AN EXAMINATION OF EXTERNAL FUNDING ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA: BALANCING AID CONDITIONALITIESAND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCE

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Abstract

International cooperation for development relies on several aid modalities and in addition to bilateral and multilateral programs civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in channeling development aid, much of the thinking and practice of international development emanates beyond states and markets. It comes from the vibrant work of civil society and social movements strengthening citizen action throughout the world, it is particularly prominent in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are challenged, both highlighting the unintended consequences of development and offering alternative perspectives on how development may be practiced. This paper explored the influence of externally related funding and its impacts on changing the direction of local policies and development agendas. The study adopted a qualitative research design to this end, data were collected, in which journals, books and other related online material related to the research were reviewed. The conspiracy theory was utilized with a view to explaining an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy without warrant, generally one involving an illegal or harmful act carried out by government or other powerful actors. The study found among other things that, the civil society play a vital role in the development agenda of many underdeveloped nations but many of them were found inadequate in the discharge of their responsibilities. The research recommends that funds received, externally should be properly directed objectively and focus on critical sectors affecting the socio-economic needs of the recipients and beneficiaries, furthermore, the hidden agendas of the external funding should be monitored strictly.

Introduction

External funding of civil society is the aggregate received by local civil societies in Nigeria or any other developing country, either in cash or in kind, in the form of foreign aid. This foreign aid could be multilateral or bilateral in nature. Multilateral aid is financial assistance provided by multiple countries or international organizations to support development projects in developing countries of the world (e.g. African Development Bank-AfDB; United Nations Development Programme UNDP), while bilateral aid refers to provision of assistance from one country to another country, often used to influence the recipient's policies or actions in alignment with the donors preferences (e.g. Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA; United State Agency for International Development-USAID). Funding in the form of aid, at times are used to finance civil societies (especially with, the New Public Management (NPM) which supposed to be the watch guard of the government and the markets. Thus, civil society has been a vital part of Nigeria's political development. Some civil societies have both pushed for reform and democratization, while also reflecting on the corruption and authoritarianism of the country's political leaders. However, their sources of funding become a source of concern (lack of trust) among the state, civil societies and the citizens.

Researches in international development and finance have pointed out two kinds (i.e. conditions) of aid, the "Unconditional aid" and "Conditional aid". The Unconditional aid is assistance given without any conditions or requirements for the recipient. For instance, unconditional cash transfer given to people in need without requiring anything in return (for instance, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Conditional aid which is the focus of this research is the policy and political system stipulations attached to loans and grants by international financial institutions and donors have been contentious in international financial transfers between countries since the beginning of large-scale financial flows in the nineteenth century (Kahler, 1992). Reasons for the contentiousness of such conditionalities range from their contested efficacy to their economic, social and political impact. They are also seen as interference in the sovereign prerogatives of recipient governments by international financial institutions (IFIs), and donor governments and agencies (Gilpin, 1987).

Furthermore, for decades now, interrogations of foreign aid have been on its impact on economic development in the recipient nations. Justifying this assertion, Chenery&Strout (1996) argue that the fundamental justification that foreign aid plays a role in economic development of recipient nations has been the driving force behind aids flows. There was a significant increase in the sum and areas of coverage of aid transfer in the latter part of 20th century to the extent that development assistance from Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was roughly $60 billion at the conclusion of millennium development aids (World Bank, 2004). This foreign aid to countries comes in various forms such as training of local people, grants, loans, sharing of intelligence and execution of projects among others; and this has been the case in African countries which have been part of developing nations receiving foreign aid to address numerous developmental challenges bedeviling the continent. Notwithstanding, there are increasing concerns among intellectuals and

political actors over the implications of these huge foreign aid to developing countries.

It is interesting to note that in recent years there has been a significant increase in aid flows to Nigeria. This is sequel to the total net aid flows from all donors that Nigeria received which amounted to US$ 152 million in 1999. In 2000, aid flows increased slightly to $185 million and by 2004, it reached $573 million (Ayodele, Cudjoe, Nolutshungu and Sunwabe, 2005). Aid flows thereafter rose to US1.29 billion in 2008 and has been above that till 2011 with US1.78 billion as aid flow to Nigeria. Nigeria has received foreign aid from a wide array of agencies and countries between 1960 and today.

However, Moosa (2016, 83) slightly goes social by pining down the rationale for foreign aid to global security while contending that "After the terror attacks of 9/11 against the United States, the war against terror became an indispensable part of foreign aid programmes in poor countries, mainly because the industrialized countries (the donors) recognized the important and increasing need to collaborate with the governments of these countries to ensure global security. This stems from a profound comprehension the donor countries have of the intrinsic link between the spread of poverty and the phenomenal spread of terror". Consequently, the prolonged poverty further weakens poor vulnerable nations thereby threatening global security. As a result, a significant aspect of the foreign aid has been channeled towards addressing developmental and poverty issues by executing projects aimed at creating the necessary manpower to boost the capacities of public institutions and different civil society organizations in the beneficiary nations ((Akramov, 2006).

It is against this backdrop that this study aims to analyse the effects of the contentious impact of foreign aid on local development preferences in Nigeria whichhas created a research gap as demonstrates by Nwude et al (2023) while arguing that despite the various studies on foreign aid, consensus is yet to be reached by scholars; hence, opening up further investigation on the impact of conditioned foreign aid. Toeing this line of thought, Molokwu et al (2022) observe that Nigeria is not exempted from the controversial impact of conditioned foreign aid as so many studies have made conflicting findings. This attests to the identified gap which is more visible and fundamental in conditioned foreign aid due to its grossly inadequate exploration.

Conceptual Clarification

Civil Society Development

Civil society has been broadly defined as the "area outside the family, market and state" (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2013). Civil society is the voluntary expression of the interests and aspirations of citizens organised and united by common interests, goals, values or traditions and mobilised into collective action (African Development Bank (AfDB), 2012). Civil society "encompasses a spectrum of actors with a wide range of purposes, constituencies, structures, degrees of organisation, functions, size, resource levels, cultural contexts, ideologies, membership, geographical coverage, strategies and approaches" (Cooper, 2018). As there are many definitions of "civil society," there are many civil society actors-including churches, community associations, trade unions, and NGOs-which do not offer a single voice or position, nor always act collectively among themselves.

Civil society occupies an important position in the development dialogue as it provides opportunities to bring communities together for collective action, mobilising society to articulate demands and voice concerns at local, national, regional and international levels (AfDB, 2012). Civil society groups also provide services such as education and healthcare. However, problems of development can also be cultural, requiring civil society to face its own prejudices and injustices (Sen, 2009).

Aid Conditionalities

According to Moyo, (2009) aids are;

"Large systematic cash transfers from rich countries to African governments have tended to be in the form of concessional loans (that is, money lent at below market interest rates, and often for much longer lending periods than ordinary commercial markets) or grants (which is essentially money given for nothing in return)".

On the other hand, the term '**Conditionality'** is an ugly addition to the English language with which government officials in indebted countries have become all too familiar (Killick, 1996). Conditionality has been defined succinctly by Kahler (1992) as "an exchange of policy changes for external financing". In the context of this assignment, conditionality refers to policy changes which an aid donor agency stipulates a government must undertake in order to obtain, or retain, access to the donor's financial support; it is an exchange of money for policy action. It arises most frequently in connection with the 'adjustment' programmes of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank but bilateral donors have made greater use of it in recent years (Killick, 1996).

Local Development Agenda

A development agenda is a set of goals that guide a country's development over time. For example the United Nations has multiple development agendas, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). Local development preferences dwell on empowering communities, respecting individual and cultural contexts, and addressing specific national, regional and community challenges. These agendas prioritize participatory approaches, aiming to involve local stakeholders in decision-making processes. Thus, each country has its own initiative toward development. For instance, "The Nigeria Agenda 2050" this is a perspective plan designed to transform the country from a developing economy to an Upper-Middle Income Country (UMIC)", requiring a significant shift in the economic structure, towards competitiveness and value-added production that will give rise to a sustained increase in the country's per capita income. Local Development Agenda, however, may face several obstacles that can obstruct their success such as limited financial and technical resources that can hinder the implementation of locally driven development projects.

Civil Society

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have become much more central to the delivery of foreign aid over the last few decades, reflecting global trends in government that prioritize contracting out for services and other forms of public-private partnerships (Ebrahim 2005). Just as the New Public Management (NPM) movement promoted the market and private sector initiatives as alternatives to public agencies in many countries, foreign aid began to shift away from direct funding of governments in favour of civil society organizations (CSOs)

and decentralized development programs (World Bank 2000). Concerns about corrupt or weak institutions in recipient countries added impetus for decentralization and devolution in foreign aid, as did the emergence of rights-based approaches to development and donor optimism about CSOs as agents of democratization (Nelson and Dorsey 2003; Schmitz and Mitchell 2016).

Statement of the Research Problem

In most developing country and post-conflict settings, donors have actively encouraged the growth of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and used them as implementing partners for donor programs. Foreign aid either as a programme, project, transfer of skill, grants, loans or service etc is driven by interest of not only the government(s) but also other relevant actors. The fact that activities around foreign aid are carried out by human beings who naturally have interest which may be national, organizational or personal strengthens this argument and opens up windows of interrogations on level of consistency or inconsistency of the interests. Looking at it from government perspective, Nye (2008) contends that foreign aid is a foreign policy instrument used in form of attraction by a donor country to affect other recipient country's decision towards a particular outcome.

The novelty of this paper is accentuated on the impact of external foreign funding or aid oncivil society and local development preferences in Nigeria. Consequently, this paper is motivated in two specific ways. Firstly, it interrogates the impact of foreign aid on local development priorities in Nigeria. Secondly, it examines the impact of foreign funding and conditionalities on civil society in the discharge of their responsibilities.This informed the need for this study with a view to dissect and analyses specific effects of foreign funding on civil society in Nigeria, the role of conditionalities and local development preference. This is in congruent with the opinion of Riddell (2018) that foreign donors are driven by diverse interests that include humanitarian aid, developmental objective, solidarity, economic reason, strategic political motive and promoting fundamental human rights and sometime they act as conspirators of the receiver's nations.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study, therefore, are to

i. Examine the influence of externally related funding and its impacts on changing the direction of local policies and development agendas in Nigeria.

ii. Evaluate tradeoffs if any between the role of civil societies and aid conditionalities on economic, political and social development of Nigeria

Empirical and Theoretical Explanations

Development aid has always been, of course, with implicit conditionality, since the 1960s economic assistance from the industrialized nations has been provided in return for political support and geo-strategic advantage while it is a welcome shift from such practices, the more recent policy agenda remains controversial and problematic. A long-standing complaint about the use of conditionality, particularly as practised by the Intemational Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and other donor organizations, that their policy stipulations infringe the sovereignty of the recipient countries (Killick, 1996). The imposition of donor-driven conditions can lead to a misalignment with local development agendas. When aid is used to promote reforms that do not consider local contexts or priorities, it can result

in policies that are ineffective or even harmful. For instance, the push for privatization of essential services (for example, Structural Adjustment Programm (SAP) 1986 in Nigeria) without adequate consideration of local capacities and needs can lead to reduced access and quality of services for the population.

Conditionalities attached to the use of some of the resources of the International Monetary Fund, for example, imply that a member government must satisfy the Fund that it will use the credit to support a programme of domestic policies that are designed to correct payments deficits (Killick, 1984). Even though the policies that are demanded for the use of the Fund's resources vary from case to case, they are invariably made up of a package of macroeconomic policies which recipient countries are expected to implement. These include "restrictions on monetary growth, and public expenditure, and often include devaluation, increases in taxes or public utility prices or wages control" (Mosley, 1991). There are tradeoffs between these conditionalities and the economic, political, social development of the country concern. Nigerian economy (2023-date) is a near perfect example of this predicament.

Furthermore, Damvisa, (2009) opined that, large sums of aid, and a culture of aid-dependency, also encourage governments to support large, unwieldy and often unproductive public sectors just another way to reward their cronies. In his research, Boone (1996) finds that the net result of aid-dependency is that instead of having a functioning Africa, managed by Africans, for Africans, what is left is one where outsiders attempt to map its destiny and call the shots. Given the state of affairs, it is hardly surprising that, though ostensibly high on the global agenda, the Africa discourse has been usurped by pop stars and Western politicians. Rarely, if ever, are the Africans elected by their own people heard from on the global stage. And even though, as discussed earlier, the balance of power may have shifted supposedly in favour of the African policymakers, it is still the donors who are in the policymaking driving seat (which might help explain why, over the last five decades, independent African policymaking and national economic management have diminished considerably). So aid-dependency only further undermines the ability of Africans and Nigeria inclusive, whatever their station, to determine their own best economic and political policies. Such is the all-pervasive culture of aid dependency that there is little or no real debate on an exit strategy from the aid quagmire.

Empirical literature reviewed maitained that the effect of foreign aid could be positive or negative some studies that found a positive relationship between foreign aid conditionalities and local development preference include Ali, Dalmar& Ali, (2018), Ebaidalla, Elshakh, &Mustaf (2018), Giri, Mohapatra, &Sehrawat (2016) and Tadesse, (2011). While on the other hand those that found a negative relationships were Abokyi, Forster, Konadu, &Twerefou (2016), Javid&Qayyum (2011), Tendongho (2016). Similarly, in Nigeria, Amassoma&Mbah (2014), Bakare (2011), Kolawole (2013) concluded that aggregate foreign aid hurt local development agendas. Reviewed studies on the effect of conditionalities attached to foreign aid agreed that when foreign aid is conditioned, each component affected the local development agendas differently and the results were quite different from what was obtainable using unconditional aid. (Javid&Qayyum, 2011; Kargbo&Sen, 2014; and Iyabo&Taofik, 2015). In Nigeria, most studies focused on the use of unconditional foreign aid to examine how aid affected Nigeria's development but little effort has been made so far to consider the conditional

aid and their conclusions that foreign aid when conditioned had a negative effect on growth and local agendas.

The commitment of foreign donors and partners in assisting Nigeria to address numerous security challenges bedeviling the country has come under serious scrutiny. As Eeben (2018) puts it "The absence of effective direction and assistance with operational planning in anti bokoharam operations in Northern Nigeria widely undermined the effectiveness of Western defence engagement. In the critical application phase of converting doctrine and theory into military practice, most regular Nigerian army platoons were left on their own Western Special Forces teams would only embed sporadically with Nigeria Special Forces. Much of this training is focused on window-dressing, but when you look through the window, the room is empty". This opinion is at variance with the submission of Boutton& Carter (2013) that foreign donors are interested in combating transnational security challenges such as Bokoharam in Nigeria because their interests in the country are more endangered. The influence of foreign aid is especially noticeable in recipient nations with the greatest degree of transnational insecurity since there is a tendency that the donor interest will likely increase proportionately with the rate of transnational terrorism.

Furthermore, democracy is now an accepted attachment to much bilateral aid. Even though there is as yet no clear evidence to suggest that western democracy makes development goals more achievable (Sen, 2009). The a priori assumption is that since most donors and most developed and prosperous countries have democratic governments, then there must be a link between democracy and development. This issue is contentious and is one of the current issues at the heart of development studies and the political economy of international finance. The cases of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are worth mentioning here. With military junta in these francophone countries they are experiencing economic growth far more than the democratic regime they toppled.

Put differently, goals of foreign aid are mostly reflections of local powers in donor nations which by extension govern various interests in foreign aid offered to recipient nations (Olsson &Wohlgemuth, 2003; Brainard&Chollet, 2007). Foreign donation or aid is driven by interest of not only the government(s) but also other relevant actors. The fact that activities around foreign aid are carried out by human beings who naturally have interest which may be national, organizational or personal strengthens this argument and opens up windows of interrogations on level of consistency or inconsistency of the interests. Looking at it from government perspective,

Nye (2008) contends that foreign funding is a foreign policy instrument used in form of attraction by a donor country to affect other recipient country's decision towards a particular outcome. Moreover, the United States of America is known to be the most generous donor in terms of foreign aid to Nigeria and many other underdeveloped and developing nations which have strengthened the bilateral trade relationship between America and Nigeria alongside other countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa. To show that US was the single donor country recorded to hugely and greatly supported other needy countries in Africa through foreign aid and foreign direct investment, the table below serve as a proof. Recently, there was an allegation that USAID finances meant to support Locally Displace Persons (LDPs) was used to sponsor Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria. The suasiveness of this position is stressed in the

opinion of Moosa (2016, 93) that "most donors still connect their own self-centred interests, including those related to politics, insecurity, strategy, trade, culture and ideology, with the likely granting of foreign aid. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that donors entertain strong intentions to accomplish these self-centred interests while paying little attention to the failure of foreign aid programmes.

Sulaiman (2016) recorded the US foreign aid received by Nigeria between 2010 – 2015 ranging to $3 billion, again, in January 2016, US government donated 24 Mine- Resistant and Armor-Protected (MRAP) vehicles valued $11 million, a new warship tagged NNS Okpabana 80 foot flight deck. The US government through USAID provided over $526.7 million humanitarian help starting from 2017 that qualified them to be the single largest bilateral humanitarian donor to Nigeria (USAID, 2018). And lastly, on January 15, 2015, Johnnie Carson (Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs) proposed increased ties between America and Nigeria as to assist in Nigeria's upcoming general 2015 election which was capital intensive (Carson, 2015).

The US Mission Nigeria in 2014 noted that as a follow up, America Defense Departments were involved in a fund raising to the tune of $40 million global security contingency fund for countries like; Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria to use in countering terrorist groups such as Boko Haran in Nigeria. Equally, it is on record that the Us Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the survived family members of the abducted chibok girls through a $4.5 million, five year (2010 – 2015) programme. The USAID introduced all kinds of training for the teams in Borno which happen to be the dean of these Boko haram. Those social workers were trained on psycho- social aspect of life as to be able to sensitize the community members (US Mission Nigeria, 2014).

Moreover, one of the earliest critics of aid was a Hungarian-born London School of Economics economist, Peter Bauer. At a time when the pro-aid model enjoyed wide support, Bauer was a lone dissenting voice, many of his writings drawing on his personal experience as a colonial officer studying the rubber industry in Malaysia and Nigeria. He saw what should have been flourishing industries wrecked by huge aid subsidies that rarely reached the indigent in the recipient country. Aid, Bauer argued, interfered with development as the money always ended up in the hands of a small chosen few, making aid a 'form of taxing the poor in the west to enrich the new elites in former colonies'. Bauer argued most strongly that aid-based theories and policies were wholly inconsistent with sound economic reasoning and, indeed, with reality.

In his survey of charitable organization financing in Global South, Schiffrin (2017) reveals that the conflicting interest among parties (donors and recipients) which manifested in editorial partiality and overzealousness of reporters to please foreign donors. Narrowing it down to foreign donor's agenda stetting in Nigeria, Myers (2018) quotes a Punch Newspaper director as "I've always believed that funders usually have an agenda and try to get you to subscribe to it. But I'm like "no, what you think we need is not necessarily what we need" (The donor) comes with an idea and my role is to circumscribe that and define what would be appealing to our readers". In the same vein, a Premium Times publisher observes "pick and choose our donors for example [we partner with] Open Society because our interests coincide (Mostly) we don't reject the funding that's on offer for example, LGBT rights issue are currently the fashion [among donors] but we have no problem with this—we go for it from

the human rights angle. The strategy we have already defined is clear" (Myers, 2018). Premised on this discussion is the negative impact of conflicting interest on foreign aid in recipient countries such as Nigeria.

Lancaster (2007) explains the type of motives existing among actors in foreign aid. The actors may be private individuals, formal or informal institutions with some interests or purpose in initiating and executing measures in the process of foreign aid. These players have developed their own procedures and targets with hidden motives. Their interests may vary but they have clear strategies for influencing foreign donors externally and internationally thereby achieving their objectives. With the instrumentality of bilateral and multinational institutions responsible for foreign aid initiatives in recipient nations, these actors can influence the tools and strategies for executing foreign aid interventions. Schiffrin (2017) reveals that the conflicting interest among parties (donors and recipients) which manifested in editorial partiality and overzealousness of reporters to please foreign donors, narrowing it down to foreign donor's agenda stetting in Nigeria, Put differently, goals of foreign aid are mostly reflections of local powers in donor nations which by extension govern various interests in foreign aid offered to recipient nations (Olsson &Wohlgemuth, 2003; Brainard&Chollet, 2007).

In addition the nexus between aid conditionalities imposed by donor countries and the development agendas of recipient nations has long been a subject of debate, to mitigate these tensions, there is a growing advocacy for a more collaborative approach to aid between the donors and the recipients (Moyo, 2009) emphasized that, Donor-imposed conditions may not always align with the recipient country's development priorities. This misalignment can lead to the implementation of policies that do not address the unique needs of the local population. For example, structural adjustment programs (SAP) in the past have mandated reductions in public spending on essential services like health and education, adversely affecting the most vulnerable communities. Thus, conditionalities may not align with the recipient country's immediate development needs or cultural contexts. For instance, the push for trade liberalization as a condition for aid can adversely affect local industries that are not prepared for international competition.While there are obvious and fundamental merits to emergency aid for instance, criticisms can be levelled against it as well as against charitable giving. Charities are often criticized, with some justification, for poor implementation, high administrative costs and the fact that they are on occasion coerced to do their donor government's bidding-despite the obvious lack of relevance to a local context. For example, in 2005, the United States pledged US$15 billion over five years to fight AIDS. But this had strings attached. Two thirds of the money had to go to pro-abstinence programmes, and would not be available to any organizations with clinics that offered abortion services or even counseling.

Put differently however,(Bulow, 2002) possessed a counter opinion by arguing that it is the imposition of external conditions that can undermine a country's ownership of its development agenda. When policies are perceived as externally driven, it can lead to resistance and reduce their effectiveness. The concept of "country ownership" emphasizes that development strategies should be formulated and owned by the countries themselves, ensuring that policies are contextually relevant and have local support. Sovereignty concerns may be perceived as a violation of national sovereignty, fostering resentment and resistance among local populations and governments. Donors,

development agencies and policymakers have, by and large, chosen to ignore the blatant alarm signals, and have continued to pursue the aid-based model even when it has become apparent that aid, under whatever guise, is not working. Even when aid has not been stolen, it has been unproductive.

Studies have shown that while community-driven development programs aim to improve local infrastructure and governance, they can inadvertently intensify violence in the short term due to increased resources and shifting power balances. To mitigate this, there is the need to recognize the importance of local contexts to ensure that aid interventions are tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of communities, fostering greater ownership and sustainability. Therefore, aid is defined as the sum total of both concessional loans and grants. It is these "billions that have hampered stifled and retarded Africa's development" (Moyo, 2009). Aid has not lived up to expectations. It remains at the heart of the development agenda, despite the fact that there are very compelling reasons to show that it perpetuates the cycle of poverty and derails sustainable economic growth. Additionally, incorporating local knowledge and expertise into the design and implementation of development projects can enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

Theoretical and Methodological Explanations

The study adopted a qualitative 'case-study' research design. In understanding case study designs, Gerring (2004) conceptualises it as an intensive study of a unit having a specific spatially bounded construct, phenomenon or geography like a state, nation, political party, revolution or a person that are observed in a single point in time within a (de)limited period of time. In this regard, Nigeria was taken as a single case study because the study aims to analyse whether aid from external donors influenced the internal development agenda in Nigeria and how these aid negatively affected the desire progress that is needed for the betterment of the general public.

To this end, data from secondary sources were collected regarding external aid disbursements and other dealings with Nigeria, the research adopted a purposeful sampling of data for the study; Maxwell (2012) notes that qualitative researchers often make use of purposeful sampling, rather than probability sampling in the study because it helps sieve rich and relevant text of documents that are germane to the research.

Conspiracy Theory

From the theoretical perspectives Conspiracy theory was utilized which seeks to explain an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy without warrant, generally one involving an illegal or harmful act carried out by government or other powerful actors such as intergovernmental organizations (ING) or Non-governmental organizations (NGO's), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African Development Bank (AfDB), International Rescue Committee (IRC), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to mention but a few, conspiracy theories often produce hypotheses that contradict the prevailing understanding of history or simple facts. The modern study of conspiracy theory began in the 1960s by a historian Richard Hofstadter in his seminar essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"

The term "conspiracy or conspiracism" was further popularized by academic Frank P. Mintz in the 1980s. According to Mintz (1998), conspiracism denotes "belief in the primacy of

conspiracies in the unfolding of history" The term conspiracy is used for a belief that explains an event as the result of a secret plot by exceptionally powerful and cunning conspirators to achieve a malevolent end. According to Barkun (2000), maintain that the appeal of conspiracism is threefold as follows:

According to the Michael (2003) Conspiracy theories rely on the view that the universe is governed by design, and embody three principles: nothing happens by accident, nothing is as it seems, and everything is connected. Another common feature is that conspiracy theories evolve to incorporate whatever evidence exists against them, so that they become, as Barkun (2000), writes a closed system that is unfalsifiable, and therefore "a matter of faith rather than proof. It is evident that most of the activities of most especially international donor organisations constitute some element of conspiricism like what is happening in Nigeria and many other nations across the globe.

First, conspiracy theories claim to explain what institutional analysis cannot. They appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing.

Second, they do so in an appealingly simple way, by dividing the world sharply between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. They trace all evil back to a single source, the conspirators and their agents.

Third, conspiracy theories are often presented as special, secret knowledge unknown or unappreciated by others. For conspiracy theorists, the masses are a brainwashed herd, while the conspiracy theorists in the know can congratulate themselves on penetrating the plotters' deceptions

Walker, (2013) has developed a historical typology of four basic kinds of conspiracy theories:

The "Enemy Outside" is based on devilish figures mobilizing outside the community and scheming against it.The "Enemy Within" find the conspirators lurking inside the nation, indistinguishable from ordinary citizens.The "Enemy Above" involves powerful people manipulating the system for their own gain.The "Enemy Below" features the lower classes ready to break through their constraints and overturn the social order.

The theory is relevant bearing in mind that Nigeria is a developing country and finds itself in alliance with the developed countries such as United States of America particularly. Nigeria is described as a developing and for this reason does not have all it takes to advance to become a developed one, hence the need for partnership and engagement in bilateral relations with the countries of the advance societies, not excluding the United States of America indeed, the tie between Nigeria and US is a strong one that Nigeria depends on US for aid to achieve its development goals. Over the years, Nigeria depends on the United Sates for foreign aid to either strengthen military capacity, improvement in the electoral system, reduction in poverty rate and development in general while this relationship exist on the other hand element of conspiracy do exist as it was alleged that United State of America through some donor organizations were sponsoring insecurity most especially Boko Haram and IS affiliate in the Lake Chad Basin. It is against this backdrop of unequal relationship that this research adopts the conspiracy Theory to dissect the theory base on the three principles that: nothing happens by accident, nothing is as it seems, and everything is connected, with a view to investigate the

impact of foreign funding on civil society, conditionalities and local development priorities.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that, the given aid is shrouded with hidden agenda from donors who set unbearable conditionality, hard to meet to yield desired results. At one hand, the inefficacy of foreign aid to eradicate issues such as insecurity, displace persons, poverty, implication of this result is that most aid funds are channeled to unproductive use thereby limiting the great potentials of foreign aid in promoting growth by bridging the savings and foreign exchange gaps by promoting the hidden agenda set by the donor nation. The study also showed that, the nature of foreign funding on civil society in Nigeria involves grants, capacity building, finance development projects' support, supplementing national budget, debt relief, aid to attain the set Millennium Development Goal which were supposed to lead Nigeria to development. Loans and grants given to accelerate poverty reduction programs have shown little aptitude to reduce poverty and insecurity.

Conclusion

More than US$2 trillion of foreign aid has been transferred from rich countries to poor over the past fifty years-Africa the biggest recipient, by far. Yet regardless of the motivation for aid-giving economic, political or moral aid has failed to deliver the promise of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. Nigeria after independence has received a significant share of external donations to support the provision of infrastructures or other services within the nation, at every turn of the development tale of the last five decades, while aid conditionalities are designed to promote positive reforms, they can sometimes conflict with local development agendas, leading to tensions that affect the effectiveness and sustainability of aid. Addressing these challenges requires a re-evaluation of aid practices, emphasizing respect for local contexts, promoting genuine partnerships, and ensuring that aid supports, rather than dictates, the development priorities of recipient countries.

Recommendations

Firstly, this study recommends an independent commission should be established in an aid receiving nations like Nigeria that will be responsible for overseeing the receipt and utilization of foreign aid and ensuring it's channeled appropriately to relevant sectors for economic prosperity.

Secondly the Nigerian government should negotiate and accept foreign assistance programme that have the potential of addressing the critical development challenges of her citizens. This can be done by creating an effective link between the recipient government, her citizens (the suppose direct beneficiaries) and the donor countries/agencies; to ascertain areas that constitute or poses as challenge to the beneficiaries quest for development, to give the donor countries/agencies the prior knowledge of the critical development challenges or areas of the recipients and how they can intervene.

Thirdly, the directions of foreign aid or assistance that has been dictated to be political and strategic in considerations more than by the socio-economic needs of the beneficiaries should be properly directed objectively and focus on critical sectors affecting the socio-economic needs of the recipients and beneficiaries.

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