

‘ZIK OF AFRICA’- AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE TO AFRICAN SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Austine Uchechukwu Igwe,

PhD, Department of History & International Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, P.M.B. 5025, Awka, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *The decolonization process in the last century led to the emergence of nationalists in many African states. In Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe emerged as a foremost nationalist, and later became the first indigenous Governor-General, first indigenous President/ head of State and Commander in-Chief of the Armed forces of immediate post-independent Nigeria, and participated in active politics up till the Presidential elections of 1983. Although, Nnamdi Azikiwe was a Nigeria by birth, but his contributions during the anti-colonial struggles was beyond Nigeria. He acquired his higher education laurels in the United States, began his journalism career in Ghana, while his intellectual contributions during the anti-colonial struggles positively influenced many people in Africa, especially in the Anglophone states. Against this backdrop, with the use of diverse secondary sources, this paper appraises the contributions of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to African socio-political and economic growth during the twentieth century. The paper concludes after a thorough appraisal that emerging African leaders should understudy the socio-political and economic philosophy of the late sage, which if well implemented could bring about the much desired good governance and sustainable socio-political growth in the continent before the end of the 21st century.*

KEYWORDS- Zik of Africa, New Africa, Neo-walfarism, Pan-Africanism, Nationalist

INTRODUCTION

Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria’s first indigenous Governor-General, as well as first President was one of the most popular African citizens of the twentieth century. The name Zik, means many things to many people, not only in Nigeria, but in most African states and among the rest of the black race in the New World and beyond. During the decades of decolonization of the last century, the name was synonymous with Pan-Africanism and emancipation of colonized peoples of Africa. Similarly, for the greater part of the twentieth century, a recurring decimal in Nigeria’s political history was Nnamdi Azikiwe- the “Great Zik of Africa”. During his life time, Nnamdi Azikiwe was a legend, who stood out among his contemporaries, and as at the time he passed on in May 1996 at the ripe age of 92, many described him as the “last of the titans”.

For virtually most period of his human existence, Nnamdi Azikiwe was a public figure, and as such was perceived by different persons from diverse perspectives. Thus, in the roles he played while still active, admirers, friends and foes had different interpretations of his involvement; especially in the evolution of the Nigerian state, the decolonization process and his participation

in the politics of post-independence Nigeria. Some members of his Igbo ethnic nationality are yet to understand his role in the Nigerian-Biafra civil war of 1967-January 1970. Even his activities in journalism, which he was among the pioneers in Africa with his group of newspapers was also misunderstood. In some of these interpretations of Zik's role in Nigeria's political evolution, with special emphasis on the nationalist struggles during the colonial period, Ikenna Nzimiro (1996:20-41) criticized the leadership style of Zik and felt that he betrayed his followers (the Zikists) when it mattered most.

Other than the above, names and appellations were used to describe the role of Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigerian politics. Specifically, during the politics of Nigeria's Second Republic(1979-1983) the Press dubbed him "the beautiful bride of Nigeria's politics"; while many other commentators argue that he was a specialist in internal political alliances to ensure he was part of the political process at any point in time. These arguments were premised on his antecedents in the politics of the First and Second Republics, when his political party entered into alliances with the party which won the majority votes to form the government in 1960 and 1979 respectively. There were also many others, who were ardent followers of Zik, who regarded him as the great Zik of Africa, who manifested boldness in the pursuit of justice on any course he deemed to be right. To this group, despite Zik's weaknesses as a human being, he was the father of African independence who was endowed with the political Pan- Africanist vision (Achebe, 2012:41).

It is based on the foregoing that this paper attempts to highlight the contributions of Nnamdi Azikiwe to the socio-political and economic growth of Africa in the twentieth century. Mindful of the existence of literatures on our subject, for clarity and purpose of analysis this paper will be based on the life and times of Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe (the Great Zik of Africa), and appraises his place in Nigerian and African history. Thus, from an objective thematic/chronological historical approach, the paper adopts an eclectic analytical framework and appraises the diverse roles of Zik, beginning with his early life and educational attainment, among others.

Early Life and Educational Attainment

From a humble background, Nnamdi Azikiwe was born on Wednesday, 16th November, 1904 in Zungeru, present Niger State, in North-central Nigeria to the family of Mr. Obededom Chukwuemeka Azikiwe and Mrs. Rachael Chinwe Azikiwe. Both parents were Igbo, indigenes of Onitsha, in the present Anambra State, South-eastern Nigeria. At the time of his birth, his father was a staff of the colonial government, and worked as a clerk with a section of the military department, the Nigerian Regiment, which constituted a unit of the British West African Frontier Force located at Zungeru, in what was then Wushishi District of Niger Province in the Northern Protectorate of colonial Nigeria. The young Nnamdi lived the first eight years of his life (1904-1912) in Zungeru, where he learnt and became conversant with the Hausa language, which shaped his life, and more importantly imbibed in him tolerance for differing views and culture from a tender age.

The educational career of the young Nnamdi began at Onitsha, his paternal home, where he commenced his first primary education at the Holy Trinity School of the Roman Catholic Mission in 1912. For Christian denominational reason, being a protestant by faith, his father ensured that he was moved from the Catholic Mission School to a school owned by one of the Protestant denominations. Consequently, between 1912 and 1915, the young Nnamdi attended many primary schools for denominational reason. Agbafor Igwe (1992:6) argues that during this period, the young Nnamdi, as a roving student “changed school as often as his civil servant father was transferred from one place to another”. This constant change of school in his formative years later broadened his Christian viewpoint, as he experienced many Christian denominations and their diverse doctrines.

In 1915, Nnamdi Azikiwe relocated from Onitsha and joined his parents, then resident in Lagos, where he continued his primary education as he was in 1916 enrolled into the Methodist Boys’ High School to continue his primary education shortly after his arrival from Lagos (Igwe, 1992:10). Shortly thereafter, he continued his educational career at Onitsha, later moved to Calabar in 1920, and was trained at the Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar, where he was influenced and inspired by some students he met there. Specifically, Nnamdi Azikiwe emphasized the inspiration from a story told him by his classmate, an indigene of the Kru ethnic group, Liberia, that in Liberia the President and all the governors in the counties were blacks; all the judges, law officers and heads of departments in the civil service were blacks too (Azikiwe, 1970:32). This story had a fascinating effect on Nnamdi Azikiwe, who from then made up his mind to devote his life to the redemption of the black man.

Nnamdi Azikiwe left Hope Waddell in 1920 for Wesleyan Boys’ High School, Lagos where he continued his education and was inspired by the sermon of Dr. (Rev.) James Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey of the Gold Coast (Ghana) resident in the United States. Other than the sermon, Dr. Aggrey had told the congregation about his personal life which revealed sacrifice for Africa and mankind at large. He further highlighted to the congregation that “nothing but the best is good for Africa” (Azikiwe, 1970:37). It was from then that Nnamdi Azikiwe began to think of furthering his education in the United States. While at Wesley Boys High School, in December 1920, he excelled in his studies and won a prize for which he was given a book on the biography of James A. Garfield, a former President of the United States, who rose from grass to grace. The book galvanized the young Nnamdi, who was just sixteen years, as he became more determined to succeed in life. His wish to embark on the trip to the United States to further his education did not materialize in 1920, and thus he had to write the Civil Service Entrance Examination in 1921. He was successful in the examination and was employed as a clerk in the Nigerian Treasury in Lagos and worked there from 1921 to 1924.

Nnamdi Azikiwe worked as a staff of the Treasury Department for few years; but his belief that education was the key to advance in Africa propelled him to seek admission in many higher institutions in the United States. He gained admission, and in 1925 he officially (his earlier attempt to travel to the US failed) left Nigeria to attend Storer College, West Virginia, United States. Levi Nwachukwu (<http://www.Lincoln.edu/history/journal>) argues that there were some

major factors that influenced Nnamdi Azikiwe's choice of the United States as the place for his higher education instead of Great Britain. These factors were: the influence of Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey, a Ghanaian Minister of God based in the United States and a member of the foreign Mission Conference on North America, which visited Nigeria in 1920 under the auspices of the Phelps Stokes Fund, the inspiration he derived from reading the biography of President James A. Garfield- "from Log cabin to the White House", as well as the biography of President Abraham Lincoln.

The Marcus Garvey factor as a result of his conversant with the role of Marcus Garvey on Pan-Africanism, and he was exposed to Garvey's ideas that emphasized empowerment of Africans, redemption of Africa by Africans and Africa's racial pride. It was from this premise that Nnamdi Azikiwe questioned the legitimacy of European hegemony over Africa. He was also inspired by United States' philosophical symbolism. Recall that to many people across the world, the United States symbolized an anti-colonial power, having liberated itself from the claws of British colonialism. Thus, it became imperative for those countries still under colonial bondage, especially in Africa and Asia to identify with the United States. Zik was also attracted to American Higher Education due to the existence of assistances for indigent students, which did not exist in Great Britain during that period.

Having all these at the back of his mind, Zik left the shores of Nigeria in 1925 to Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, United States where he did his preliminary courses that lasted from 1925-1926. He enrolled there for his bachelor degree programme between 1926 and 1927, but later moved on to Howard University, Washington D.C in February, 1928, where he continued his degree programme. However, for financial reason, he was unable to complete his undergraduate studies at Howard, which necessitated his application for admission and financial assistance from Lincoln University, Chester County, Pennsylvania. The applications were granted by authorities of the university, and thus Nnamdi Azikiwe bagged a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in Political Science from Lincoln University in June 1930.

Zik had earlier in 1927 obtained a Certificate in Law from the Lassalle Extension University, Chicago. He also obtained a Certificate in Journalism from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1930. He also obtained two Masters Degrees while in the United States: a Master of Arts degree in Religion and Philosophy from Lincoln University in 1932 and a Master of Science degree in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1933. After a brief stint as Instructor of Political Science at Lincoln from 1933 to 1934, Nnamdi Azikiwe left the shores of United States to his motherland, Africa. As he aptly captures his decision to return to Africa in these words:

Then I made my decision to return to Africa. I was ready to continue suffering personal inconvenience, if need be, in order to do for Africa what that contine needed for a renaissance in thought and action.....Motivated by an inner force

to succeed thus far, I was resolute in my determination to press forward towards a new Africa (Azikiwe, 1970:160).

Career in Journalism and Involvement in Pan-Africanism/ National Politics

While in the United States, the whole thoughts of Nnamdi Azikiwe was how to make conditions in Africa to be better. To actualize this, Azikiwe, full of youthful zeal and pan-African idealism took up appointment in the Gold Coast in late 1934 as the editor-in-chief of *The African Morning Post*, a daily newspaper, which was financed by Mr. A.J. Ocansey, the renowned Gold Coast entrepreneur of the period. The launch of the newspaper in Accra marked “a new beginning” to many literate and semi-literate Africans resident in Accra and beyond. This was as a result of the fiery language and radical outlook of the newspaper, whose editorials mostly against the colonial administration in West Africa impacted positively on many members of the reading public. In 1936, while still the editor-in-chief of the *African Morning Post*, Nnamdi Azikiwe was prosecuted for sedition by the colonial administration with Mr. Wallace Johnson, the writer of an article titled “Has Africa a God”, published on Friday, May 15, 1936 edition of the newspaper.

The fallout out from this incident was a contributory factor to the return of Nnamdi Azikiwe to Nigeria in 1937. However, it should be stressed that *The African Morning Post* under the tutelage and astute management of Azikiwe was financially viable. Other than this, the newspaper was used by Azikiwe to propound his philosophy of “a new and liberated Africa”. Agbafor Igwe (1992:39-40) opines that *The African Morning Post* vehemently attacked imperialism at the national and continental levels and so greatly attracted Africans to the nationalist struggle to free Africa from the yoke of foreign rule. On his return to Nigeria in 1937, Nnamdi Azikiwe founded *The West African Pilot*, published in Lagos, which he was editor-in-chief from 1937 to 1945.

He was also the Managing Director of Zik Press Limited, which by the 1940s he had invested more than five thousand pounds in the development of the Zik group of newspapers (Aluko, 1974:65). Zik Press printed and published the following newspapers: West African Pilot (Lagos), Eastern Guardian (Port Harcourt), Nigerian Spokesman (Onitsha), Southern Nigerian Defender (Ibadan), Daily Comet (Kano), and Eastern Sentinel (Enugu), among others. Azikiwe was described as a foremost Nigerian pioneering newspaper proprietor and journalist, whose newspapers directly influenced the struggle for independence and inspired many Nigerians to support the demand for self rule (Uwechue, 1996:63).

Nnamdi Azikiwe also championed pan-Africanism. The term “pan-Africanism” denotes a situation which finds the whole of African continent free from the shackles of foreign domination with its leaders free to plan for the orderly progress and welfare of its inhabitants. Although the term originated in the nineteenth century and has been interpreted by scholars from diverse viewpoints, it generally represents the aspirations of black peoples across the world for unity (Ofoegbu, 1980:60). Nnamdi Azikiwe was a renowned champion of the ideals of pan-Africanism, being an admirer of Marcus Garvey (a founding father of pan-Africanism). Like his hero, M.T. Mbu (1997:64) argues that the sum total of Azikiwe’s philosophy was independent

in all things and neutral in nothing affecting the welfare of Africa; and that Azikiwe believed in the dissemination of light to his people, leaving them to find their ways.

The manifestations of pan-Africanism in the life of Nnamdi Azikiwe came to the fore in 1934, when he dropped the official use of 'Benjamin', his Christian baptismal name. The incident that led to this was his disqualification on technical grounds from representing Nigeria by the Amateur Athletics Association (AAA) of Great Britain during the Empire Games in 1934. Thus, his adoption of his first indigenous name, 'Nnamdi', no doubt represented a political conversion towards an African identity. Generally, the ideals of pan-Africanism as espoused by Nnamdi Azikiwe are highlighted in his book, *Renascent Africa*, first published in 1937. The central theme of the book is Azikiwe's philosophy of a new Africa, with emphasis on respect for humanity and dignity of the black man wherever he may be found. Nnamdi Azikiwe underpinned his philosophy of New Africa into five major areas; he felt if actualized by Africans could lead to the desired socio-cultural, political and economic emancipation of the continent. Thus the five main focus of his philosophy of a New Africa are (i) Spiritual balance (ii) Social Regeneration (iii) Economic determinism, (iv) Mental emancipation; and (v) Political Risorgimento or resurgence (Azikiwe, 1968:120-140).

With particular emphasis on mental emancipation, Azikiwe criticized the curriculum of colonial education which he believed undermined the African personality. This is against the backdrop of the Euro-centric view of Africa as barbaric, uncivilized, and undeveloped; among others; as such the colonial governments in Africa used the machinery of colonial education to impress these sentiments. Based on this, Ofoegbu (1980:60-69) argues that Azikiwe insisted on the need to respect human dignity, which invariably guarantees basic human freedom, including full emancipation. Azikiwe, while harping on mental emancipation, also emphasized the African personality, in which he demanded the preservation of African cultural heritage. Zik also argued that the colonial situation in Africa, by its denial of political, economic and cultural freedom negated human dignity. Consequently, the liberation of the African politically, economically and mentally was the only way of restoring the dignity of man in the African continent.

It is also not in doubt that Zik was a foremost pan-Africanist, whose influence impacted positively on many people in different parts of Africa during the anti-colonial struggles across Africa. It is believed that the intellectual works of Zik influenced some other pan-Africanists such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana; among many others. With particular emphasis on Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (first President and father of Ghanaian independence), he was a student while Zik was the editor of the African Morning Post in Accra, Ghana during the 1930s. Nkrumah was believed to have met Zik during that period; a meeting it was argued might have inspired Nkrumah to travel to the United States to pursue his studies at Lincoln University, the same place Zik had his first degree. Ama Biney (2011:13) stresses that Nkrumah acknowledged that other significant influences on his nationalist thinking were the ideas expressed in the African Morning Post edited by Nnamdi Azikiwe.

It has also been argued that as a true African nationalist, Zik fired the nascent nationalism not only in Nigeria, but throughout British colonial territories in Africa. M.T. Mbu (1997:69) opines that Zik was the motivating force of great Africans like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Sir Dauda Jawara, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Milton Obote; among others. Similarly, as a foremost pan-Africanist and a proponent of African unity, Zik kicked against the balkanization of many African states in the immediate post-independence years of the early 1960s by African nationalists. Colin Legun (1965:121-122) argues that Zik cited the examples of some newly independent states in British West Africa, French West and Equatorial Africa, where the new African leaders dismantled certain colonial institutions, which Zik felt could have been left intact, as such institutions as the West African Airways could have been a unifying factor for the former British territories in West Africa.

Other than the above, as a result of Zik's belief in African liberation, he did not lose sight of Africans in other parts of the continent. Accordingly, Chief Mbazulike Amaechi, a former ardent member of the Zikist Movement and a surviving Nigerian nationalist observes that the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), a political party led by Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria, during the 1950s established a political training ground at Yaba, a suburb of Lagos. Chief Amaechi concluded that apart from training of some members of the youth wing of the NCNC, Zik extended his hand of followership to his contemporaries such as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi; to send their youths for political training. Thus, many non-Nigerian youths such as Tom Mboya, Odinga Oginga and Sam Nujoma passed through NCNC's political training camp as a result of Zik's benevolence and his pan-African belief.

To conclude our analysis of Zik's role as a foremost African statesman, who was beyond Nigeria, it is worthy to highlight how some renowned persons perceive the Great Zik. Maitama Sule (a foremost Nigerian statesman) observes that Zik was not only the pioneer African nationalist, but also the most selfless. Furthermore, he stresses that as an African democrat, Zik's advocacy for diarchy (which he did in the 1970s) and participatory democracy, portrayed Zik as a political realist, who realized the relativity of democracy, that every type of democracy should be determined by the cultural parameters of the people (Sule, 1997:25). The renowned playwright, Chinua Achebe (known to be blunt and objective in his remarks), observes that "the father of African independence was Nnamdi Azikiwe". He concludes that Azikiwe was the pre-eminent political figure of his youth and a man who was endowed with the political pan-Africanist vision (Achebe, 2012:41).

At this juncture, it is worthy to highlight the role of Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigerian politics from the decolonization era to the post-independence period. Many scholars and commentators share the view that Nnamdi Azikiwe was the foremost Nigerian nationalist. Michael Crowder shares this view and asserts that Azikiwe founded the first true nationalist party in Nigeria, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroon [NCNC]. He stresses further:

On the other hand, the climate created by the World War and the current ideas in Nigeria was opportune for the creation of a nationalist movement and on the 26th August 1944 Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe founded the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon with himself as secretary and Herbert Macaulay as president (Crowder, 1978:223).

Similarly, in the immediate post-World War II era, especially with the agitations against the provisions of the Richards Constitution of 1946, Azikiwe's popularity as a true nationalist leader soared so high, as J.S. Coleman observes:

Although blind devotion to Azikiwe was more pronounced among the Ibo, he was likewise the idol of many politically inarticulate groups such as Cameroonians, Nupe, Tiv, Igbirra, Birom, and Idoma and indeed of most of the Middle Belt, and a growing number of Hausa, Fulani and

Kanuri youths looked up to him as the national leader (Coleman, 1986:290).

The above, no doubt showed that during the decades of decolonization, when Nigerians from diverse backgrounds were very patriotic on the need to attain independence; for many, especially the youths, Zik was the rallying point. It was this that made him to be elected in 1947 as a member for Lagos in the Federal Legislative Council of Nigeria, where he served from 1947 to 1951.

Similarly, many scholars and commentators also wrote on the proactive contributions of Zik to the Nigerian nationalist struggle and attainment of political independence. G.O. Olusanya (1980:566) observes:

Between 1944 and 1951 Azikiwe and the NCNC dominated the political scene and the NCNC membership spread across the various groups in the south. The party could lay claim to strong support from a large articulate section of the Yoruba population

Zik was believed to be the "man of the moment" in Nigerian politics during the post-WW II years, even up till the early 1950s, when he was the leader of opposition in the Western Region House of Assembly. Specifically, Bola Ige (1995:16) opines that after the death of Herbert Macaulay, there was no Nigerian who could claim to be more nationalistic than Nnamdi Azikiwe. Zik was so revered and highly respected then and his activities were pan-Nigerian and pan-African, especially his intellectual contribution to the nationalist struggles across the African continent. He was a role model for youths across Africa, especially through the use of his natural skill- as he used his oratory skill in his campaigns against colonialism (Aluko, 1974:63).

Generally, many Nigerians, living and dead revere him as a true and foremost nationalist. Specifically, the renowned nationalist and living orator, Maitama Sule argues that the fact that Nnamdi Azikiwe, with the introduction of the Macpherson Constitution, won an election and represented Lagos as Leader of Opposition in the Western House of Assembly from 1952 to 1953 showed Zik as a true Nigerian because he was accepted to represent Nigerians in the area

he resided. Maitama Sule concludes that Zik became the first and indeed, the only Nigerian leader who was popularly and democratically elected by the masses outside his home town, outside his own locality, outside his own region; and above all in a Constituency, which did not comprise of his ethnic group (Sule, 1997:21).

Nnamdi Azikiwe was a major participant in Nigeria's politics for the greater part of his life during the twentieth century, and during those decades in politics he was committed to the survival of Nigeria as a nation-state. From 1947, when he became an elected member of the Legislative Council of Nigeria till November 16th 1960, when he was sworn in as the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of Nigerian Armed Forces, he was unwavering in his service to a country he labored much to actualize its political independence. It was probably this commitment to service, which the British government noticed, and thus pronounced him the first Nigerian named to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom on the same day he was appointed the Governor-General of Nigeria. This commitment to Nigeria made Zik so emotional, as can be seen from aspects of his Inaugural Speech as Nigerian Head of State on November 16, 1960:

As for me, my stiffest earthly assignment is ended and my major life's work is done. My country is now free, and I have been honoured to be its first indigenous Head of State. What more could one desire in life. I thank God for sparing my life to witness the independence of my native land. I am grateful to God for the opportunity to serve and I hereby pledge solemnly to render faithful and loyal service to my country (Azikiwe, 1960:15).

In all his public service, as Premier of the Eastern Region in the 1950s, as the first indigenous President of the Nigerian Senate in the early 1960s, as the President and Commander-in-Chief, as well as Head of State from October 1963, when Nigeria attained Republican status up till his ouster from office by the military in January 1966, Zik showed un-alloyed commitment in his service to Nigeria. However, his role in the Nigerian civil war was misunderstood by many commentators, especially his critics. At the beginning of Nigerian crises in 1966, which snowballed to the outbreak of the civil war from July 1967, Zik initially supported his Igbo ethnic nationality, in their claim of series of pogroms against the Igbo mostly in Northern Nigeria. He acted as Biafra roving Ambassador, and played a contributory role in convincing few African presidents who recognized Biafra.

Despite this, he supported peaceful resolution of the war, an advice, which was turned down by Biafra leaders, a situation that made him withdraw and resign from his role as a roving ambassador of Biafra in February 1969 when the London Peace Talk between the Nigerian Government and Biafra representatives failed. Zik's stand at the Peace Talk was for a just settlement of the Nigerian conflict under the umbrella of "One Nigeria" (Uwechue, 1996:64). This change of allegiance portrayed Zik in bad light to some Igbo people on whose territory the Nigerian civil war was fought, especially to Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (the leader of Biafra), whose opinion on Zik was that although he was an indefatigable fighter for freedom and equity, but his politics of compromise left the Igbo naked.

In the opinion of late Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe, Zik had a messianic outlook like Mahatma Ghandi of India in certain respects. However, unlike Ghandi who said he was the light and the way, Zik only showed the light for people to find the way (<http://www.emeagwali.com/nigeria/nigerians>). Perhaps, Mbadiwe made this remark based on the belief that Zik ‘abandoned’ the Zikists when it mattered most, during the late 1940s. Another commentator also observed that during the period of radical campaigns of violence against the colonial Government mounted by the Zikist Movement in the name of Zik, he saw their actions as “the youthful impetuosity of the Zikist”(Aluko, 1974:63). To the likes of Ikenna Nzimiro, Zik was purely paradoxical in some political actions he took during his many years in Nigerian politics (Nzimiro, 1996).

At the end of the war in January 1970, Zik was happy that a nation he struggled for its independence was united again. He continued his writings based on politics, national and global issues, and argued in one of his works titled *Democracy with Military Vigilance*, in which he felt diarchy was the best system of government for African countries (Azikiwe, 1974). He was also appointed Chancellor, and Chairman of the Council of the University of Lagos in 1972, a position he held till 1976. When the ban on civilian politics was lifted, Zik joined the Nigerian Peoples Party and due to his vast political experience was the party’s Presidential candidate in the 1979 Presidential election in Nigeria. However, Zik’s foray into politics in Nigeria’s Second Republic was not as successful and rewarding as his glorious years as Nigeria’s foremost nationalist and renowned politician, which spanned more than two decades from the 1940s to the first military coup d’état in January 1966.

He contested the position of president of Nigeria in 1979 and 1983, respectively, but failed. Like in Nigeria’s First Republic, his political party, -Nigerian Peoples’ Party (NPP) entered into a political alliance with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which won majority votes in the Parliamentary and Presidential elections held in 1979 to form the government in October 1979, when the military administration under General Olusegun Obasanjo handed over power to the civilian democratically elected President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979. That alliance sanitized the polity for a while, but later collapsed before the expiration of President Shagari’s first term of four years.

In preparation for the 1983 General Elections, Zik’s party entered yet into another political alliance with other opposition political parties in a bid to defeat the NPN. It was at this stage that the vociferous Nigerian Press dubbed Zik, “the beautiful bride of Nigerian politics”. Perhaps, this tag was labeled on Zik because of his politics of compromise, as his party entered into what the Nigerian Press termed alliance of ‘strange bed fellows’. The Press was doubtful on who between Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo would be the Presidential candidate of the alliance of ‘progressive parties’. Like earlier alliances, the Progressives failed to present common candidates who could have matched candidates of the ruling NPN, while the election ended in favour of the ruling party. Few months after the 1983 General Elections, Zik resigned from participation in active politics.

Zik's Views on Education, Reflections on Zik as an Upholder of African Traditions & Lessons Learnt from His Challenges and Successes

It is not an overstatement to assert that Lincoln University molded Zik and broadened his views on different aspects of life, particularly the need for attainment of education. This can be premised on Lincoln University's philosophy which stresses that education should act as a liberating, as well as redemptive instrument to mankind. Being a product of Lincoln, Zik perceived Lincoln's mission as emphasizing the rebuilding of the truly disadvantaged into respectable and functional human beings who would apply their Lincoln experience to the service of humanity. Thus, this shaped his view on education, and while a student in the United States he witnessed developments brought to that part of the world as a result of the high level of their educational attainment. By the vast experience Zik acquired in the United States, he vowed that on his return to Africa he would start a school that would serve as "a nucleus for a university" (Azikiwe, 1970:167).

Nnamdi Azikiwe was highly influenced by the educational system in the United States, and he inspired and assisted many Nigerians to study in higher educational institutions in the United States, which includes Lincoln University, his alma mater. Among those assisted by Zik to study in the United States were; C.A. Bolaji Macarthy, Eyo Ita, Asuquo Idiong, Abdul Disu, Nwafor Orizu, Mbonu Ojike, Nnodu Okongwu, George Mbadiwe, Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe, Reuben O. Ikejiani; among many others who followed Zik's footsteps to acquire American education (Ogbeidi, 1997:320). Zik also thought of establishing a university in Monrovia, Liberia, but when this could not materialize due to funding, he thought about establishing a University of Nigeria on his return from the United States.

The dream for the establishment of a University of Nigeria later materialized when he was the Premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The birth of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka can be traced to 1954, when an Economic Mission of the Government of Eastern Region of Nigeria led by the Premier, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe embarked on an economic mission to Europe and America. A major result of the mission which lasted from May 5 to July 11, 1954 was the clear articulation of the idea for a genuinely African university charged with the responsibility of freeing the African intellect and serving as a bulwark against colonial mentality, which Zik felt was a major impediment to genuine development (Obasanjo, 2012). That mission gave birth to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the first truly indigenous university in Nigeria, the handiwork of Zik, inaugurated on October 7, 1960. The motto of the University of Nigeria founded by Zik is "to restore the dignity of man". This summarizes Zik's view on education, that it should be used to uplift man and his world view.

Nnamdi Azikiwe was a true African, who, despite his many years in the United States did not forget his roots and the culture and traditions of his people, Onitsha, as well as the Igbo culture. Thus, he married former Miss Flora O. Ogoegbunam from his home town, Onitsha in 1936 based on the cultures of his people, even though he resided many years in the United States. As a respecter and upholder of the culture of his people, he was inducted into the prestigious *Agbalanze* Society of Onitsha in 1946 with the title of *Ogbuefi Nnayelugo*, which denotes "your

father has glorified you”. Similarly, in 1963, as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the then Obi of Onitsha, Paramount Chief Onyejekwe appointed him a Second rank red cap Chief (*Ichie Okwa*) of the Onitsha Chieftaincy hierarchy, as the *Oziziani*. Zik became a full-fledged First –Class Red Cap Chief of Onitsha in 1970, when he was installed *Owelle-Osowa-Any* of Onitsha. This position made him a nobleman in Onitsha, as well as a member of the king’s cabinet. He remained the Owelle of Onitsha till death on May 11, 1996; and his eldest son, Ambassador Chukwuma Azikiwe is the current Owelle of Onitsha.

The life of Nnamdi Azikiwe was not one filled with bed of roses. He had his challenges, especially in acquiring higher education, which took him to the shores of the United States. He witnessed his odyssey in the United States as a result of great challenges he faced in sourcing fund for his education, to the extent that he desired to commit suicide, but for divine intervention (Azikiwe, 1970:101-102). He was denied job by the colonial government when he returned to Africa, but by dint of hard work and his personal ingenuity he excelled in the risk he took by editing a newspaper as its pioneer staff in Accra, Ghana. Although he was initially well received as a patriotic Nigerian nationalist and politician, aspersions were cast on him as from the 1950s, when Nigerian politics became ethnically based with the emergence of the Northern Peoples’ Congress and the Action Group as political parties that catered for the interests of the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba respectively.

It was in that circumstance that Zik began to rely more on the Igbo politically, against his hitherto role as a full-fledged detribalized Nigerian politician. Nonetheless, Zik, in all his years of involvement in Nigerian politics was a true patriot and nationalist. Accordingly, Bola Ige (1995:16) concludes that: “after the death of Hebert Macaulay, there was no Nigerian who can claim to be more nationalistic than Zik”. Thus, contrary to the views of the not well informed commentators and pedestrian observers of the life and times of Zik, he gave Nigerian nationalism an actual federalist flavor and impetus more than any other Nigerian. The intellectual contributions of Zik are too numerous to highlight here; his write-ups and editorials, and his numerous newspapers spurred nationalist feelings in Nigeria and across Africa, especially in the British colonies during the colonial era. His literal works and philosophy of the New Africa have remained indelible, and the younger generation should be encouraged to read his works.

Conclusion: Zik of Africa, beyond Nigeria

The legacies left by President Nnamdi Azikiwe are so numerous and vital to the revitalization of the development potentials in Africa that have been undermined by inept post-independence political leaders across the continent. Other than his recognitions through honorary doctorate degrees from universities in America and Africa, as observed earlier, the intellectual input of Zik should be proactively harnessed and utilized so as to restore the true dignity of the African in this era of globalization. A major intellectual legacy is his political thought, which centers on the idea of a regeneration or rebirth of Africa in both socio-political cum economic and mental emancipation from all shackles of bondage. The idea of regeneration of Africa represented a call for a new Africa, espoused fully in his work, *Renascent Africa* (Azikiwe, 1937). Realistically, Africa needs regeneration in the present era of mal-administration, poor leadership and non-

enterprising followership, which has made Africa (especially sub-Saharan Africa) to remain perpetually underdeveloped after more than fifty years of political independence of most of the states.

As a result of recurring military coups and the attendant bad governance in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s; and the Cold War ideologies of the period, Zik felt that a type of government that could suit the African situation was desirable. Thus, he proposed a socio-economic ideology, which he dubbed neo-welfarism. Thus, in a work published in 1980, Nnamdi Azikiwe sought a middle way between capitalism and socialism. Finding the major socio-economic cum political systems: socialism, capitalist and welfarism wanting, he felt that none of them was totally bad, he harmonized the system and termed it “neo-welfarism”, by combining the good elements in them. As an economic ideology, neo-welfarism is a combination of the good elements in the three ideologies: capitalism, socialism and welfarism in a socio-economic matrix influenced by indigenous African mores (Azikiwe, 1980).

The combination of the good elements is to enable the state and private sector to own and control the means of production and distribution of goods and services. In Zik’s view, neo-welfarism would enable the state assume responsibility for provision of social services, so as to benefit the citizens. Zik concludes that voluntary organizations can also play a role in the provision of social services in his neo-welfarism economic blueprint. Finally, he recommended eclecticism and pragmatism as the philosophical basis for neo-welfarism. No doubt, Zik used the indigenous African culture of practical work and cohesion to fashion out his neo-welfarist economic ideology based on his understanding of indigenous pre-colonial African economies that flourished and were independent from external influence. Despite the ideals of neo-welfarism as espoused by Zik, African political leaders failed to utilize it; and till date African states are still searching for an appropriate ideological base for their socio-economic and technological development.

Finally, no doubt, the preceding appraisals have shown the contributions of Nnamdi Azikiwe to the socio-political and economic growth of Africa in the last century. The great Zik of Africa has joined his ancestors, but he remains one of the best intellectual and proactive leaders ever produced by Africa in the twentieth century. Although the Nigerian government has named certain institutions and physical structures after him; despite this, the whole of Africa has not benefitted fully from this late foremost African statesman. His legacies are worthy of emulation, and as such this paper calls on the emerging political leaders of Africa to understudy his socio-political and economic ideologies available in his intellectual works, which, if proactively utilized will certainly lead to the “recreation of a new Africa”, which he envisaged in his life time.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, Chinua (2012) *There was a Country, A Personal History of Biafra*, London: Allen Lane.
- Aluko, Olajide (1974) "Politics of Decolonization in British West Africa, 1945-1960", J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Vol. 2, London: Longman, .
- Azikiwe, Nnamdi (1960), "Respect for Human Dignity", *An Inaugural Address Delivered by His Excellency, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief*, Enugu: Government Printer, November.
- Azikiwe Nnamdi,(1968) *Renasant Africa*, London: Frank Cass.
- Azikiwe, Nnamdi(1970) *My Odyssey: An Autobiography*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Azikiwe, Nnamdi(1974) *Democracy with Military Vigilance*, Nsukka: African Book Co. Ltd.
- Azikiwe, Nnamdi(1980), *Ideology for Nigeria: Capitalism, Socialism or Welfarism?*, Lagos: Macmillan Publishers.
- Biney, Ama,(2011)*The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* , New York: Palgrave.
- Coleman, J'S.(1986) *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Benin City: Ilupeju Press (Paper back Edition).
- Crowder, M(1978) *The Story of Nigeria*, London: Faber & Faber.
- Ige, Bola(1995) *Political Parties of Nigeria, 1970-1979*, Ibadan: Heinemann,.
- Igwe, Agbafor(1992), *Nnmidi Azikiwe: the Philosopher of our Time*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Legun, Colin(1965) *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*, New York: Fredrick A. Praeger.
- Mbu, M.(1997) "Zik and the African Revolution", E. A mucheazi (ed.) *Zik: Life and Times*, Abuja: National Orientation Agency (NOA) Publication..
- Nzimiro, Ikenna(1996)*The Rise and Fall of African Leaders*, Oguta: Zim Pan-African Publishers.
- Obasanjo, Olusegun(2012) "Education and Development", Lecture Delivered at the 2012 Convocation Ceremonies of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, January 25.
- Ofoegbu, Ray(1980) "African Personality", "African Socialism" and "African Democracy" as Pan-Africanism", *Tarikh*, Vol.6, No. 3, pp.60-69.
- Ogbeidi, M.(1997) "Influence of American Education on the Evolution of Nigerian Culture", A. Osuntokun and A.Olukoju (eds.) *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*, Ibadan: Davidson Press..
- Olusanya, G.O. (1980) "Nationalist Movements", in Obaro Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Sule, Maitama(1997) "Zik: the Statesman", in E. Amucheazi (ed.) *Zik: Life and Times.....*
- Uwechue, Ralph, ed. (1996) *Makers of Modern Africa: Profiles in History*, London: African Books Ltd.