

The Fulcrum of Dangotisation in the Nigeria Modern Society: Trajectory and Implications

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the characters and social influence of Dangote Conglomerate in Nigeria's contemporary society. The assumption is premised on the theoretical exposition of Henry Ford's exploitation in the 19th-century innovation in manufacturing business which produced Fordism in modern society of USA and beyond and the McDonalds' business sense which pioneered fast food conglomerates all over America, Europe, and Asia, this produced McDonaldisism from the mid-20th century and central to the analysis of Postmodernism and globalisation. In Nigeria, the peculiarity of Aliko Dangote's business sense started in the 1970s and increasingly expanded with much resilience is characterized by diversification, governmental support, focus on extractive raw materials, cascaded chains of retail outlets, non-partisanship relationship with political leadership, business brand not separated from ownership, rational aloofness from traditional inclinations, philanthropism, monopolistic inclination, strategic multilevel partnership, most popular brand name in Nigeria, focus on necessity products for household and industrial uses, and exposure to blizzards. Max Weber's theory of rationalisation and Marxist critique of modernity were adapted to explain this Dangotisation. The quest for social order should be tied to the understanding and strategic response to the strengths, weaknesses, and prospects of Dangotisation in Nigeria's social systems.

Keywords: Dangotisation, modern society, socio-economic order, industrial innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria could not be tagged as pre-modern in the 21st century, Nigeria is therefore modern with obvious manifestation of the characteristics of Western modern epochal traits like urbanization, increasing capitalism, industrialism, social mobility, centralized political democracy overshadowing monarchy, rational Christianity, and all the evils produced by those traits with very weak governmental capacity to ameliorate the degradation of large masses of people and the rapid growth of urban life in which everything was sacrificed for profit by the political and private bourgeois. Central to modern societies is the economic life of the people which is not independent of the families, political, and religious life. For instance, Calvinism, or protestant religion which wrestled against and above catholic doctrine in 19th century Europe was both a religious and economic substructure as explained by Max Weber, and an expression of capitalism as criticized by classical Marxists (Labinjoh, 2002)

Nigeria could be said to have entered the modern society stage with stable liberal democracy since 1999 after intermittent military rulership through seven coup d'états between 1966 and 1999 marked by social disorder or turbulence reminiscent of 18th century France, Germany, and Great Britain. Just like the Enlightenment period produced a new wave of religiosity, economic system, intellectual rationalism and empiricism, and mass agricultural production, the pre-1999 agitation for democracy and liberalism produced many public

interventions in health care, education, business opportunities, and industrialisation through governmental interventions. Aliko Dangote started his business empire in trading, manufacturing, and agro-allied industries. This has been a model and brand in private sector entrepreneurship, partnership, diversification, governmental support, focus on extractive raw materials, cascaded chains of retail outlets, non-partisanship relationship with political leadership, business brand not separated from ownership, rational aloofness from traditional inclinations, philanthropism, monopolistic inclination, strategic multilevel partnership and enmeshed in serial controversies, a little like the brand of Fordism and McDonaldisation in the Western world. This brand is the focus of this paper as a case of modernity in the quest for social and economic transformation in Nigeria. Modernity is a strange socio-economic dichotomy in Africa since its definition in space and time is ambiguous.

For Africa, modernity has been equated to post-colonial in political, economic, and social aesthetic contexts with modernization as the process. Modernisation is the process where undeveloped nations from colonial days, especially African nations, catch up with the Europe and America of the 20th century through borrowing and assimilation of Western political, economic, religious, and aesthetic practices (Imafidon, 2020). The more political democracy, the more economic liberalism, industrialisation, imports of finished consumer and industrial goods, and capitalism, the more Christianity especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and the more adaptation of popular cultures from the Western world, the more modern the African nation. The critical theoretical perspective of this process is the dependency theory originally from Paul Baran and Andre Gunde Frank which sees Modernity as nothing but the creation of Western development ideology. Contrary to modernisation theory which justifies colonialism, post-colonialism, or imperialism as an intervention to help third-world nations from poverty, illiteracy, leadership gap, and squalor or what Thomas Hobbes called the state of nature, Dependency theorists traced the underdevelopment of Africa and Latin America to the infiltration of the western world until these Africa and Latin America indigenise their societal structures, development becomes elusive. However, there has been increasing interest in the best-fit model for sustainable development, especially in Africa how far can the Western model of development and halting dependency should go in Africa? The reality of this development path continues to be the political discourse, especially in the 21st century, that the inevitability of integrating the positive functions of westernisation and indigenisation (Drew, 2023). (Cohen, 2007).

This paper is part of sociological discourse to indigenize the study of modernism and industrialism in Africa especially Nigeria cascading the intellectual model of Fordism and McDonaldisation so much espoused so much by Anthony Giddens and George Ritzer. This will assist in situating the path of modernity of economy, politics and culture as they impact social life in non-western nations especially sub-Saharan Africa. Dangote business in Africa nucleus in Nigeria is a process of building economic infrastructure and sustainable industrialisation through its business innovativeness in Nigeria. Social Sciences should also direct its intellectual lenses to study this.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The contribution to the sociological discourse on the socio-economic development by Dangotisation is guided by Max Weber's theory of rationalisation especially the inevitable bureaucratisation of modern and capitalist societies of 20th century focusing on four principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Weber & Kalberg, 2013). The thesis of Max Weber directly motivated George Ritzer also to adopt these principles to analyse the social imports of McDonaldisation of the 20th century and beyond, with the elucidation of control as the dominant use of technology and the irrationality of the rationality (Ritzer & Stepnisky (2014). Giddens (2014) equally identified four basic institutions inherent in modernity which are capitalism, industrialism, surveillance capacities, and military power or the control of the means of violence. While Ritzer's analysis of modernity is all about the society as a whole but Giddens' analysis is about the state or political leadership institution. The traditional intellectual acrimony between Max Weberism and Marxism is best appreciated in the evaluation of modernity or capitalism.

Classical Marxism on the other hand affirms the inevitability of increasing capitalism and globalised modernity through colonial and postcolonial or imperialist conquests. The internationalization of bourgeois and proletariat conflictual relationship with the bourgeois having control of production, manpower, and the market is using the core-periphery analogy. As Europe and America have stronger capitalism, they internationalise their markets to weak nations recruiting peripheral capitalists/bourgeois class. Therefore the acculturation of core and peripheral nations into the capitalist system is globalization, which creates a world after the image of the West. Therefore the proletariat in poor nations witnessed the negative dimension of daring capitalism especially various forms of alienation, socio-political exploitation, and the ascendancy of ideology for class control in politics, religion, aesthetics, and economic life. In the periphery nations of Africa, here Nigeria, a proletariat society with the collaboration of periphery bourgeois will experience the same woes worse for the lower class (Klak 2008). But as Marxism views the negative side of capitalism, modernity, and industrialism at the global level, its recommendation for an overthrow of the hegemony through class struggle, or revolution looks elusive except to rely on the neo-dependency theory recommendations for the global south including Nigeria to engage in strategic effective evaluation of the globalised socio-economic engagement in terms of sustainability, increase imports substitution programme through home-grown technology, and comparative advantage focusing on goods, services and manpower, transparent democratic participation and accountability, unbridled socio-economic mobility and authority (Conway and Heynen 2008, Marx and Engels 1967). These two modern theories of Rationalisation of and Marxism by which were refined by Giddens' Modernism and Dependency theory respectively formed the guide for this analysis in this paper.

CONCEPTUALISING DANGOTISATION

Ritzer and Stepnisky (2014) described Fordism as associated with the modern era, and "refers to the idea, principles, and systems spawned by Henry Ford. Henry Ford is credited with the development of the modern mass production system" in the United States of America characterised by 10 industrial work and personnel practices. Fordism was the model of work ethics in the 20th century USA but declined due to the rise of the Japanese automobile industry in the 1970s. That is, the opening up of Americans to imports from Japan. This to scholars marked the onset of post-Fordism and Postmodernism in the USA society. Fordism served as a model for work ethics, work, and business organisations. The key features of automobile production include mass production, standardisation, specialisation, and prioritising worker's living wages and welfare. These helped to bridge gaps between the rich and poor since vehicles were designed to be made affordable to the general population but weakened by sudden exposure to international competition, especially from Japan.

McDonaldisation also known as McDonaldisation is much linked to the theoretical exposition of George Ritzer in describing the uniqueness of later 20th-century American society, especially the fact that modernity as theorised by Max Weber has changed due to cross-national expansion. While Max Weber hinged on increasing bureaucratisation of social structures to explain rationality, Ritzer instead identified McDonald's fast food restaurants to describe the transformation of modern society to the next phase of social development on a global scale. McDonald's fast food was started in 1940 by the McDonald brothers in San Bernardino, California popular for its speedy preparation of the menu and by 1955 became a franchise company excised from the family business of the McDonald brothers. Ray Kroc bought the name as part of the franchise deal and by 1965 it became a publicly quoted company with wide expansion across the USA, 1000 locations in the 1970s, and moving to Europe and Asia by the 1980s. It became an international brand, adapting its menu also to local or non-American tastes and menu. It is also reputed to have a dynamic menu that is specific to the nutritional needs of the clients like the aged, and other healthier food options. As a global brand, it has over 38,000 locations in over 100 nations and employs over 210,000 people. While the Ford automobile industry suffered a loss of patronage of the opening up of America to Japanese vehicles in the 1970s, McDonald's fast food business experienced global reach during the same period. That is, Ford's business empire plummeted with the increasing international economy but it was a boost to McDonald's business. (Hannerz, 1992) described McDonald's in the international market as promoting American business

culture with fear of Americanisation or business domination by European nations just like cocacolonisation by the Coca-Cola brand outside of America, Ritzer popularised the five dimensions of McDonaldisation as: ‘efficiency, calculability, predictability, control through the substitution of technology for people, and paradoxically, the irrationality of rational’ Ritzer (2014: 581-583). These make the brand to be emulated by many other concerns. Certainly, its worldwide appeal has been enormous (Cohen and Kennedy 2007).

Dangotisation can also be an interest in understanding the modernity or the dimensions of the cultural, social, and economic structures of Nigeria which interdependently affect Nigeria society in all areas. The nation of Nigeria and Aliko Dangote's business empire are intertwined. Salient dimensions of Dangotisation include; a model for entrepreneurial development, business focus, amoebic expansion, monopolistic approach, passivity to social parochialism, modelled business diversification, and consumer's need capture and on dysfunction side, aloofness to environmental impact, extractive business impacting communal acrimony, a contributor to industrial pollution, monopolistic business sense, and personification of the brand,

The fact is that in a resource-poor society and from a relatively wealthy family, Dangote had to take a loan from his uncle in 1977 to expand his business plan and migrated from Kano (in Northern Nigeria far from the seaport) to Lagos (the most urban city and Nation's capital with the most flourishing seaport), being nucleus to his importation of goods trade. Modernity at the onset of the Industrial Revolution subsequently entailed risk-taking and rational decisions outside of one's family and religious values. His decision conforms to Max Weber's rational purposeful action which also is socially pragmatic, that is decision that is thoughtful, reflective, and cautious outside of traditional and feudalistic orientations (Khusdil 2019).

The Dangote business started as a trading business in the importation of rice, sugar, and cement for local markets and later ventured into full-scale trading and this progressed into a conglomerate trading cement, sugar, flour, salt, and fish. It dominates the sugar market in the country, supplying soft drinks manufacturers, breweries, and confectioners. The Dangote Group has 13 subsidiaries spread all over Nigeria including salt, flour, pasta, noodles, logistics, real estate, telecommunications, steel, oil, and gas among others, and operates in 14 African countries (BusinessChief 2020). Recently, no household in Nigeria especially can do without any of Dangote products directly or indirectly in terms of consumption. Dangotisation has in its brand, adaptation, dynamics, and strategic response to social and industrial needs, unlike Fordism.

The expansion of the Dangote Business Empire shows resilience and follows the biological reproduction system. This is shown in the wholesale and retail outlets of its products across Nigeria and Africa. For instance, Kuforiji (2021), listed 47 Dangote Cement distribution depots in Nigeria which also service networks of medium and small retail shops using branded iron kiosks and sheds. Dangote Cement is also in operation in 10 other African nations. This is the pattern for all its other products making it the most accessible product in Nigeria after local foodstuffs, soft drinks, and ISP vouchers. Thousands of Nigerians are in this marketing chain. The most remarkable is the notoriety of Dangote Trucks and Lorries across Nigeria roads.

Dangote's Conglomerate operation has been likened to monopoly capitalism with the moves to outplay and neutralise its competitors, especially in the manufacturing activities like cement, sugar, and oil refinery. Itaman and Wolf (2019) explained this vividly; ‘Mapping Dangote's business activities across sectors and levels of production shows evidence of backward linkages, including upscaling across domestic and regional value chains...emerging monopoly capitalism carries with it the fruit of fragile accumulation to the extent that price-setting power, tax evasion and control over wages undermines the growth of purchasing power’ Shuaib (2024), described this also as monopolistic oligarchy with the connivance, negligence or collaboration of political leadership with private sector business elites. The author cited the establishment of Transcorp Corporation in 2005 by the government of General Olusegun Obasanjo as evidence of undue government patronage of private sector business moguls to stifle business just competition (Shuaib 2024). Dangote Conglomerate has severally been accused of underhand dealings to have market control of sugar, salt, cement, fertilizer, and other products by neutralizing or weakening competitors' business strength. (Business Hallmark 2017, BusinessDay News 2023).

Another dimension of the brand, Dangotisation is the salient passivity to socio-cultural parochialism. Parochialism according to Romans, Sutter, James, Yamagishi & Balliet (2021) is the tendency to cooperate more with ingroup than outgroup members which limits contributions to global public goods. Dangote has in all social spheres been passive in exclusively associating with his ethnic, religious, and political ingroups as against the out-groups. Though born into Hausa ethnic group family, he migrated to the Lagos in southwest to start his booming business and since 1977 has remained in the area, he established his cement factory, fertilizer factory, and crude oil refinery in the Southern part of Nigeria except the Tomato processing factory and farms located in Kano. It is therefore rational economics guiding his decision, especially closeness to raw materials and major markets and not cultural or ethnic non-rational affiliation. Equally, as a practicing Muslim and learned in both Arabic and Islamic studies, religious fundamentalism and centrism have not been linked to him. His religiosity has been inclusive and peaceful notwithstanding the religious-linked violence in both the Northwest and Northeast zones of the country and the allusion that affluent personalities are sponsors of the widespread violence. In the national politics of Nigeria, Dangote's interest has not been obviously and consistently partisan but proactive in supporting the federal government's political leadership irrespective of political party. The non-partisanship of the brand is obviously to immune the business conglomerate from the higgledy-piggledy of partisan politics in Nigeria.

Another pattern of Dangotisation, that is dynamic and strategically filling the gaps of consumer needs at a wider societal level. All the products are targeting already waiting customers in Nigeria and other African nations. Consumers range from all demographic divides. For instance, Pasta is favourites for infants, children, and the youth in vey households, the sugar, salt, wheat flour, semolina, and rice are inevitable on the daily menu in every household, and farming activities always have an unmet need for fertilisers both in Nigeria and Africa, confectionery and bakery industry are constantly in need of flour while the crave for cement from manufacturers of cement in Nigeria can still not meet the customer's demand. The same is the recently commissioned. Dangote Oil refinery though said to be able to meet local demand just like the Dangote automobile (Peugeot) factory. In all Dangote products are for readymade markets. This business sense is similar to McDonaldisation in being dynamic to meet customers' local and international tastes and needs. Also like McDonaldisation, Dangotisation is a pro-export and import replacement production strategy though Dangote factories are mostly dependent on foreign technology and high-level technical manpower.

Aliko Dangote as the wealthiest person in Africa and the most impactful entrepreneur in Nigeria with the widest socio-economic reach across the country is the only non-politically partisan with the highest honour in the country-Grand Commander of the Order of Niger. This attests to his social acceptance and acknowledgement of his social impact in philanthropism, building new crops of entrepreneurs, national peace and bridge building dispositions, over 54,000 employees in his cement factories units across four African nations in 2019 is humongous and recently "The President/Chief Executive, Dangote Industries Limited, Aliko Dangote has disclosed plans to increase the human capacity at the Dangote Refinery Project site from 40,000 to 57,000 personnel".

Apart from the suspicion of Dangotisation enrooting monopolistic capture of the target market, there is the fact that management and ownership or proprietorship of Dangote Conglomerates is yet to be divorced is peculiarity of a billionaire business empire though already publicly quoted. It is a sour point on bureaucratisation of the modern society. Aliko Dangote remains the voice of the Conglomerate though the management team is structured and actively in place.

Thirdly there have been accusations and denial of breach of environmental sustainability in its operations. For instance in a study by Owokalu, Babatunde, Agbakwuru, and Omotayo (2023) about the environmental impact of Dangote Cement in Kogi State, though the factory and Dangote Group have a positive impact on employment and health infrastructure in the state, it hurts security and crime rate reduction. In its sustainability report for 2022, Dangote Sugar Refinery appraised the impact of its operation on host communities, in that report, 48 percent had a negative impact perception while 10 percent were neutral in their appraisal (Dangote Sugar 2022). National Daily Newspaper reported in 2021 that:

In those four (2014-2019) years, no fewer than 2,607 Nigerians were involved in 318 road accidents with the Sino-Truck vehicles the Dangote Group assembles for its use in Nigeria. In that period, about 54 percent of the road users fell victim: 377 died, 1040 got injured...Of all the registered fleet owners in Nigeria, Dangote Cement leads in road traffic crash casualty figures. The company's trucks were responsible for 96 percent to 98 percent of accidents that killed and injured those involved in RTC with the fleet operators within the period.

The alarming casualty figures have not abated. On all major roadsides of Nigeria are sights of abandoned, dismembered, and whacked bodies of Dangote Buses, Lorries, and or Trunks contributing negatively to environmental sanitation and aesthetics. This is less compared to the cries and sour memories of the loss of lives, properties, and disfigurement of bodies as victims of accidents by Dangote Vehicles contributing to volumes of widowhood, orphanages, and persons with disability in the country.

IMPLICATIONS OF DANGOTISATION

Positive implications will include: No doubt Dangote Group or Conglomerate tendencies in Africa have impacted social and political structures and across demographic divides (adolescence, Youth, adults, elderly, and gender). It serves as a model of business vision, development, and navigating across socio-political obstacles. Secondly, in the application of modernity principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control, Dangotisation is still a work in progress given the peculiarity of peripheral states of Africa compared to Western societies. Thirdly, Dangotisation has been able to face boldly the challenge of internationalisation of the brand, unlike Fordism and like McDonaldisation, and still growing though it is still an emerging business group. (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: Box 4:2).

Negative implications will include: The scare of inevitable competition at both local and global levels for all its production and marketing units. This demands strong government intervention especially to encourage healthy competition within the country and protect local businesses against unbridled imports that can rubbish local economic prospects which in turn can produce a local Fordist experience. Secondly, the Dangote extractive ventures and haulage activities have increasingly impact negatively the livelihood of the people, especially the community dwellers, rural, and lower class around the cement factories and inevitably the newest Crude Oil Refinery. This environment unfriendliness by Dangotisation must be addressed through broad based and comprehensive public legislation. Thirdly, the growth and expansion of Dangotisation has no prospect to significantly improve the economic class of the general population but to improve social status of its production process stake holders. Social alienation in the workplace with increasing wealth and economic accumulation at the detriment of both the workers and populace. Fourthly, the gains of the import substitution industrialisation plan, is not translating to low pricing of all its products for the population. This equally attests to the capitalist profiteering tendency.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that Aliko Dangote phenomenon took a cue from the trajectory of McDonaldisation that started in the last quarter of 20th Century taking advantage of globalisation. However rather than food chain industrial trend of the former, Dangotisation is diversified into food, energy, transport, mining, agriculture, education, and manufacturing and still expanding. With increasing industrialisation and private sector dominance of the economic space in Nigeria and Africa, the impact and models of Dangotisation will be conventional and promoting global capitalism.

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