the rest of people are. Historical reasons and living conditions which Africa countries experience, somewhat compel them to involve themselves in trade the way they do. Such a state of affairs deserves to

be challenged. Decolonisation remains relevant to African countries to enable them to trade differently.

The Critical Theory competently illuminated the problem which this paper is addressing, which is about explaining the opportunity missed by African countries by putting little emphasis on trade among themselves and more emphasis on trading with their erstwhile colonisers. The theory advocates for the critical reflection on society in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships that keep the societal members perpetually enslaved though in a different form and guise. The Critical Theory is undergirding this paper because its basic contention is that all ideas come from human beings and all human beings are influenced by the world and the context they live in (Higgs & Smith, 2010:67). Continuous trade of African countries more with their former colonisers and less among themselves could be traced back to African countries not creating time and space to break the shackles that keep them perpetually enslaved to their former colonisers instead of decolonising to assert their own trade autonomy. African countries are displaying the learnt socio-economic and trade oppression, which has to be reversed. Countries of the world stand to be emancipated from trade imbalance, immediately they decolonize and become conscious of how trade oppression operates. This suggests that how countries normally think and act in relation to trade, is the product of many years of subjugation that compromises trade autonomy and thereby entrench trade dependence instead of trade interdependence (Freire, 1990:172).

3. Research Questions

In this paper, the research questions addressed are anchored on the Critical Theory since it underscores the paper (Higgs & Smith, 2010:88). The research questions are as follows: What is the role and significance of a clearly formulated foreign trade policy in promoting continental trade more than off-shore trade with erstwhile colonisers? What are the ideas, concerns and hindrances by African countries regarding the shifting of the trade focus from Europe back to Africa?

The above questions could be broken down into the following sub-questions:

- How is more trade with the former colonisers delaying the development of Africa?

- How best to break free from the master-slave unequal trade relations?
- How can decolonisation enhance trade relations among the African countries?
- What do African leaders require to trade in the interest of their own citizenry?

4. Research Methods and Materials

This is a qualitative paper. The paper follows a qualitative research approach as against the quantitative line of thinking as a result of the problem pursued, namely, attempting to explain the opportunity missed by African countries by putting little emphasis on trading among themselves and more emphasis on trading with their erstwhile colonisers (Creswell, 2010:156; Mouton, 1996:80). The choice of the qualitative research methodology was also triggered by underpinning the paper with the Critical Theory. This creates a synergy between the Critical Theory and the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Babbie, 1992:129). The combination of the two helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of the vestiges of colonialism that continue to obstruct full-scale trade among African countries. Partnering qualitative research approach and Critical Theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years since colonialism formally ceased to exist, its effects remain firmly in place. Such effects are still so severe such that African countries find it difficult to cooperate and successfully involve themselves in full-scale trade with one another. As part of research methodology, interviewing techniques and document analysis were utilised to collect data relevant for this paper. The said data collection tools emerged very helpful in terms of accessing data pertaining to the vestiges of colonialism as they prevent full-scale trade among the African countries, especially the economic superpowers like Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria (Leedy, 1993:66).

5. Results and Discussion

Findings arrived at in this paper are in relation to the research topic whose focus is how vestiges of colonialism continue to hinder full-scale trade among the African countries. The Critical Theory has been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these

findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: the vestiges of colonialism as a barrier obstructing and averting African countries from ever trusting one another to the level of doing full-scale trade with one another, how ignorance of the decolonisation philosophy, maintains the master-slave trade relations and how lack of full-scale trade, consolidates and reinforces the barrier of under-development among African countries.

5.1 The Vestiges of Colonialism as a Barrier

The master-slave relations or bond take ages to sever if ever such ties unbundle. This is a stark reminder of how currently, African countries find themselves always attracted to their former colonisers with whom they fought bitterly over their independence. Upon gaining independence, African countries faced a reality of economic dependence. It dawned on them that it is difficult to fight for freedom and win it but even more difficult to rule over the country (Madue, 2013; Msila, 2017). One of the main reasons why the majority if not all African countries do not want to break away from their erstwhile colonisers is the realisation that their colonisers still have something to offer them, economically. Whether this is a reality or myth, is a question and debate for the other time. As of now the point at issue is that African countries trade more with their former enemies than with themselves. This is being done even by the economic superpowers of Africa, such as Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria, who were expected to be exemplary to fellow African states. Obviously this is a challenge to be surmounted. Whether African countries themselves will ultimately be able to sever the historically established ties with their erstwhile colonisers, it is a matter of wait and see (Tsheola, 2002).

Zwane (2015:10) validly contends that structurally, nothing has changed in Africa since the collapse of colonialism. That African countries have amongst others, inherited colonial policies, colonial infrastructure and colonial administration, is no critical factual inaccuracy. It could be contended that the challenge of being a copycat by African countries and its people, keeps Africa as a continent always bereft of originality which is a sign of lack of critical reflective thought on issues of sustainable development and calculated progress emanating from trade among the African countries. Formally, colonialism may have been outlawed but practically, it continues to wreak havoc on the lives of many of Africa's citizenry (Ngugi, 2017). The reality that in

the main Africans are not assertive enough about their own trade and economic issues, attests to the actuality that the vestiges of colonialism are alive and kicking in ourselves to the level where anything whose genesis is in Africa and not Europe, holds little or no appeal at all to us as Africans. Hence African countries and their leaders marvel and celebrate their trade and economic ties with their former rulers as against doing the same with their fellow Africans. This contradiction of African countries having attained self-rule and yet still being hangers-on to their former colonial masters ought not be countenanced. Actually, 21st century was supposed to be an African century, in trade and other economic aspects. Although as of now that is not the case, time still allows that something be done in this regard. Despite the point that the world is 19 years into the 21st century, if ever concerted efforts could be mustered by African themselves and gravitate towards one continent, one destiny and one future in the area of full-scale trade among the African countries, things could turn rosy for the continent. Africa requires a devoted trade and economic resolve and determination that are free from hypocrisy (Msila, 2017). Such a resolve would help to address the vestiges of colonialism that are still impeding African countries from engaging in full-scale trade with one another.

5.2 Ignorance of Decolonisation Philosophy

The trend throughout the world with regard to countries that were at one stage colonised, is to resolve to decolonise in order to restore their eroded dignity and re-humanise in the form of promoting sustainable trade among its fellow countries (Ngugi, 2005). That the majority of African countries are characterised by either political crisis, anarchy, upheavals or economic instability, could be traced back to ignoring the philosophy of decolonisation, that guides their operations including trade and industry. This is not helping the project of attempting to bring Africa together as one continent in the area of full-scale trade. Of all the countries of Africa, those that experience and enjoy economic and political stability are fewer than those experiencing political turmoil. For instance, as of now, it is Botswana and South Africa which could be placed in the category of stable countries. The other 52 countries, inclusive of South Sudan which has just gained independence, are not politically and economically stable. Instability defining African countries is part of the vestiges of colonialism and one of the solutions is

decolonisation. A classic example is Mozambique which even today is not at peace with itself but it is at peace with its former coloniser, namely, Portugal. What is astonishing, is that trade between Mozambique and Angola as both former colonies of Portugal are not as high as between those countries themselves but it is up with their erstwhile coloniser, namely Portugal (Msila, 2017). If that is not an indication of the vestige of colonialism, what is it? Another excellent example is that of Lesotho which is not enjoying absolute peace with itself and some neighbouring African countries, but it enjoys sufficient peace with Britain as its former colonial master. Lesotho, as a country, is known to be characterised by political and economic instability which normally forces some of its neighbours like South Africa to now and again, intervene. Once again, if failure to enjoy absolute peace and sufficient trade by Lesotho with fellow African countries, is not a confirmation of being mired in the vestiges of colonialism, then it means colonialism has no meaning. The source of minimal trade among African countries is ignorance of decoloniality. The review of literature exposes the enemies of Africa and Africans as themselves. This is to imply that where there is an instability in an African country, yes third force may be part but the chief culprits of that crisis will be African themselves for various reasons ranging from greed to just being conditioned to disorder, quarrelling and mutinous activities (Gobillot, 2008; Fomunyam, 2017).

The contribution of colonialism is not shielded in this regard. As a result of ignoring to decolonise, nearly all the African countries, experience various forms of anarchy, ranging from trade to political turmoil. Currently, countries such as Libya, Egypt, Central African Republic and other African states witness dissatisfactions over the lack of decolonisation and democracy. The reality is that full-scale trade among the African countries occurs successfully in an environment of decolonisation which promotes consciousness about the need for trade-cooperation first among African countries before forging other trade links with their erstwhile colonisers (Cunha, Filho & Goncalves, 2010). Africans themselves have to face that challenge head-on, oppose and defeat it. Failure to do so will continue to mire Africa in poverty, unemployment, inequality, diseases and other maladies, when Africa is one of the world's well-endowed continents with natural resources to benefit all her citizenry. Full-scale trade among African countries could be enabled by decoloniality. The argument of ignoring

decolonisation, as one of the causative factors and barriers to why trade among African countries is ever minimal instead of being to the maximum level, needs fresh attention. The remedy to it is for African countries to decolonise their environments through creating the necessary trade climate and atmosphere which will enable continental investors never to look back upon deciding to do business trade among themselves as countries of the same continent (Hlongwane, 2016).

5.3 The Barrier of Under-Development

As long as the occurrence of full-scale trade is dependent on the availability of an infrastructure, then it means African states will always be in a disadvantaged position. The question to pose is: why is Africa's infrastructural development lagging behind in comparison with other countries of the world. There are varied answers to such a question. The first response would be that having an underdeveloped infrastructure is not the phenomenon experienced in Africa alone. This is to signify that other countries of the world do have such a predicament. Countries of the world are classified into three categories as regards their level of development. There are countries that fall within the category of developed countries. Others fall under the developing countries. The last category is that of underdeveloped countries. The question is: what is responsible for such distinctions within countries of the world? Once again, various responses could be secured for such a question. However, it suffices to reveal that normally countries that were at one stage colonised, are nearly underdeveloped in as far as infrastructure goes. This could be explained in terms of the former rulers of those countries having impoverished them due to only being concerned about the extraction of those countries' natural resource, to the total ignorance of the advancement of those countries' infrastructure (Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010). Had the infrastructure in the colonised countries been developed, then upon getting independence, those countries were going to be able to make quick progress with their trade activities. A critical interrogation of why many if not all African countries are having a backlog of infrastructure, leads to the response that it was a deliberate strategy to keep African countries always politically independent and economically dependent on their former rulers. This is a diabolical deed in the sense that it ultimately reduces the poor of the poor in that impoverished country to perpetual and entrenched poverty of the last degree. Unfortunately for those in

power, they are able to grab whatever has been left by the former colonisers and help themselves with it, when the masses on the ground are starving and wallowing in poverty attributable to infrastructural underdevelopment and owing to lack of good governance (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Sebola, 2012). The other reason behind infrastructural backlog in African countries could only be explained in terms of the African leaders having not pursued continental trade with vigour. In addition, taking financial resource earmarked for infrastructural development and either make it disappear or connive with the contractors to do a shoddy job regarding the improvement of the infrastructure, became rife. So, the contradiction pertaining to infrastructural underdevelopment by African countries is multifaceted. In some countries as it has been argued such a state of affairs is to be blamed on the colonial rulers of those African countries while on other African countries, the delay in the improvement of infrastructure for economic purposes has just been internally generated. To sum up this hurdle of the underdevelopment of infrastructure which is touted to be obstructing full-scale trade among the African countries, including the economic superpowers of Africa such as Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria, deserves urgent attention (Omano, 2005; Qwabe, 2013).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Scapegoating of the existence of trade hurdles and parading of all the obstacles being externally generated will not always be convincing, especially to those who are naturally critical, reflective and independent-minded about minimal trade by African countries among themselves. African countries need to decolonise to learn to build their economies from inside-out. In this era of the shrinking of the world economies, continental economic integration has to be an option. This is the case because unemployment, inequality, diseases, poverty, starvation and other maladies, keep on increasing in Africa yet full-scale trade with the former colonisers is proceeding unabated but with little or no material benefit for Africa and her people. The three countries that are anticipated to lead the way as regards forging strong economic ties among the African countries themselves, are the economic superpowers of Africa, namely, Nigeria, South Africa and Algeria. The researcher is convinced that African economies could turn a tide if African countries could with enthusiasm, determination, focus and vigour explore doing more full-scale trade with

themselves and maybe to the only small scale with foreign markets. On the basis of the findings discussed, the following recommendations are made:

- There is a need for African countries to sever or lessen economic ties with their former colonisers. Down the years such trade relations have been characterised by imbalances. Worse, such economic ties benefitted Africa less and their former colonisers, undeservedly more.
- There is a need by African countries to unbundle the vestiges of colonialism as a way of creating an enabling economic environment which will make sustainable economic activities among the African countries to thrive.
- There is also a need for Africans to be emboldened to embrace the decolonisation philosophy, to enable them to learn to be proud of themselves, their fellow citizens and their countries.
- Lastly, there is a need to place adequate attention to the advancement of underdeveloped infrastructure since today's full-scale trade thrives on its availability.

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