

## **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED FOR STRONG INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA - A PHILOSOPHICAL ASSESSMENT**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

Political development is basically a process that is concerned with the improvement of institutions, attitudes and values that form the political system of a society or nation. In Nigeria, a critical assessment has revealed that despite the nation's abundant human and natural resources, her citizens are subjected to abject poverty. Thus, this paper sets study is to assess the level of political development in the country and give reasons for establishing strong institutions. This paper concludes that the nation's political development is hampered by factors like imposition of unrealistic policies on citizens and poor assessment/implementation of such policies, problem of socio-economic inequalities, historical challenge, corruption and mismanagement of resources and lack of credible leadership among others. This work, adopting a method of critical analysis, concludes that in order to tackle these setbacks and ensure sustainable political development in the nation there is urgent need for strong institutions..

*Keywords: Political development, Strong institutions, Institutional development, Nigeria's political development, Socio-economic development, Social inequality.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The current sociopolitical and economic situation in Nigeria is both pathetic and shameful. It is pathetic on the ground that only a few disgruntled and selfish politicians and their families are living in affluence. The rest or majority of her law-abiding citizens are unjustly treated. They are exposed to abject poverty, daily starvation, uncontrolled diseases and infections, marginalization, victimization, unemployment, unabated violence and abuses, insecurity, untimely death and other socioeconomic menaces. These evils are, of course,

engendered by bad governance or leadership, poor management of the nation's resources and, more especially, corruption.

The situation is shameful in the sense that Nigeria, despite being the 'Giant of Africa' and one of those nations that are profusely blessed with natural and human resources, is paradoxically in the list of the poorest ones. This has become the case because the political officials and institutions saddled with the duty of managing the nation's economy so as to cater for the well-being of everyone have failed in their responsibilities. The failure, perhaps, arises from their negligence, self-centeredness, improbity or corrupt mindset and inefficiency.

In the words of Trask (10): "[Bad] leaders [or officials], entrusted with the resources of their [country], prefer to enrich themselves using political means thereby increase their wealth". Thus, self-interest has always remained stronger in the mind of many Nigerian leaders or politicians than the desire to meet the basic needs of all citizens. It is this sort of unfortunate experience that has prompted Nyerere (15) to remark that bad government is not generally interested in eradicating poverty. Also, Plato was right when he observed that one of the evils of political life is the material greed of politicians. And, even Awolowo reached a similar conclusion in his analysis of leadership and good governance in Nigeria. But, must Nigeria continue in this mess? The answer is no. Nigerian political, social and economic systems ought to be sanitized or purged of every atom or form of fraudulent and corrupt practices. Hence, the presence of Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (ICPC) and the like agencies or institutions notwithstanding, there is still an urgent need to establish strong institutions or strengthen the existing ones to checkmate the excesses of public officials and politicians as well promote sustainable development in this country. Our discussion centers on this proposal as we proceed by first exploring the concepts of development and political development and what so far has been the Nigerian experience of the latter.

## **MEANING AND NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL**

In recent times, "development" has become one of the commonly used concepts in many nations of the world, especially, among the developing countries. Its popularity, probably, arises from its various meanings, applications and significance. Thus, etymologically, the word "development" derives from the French verb *veloper* meaning "to wrap". Invariably, to "develop" means to "un-wrap" or to change from a smaller into a larger, stronger, more impressive, successful or advanced status. The term generally connotes some form of transformation from an inferior or insignificant condition to a superior or significant one. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines it as "the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced and stronger or ... the process of producing or creating something new or more advanced" (400). It can apply to the advancement of social, political and

economic systems which entails increase in skill and capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships (Rodney, 10).

According to Walter Rodney (10), the concept of development “is many faceted”. That is to say it can be applied diversely to disciplines, human persons, nations or continents, and so on. Thus, for sociologists, the concept is concerned with the process of differentiation that characterizes modern society. The economists and liberal theorists relate it to the maximization of profit involving manufacturing and production, or “the maximization of the growth of Gross National Products (GNP) through capital accumulation and industrialization” (Meier, 6). In this sense, development implies change which “often follows a well-ordered sequence and exhibits common characteristics across countries” (Thirlwall, 8). It also means “the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static to generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Products (GNP) at the rates of perhaps 5 to 7 percent or more” (Todaro, 87). But this liberalist conceptualization is inadequate, for there is more to development than mere economic progress. Hence, the political scientists link the concept with the capacity of government to bring about political changes and stability, while the political economists consider it to be “... a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capital income and level of living through modern production methods and improved organization” (Roger, 8-9).

The psychologists, on their part, see the concept as revolving around the human person or individual and eventually leading to self-reliance and estimation. Agbafor Igwe (4), also shares this psychologist position when he contends that real development is fundamentally about human beings in terms of ideas, which imbibe in them the capacity to think qualitatively and to tackle the problems that emerge out of their living conditions. Daniel Offiong (21), sees a close link between development and modernization. He describes both concepts as interconnected processes and cites Berger as saying that the two collectively stand for “a process whereby societies and social institutions change from traditional and less developed ones”. What this implies is that development and modernization are at variance with tradition. They both involve complex changes in societies and institutions that lead to the well-being or betterment of citizens. True development, therefore, is concerned with a structural transformation of the economy, society or polity and culture of a State that allows for the self-generating and self-perpetuating use and improvement of the people’s potentials (Etim, 225). It is, contemporary speaking, the “ process of advancement, growth and maturation that encompasses [the] materials and/or issues that are central to meeting human basic needs and improving the quality of life” (Jonathan, 48).

Contrary to Offiong's view of interconnectedness between development and modernization, Sylvanus Nnoruka (243), is of the opinion that development is concerned basically with the individuals and the extent to which each realizes his potentials and attains social integration. Thus, development, for him, is not synonymous with modernization; since the former starts with the individuals, while the latter starts with society using structural growth as its indicator. Be that as it may, genuine development, as Opuka (67), has indicated, must take cognizance of man as a whole, not just an aspect of him or an aspect of his society. In other words, a true development is one that is holistic and sustainable. It is not all about an improvement in people's well-being but also the capacity of economic, political and social systems of a nation to provide the circumstances for that well-being on a sustainable or long-term basis. That, in a nutshell, is what should be expected in a sovereign State like Nigeria.

### **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ITS BASIC CRITERIA**

As a concept, political development is of recent origin in political science. It is, as an online article explains, an essential aspect of development or process that involves an increased differentiation, specialization and stabilization of political structures as well as increased secularization of political culture ("What is Political Development?"). Hans Park defines it in terms of "the capacity of the political system to satisfy the changing needs of the members of the society" (Park, 58). In other words, the process is concerned with the improvement of the institutions, attitudes and values that form the political system of a society. Its primary objective is to attain the well-being of citizens through proper utilization of human and natural resources and/or advancement of economic, social, political and cultural institutions of a nation. It is, therefore, characterized by its special concern with equality of political institutions, the capacity of political system in place, and the differentiation or specialization of governmental organizations.

The spirit or attitude towards equality, as a distinguishing feature of political development includes, according to Pye, the level of participation, universalistic nature and standards of achievement of political institutions or organizations. The capacity of political system depends on the level of a nation's economy, performance of its government judged by its effectiveness and efficiency or rationality in administration, and secularization of public policies; while differentiation has to do with increase of structures, institutions, division of labour and specialization followed by ultimate sense of integration (Pye, 1965: 13).

Explaining further, Samuel P. Huntington sees political development as a synonym or some kind of political modernization. He identifies four major criteria by which this process can be determined. The first, according to him, is rationalization which involves the movement from particularism to universalism or from a given political standpoint to a focus on functional differentiation and achievement. The second is nationalism and national

integration which emphasizes nation-states and nation-building as the key aspect of political development. The third is a focus on democratization which, in essence, is a focus on competition and equalization of power. The fourth is mobilization which is a focus on political participation (Huntington, 386). Thus, greater political development consists in greater modernization of a State, greater mobilization and greater political participation. In short, from Huntington's explanation, political development is ultimately an increase in national political unity and an increase in political participation.

## **THEORIES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Theories of political development can be categorized into the following theories: The Western Theory of Political Development, Marxist Theory of Political Development, and Dependency Model of Political Development.

### **The Western Theory of Political Development**

The major exponents of this theory are: Lucian W. Pye, Almond and Powell, Samuel Huntington, Edward Shills and Fred W. Riggs. For Pye, political development has to do with "the cultural diffusion and adaptation; fusion and adjustment of old patterns of life to new demands" (Pye, 1965: 33-35). He also views it as a "basic concept supporting the gradual diffusion throughout societies of what we might call a world culture" (1965: 33-35). He remarks that the concept or process could be stressed at three stages, namely: (i) with reference to the population as a whole, (ii) with reference to the level of governmental and general systemic performance and (iii) with reference to the organization of the policy (Pye, 1965: 35). In another work, Pye enumerates some of the essential characteristics of political development, namely: (i) political development as the political prerequisite of economic development, (ii) political development as the politics typical of industrial societies, (iii) political development as political modernization, (iv) political development as the operation of nation State, (v) political development as administrative and development, (vi) political development as mobilization and participation, (vii) political development as the building of democracy, (viii) political development as stability or orderly change, (ix) political development as mobilization and power, (x) political development as one aspect of a multi-dimensional process of social change, and (xi) political development as a sense of national respect in international affairs (1966: 23).

The above listed aspects by Pye offer us an insight into three important areas of political development, namely: equality, capacity and differentiation. The aspect of equality shows that political development implies active participation of the masses or people as a whole in the political activities of the nation which may be either democratic or totalitarian in nature. It also denotes that "laws should be of a universalistic nature, applicable to all and more or less in their operation" (Pye, 1966: 35). All citizens are equal before the law and so,

there should be no distinction between the rich and the poor or the strong and the weak regarding submission to the rule of law. Lastly, recruitment should be based on achievement rather than restrictive factors of traditional systems. In other words, modern political systems require that people should be inducted into political decision-making based on merit or 'competitive test of competence'(1966: 35).

Capacity, according to Pye, is concerned with the outputs of the political system. It is generally related with the performance of the government and the factors that affect such performance. It also connotes the sheer magnitude, scope and the scale of political and governmental performance, which ultimately lead to effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of public policy. The efficiency and effectiveness of the governmental performance result in the universally recognized standards of performance (Pye, 1966: 46-47). Differentiation involves diffusion and specialization of structures. It also calls for equal division of labour within the governmental apparatus with distinct and limited functions for offices and agencies. It also requires the integration of complex structures and processes. Thus, for Pye, this aspect "... is not fragmentation or isolation of the different parts of the political system but specialization based on an ultimate sense of integration" (1966: 47).

Further, Pye avers that the different aspects of political development may not necessarily go together; there may be tensions between the demands for equality, the requirements for capacity, and the processes of greater differentiation. The demand for equality can pose challenge to the capacity of the system, and differentiation cannot ensure equality when the system needs people on the basis of specialized knowledge. More so, development is neither nonlinear, nor determined by sharp and distinct stages, but characterized by a set of problems, which occur separately or concurrently. In all, it is Pye's belief that the problem of equality is related to 'the political culture and sentiments about legitimacy and commitment of the political system. The problems of capacity are also related to the 'performance of the authoritative structures of government; while the problems of differentiation are related to the performance of the non-authoritative structures and the general political process in the society at large (1966: 48).

Pye's view is prejudiced by Western mentality that a well-differentiated structure can guarantee better development. It tries to transpose the bias of the evolutionary theorists who hold that the stages of evolution of organisms reveal a definite progressive development towards differentiated structures from a single celled amoeba to human beings. But in practical terms, the processes of development of socio-political system can hardly be generalized. A well-differentiated system is no guarantee for social equality and better governance. This then is the reason the adoption of Western models of governance in the third world democracy has always met with failure. None of such models has ever succeeded in securing equality, justice or liberty in the true sense of the

word. They have rather been super-imposed models, divorced from the norms and conventional values of the third world societies. Thus, they have not been helpful in explaining non-Western social realities.

After Pye, Almond and Powell explain the problems of political development in terms of State building, nation building participation and distribution (Almond and Powell, 25- 26). According to them, the problem of State building occurs if the stress is perceived at the intra-societal and extra societal levels that may pose serious threat to the system. The change of political goals by the powerful elite class at the internal level or a war or an aggression at the external level may also pose serious challenge to the existence of a political system. The State building, for them, occurs when the political elite creates new structures and organizations designed to penetrate the society in order to regulate behaviour in it and draw a larger volume of resources from it. It is also associated with significant increase in the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system, with the development of a centralized and penetrative bureaucracy related to the increase in these capabilities, and to the development of attitudes of obedience and compliance in the population which are associated with the emergence of such a bureaucracy (Almond and Powell, 26).

Nation building, on its part, is a process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages or petty principalities to the large political system (Almond and Powell, 26). Participation is concerned with a situation where different groups in the form of political parties, cliques and factions operate in the society and strive to be involved in the decision-making process. They put forward their demands through various types of supports, while some of their leading members participating in the decision making process convert their 'inputs' into 'outputs' in their own favour. Lastly, the distribution issue occurs when the wealth or national income is distributed or opportunities are given on merit. The situation is also called politics of welfare or general good (Almond and Powell, 26). In all, the views of Almond and Powell seem logical and cogent. But like Pye's analysis, it is too broad and general.

Coming after Almond and Powell is Huntington. His concept of 'Political Development and Political Decay' is an important contribution to the theories of political development. He defines political development as "the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures". For him, "this concept liberates development from modernization" and can be applied to the analysis of political systems of any sort, not just modern ones, especially when defined in reasonably precise ways, which are at least theoretically capable of measurement. He contends that political development as a concept does not suggest that movement is likely to be in only one direction. Institutions can decay and dissolve as they grow and mature, but there is always the reciprocal interaction between the on-going social processes of modernization on the one

hand and the strength, stability or weakness of political structures - traditional, transitional or modern - on the other (Huntington, 393-394).

The strength of political organizations and procedures, according to him, vary with their scope of support and their level of institutionalization. Scope, here, refers simply to the extent to which the political organizations and procedures encompass activity in the society. If only a small upper class group belongs to the political organization and behaves in terms of a set of procedures, the scope is limited. If, on the other hand, a large segment of the population is politically organized and follows the political procedures, the scope is broad (394). Thus institutions, for him, display stable, valued and recurring patterns of behavior, while organizations and procedures vary in their degree of institutionalization.

By institutionalization, Huntington means a process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability. The level of institutionalization of any political system depends on the adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures. Same is the case with the level of institutionalization of any particular organization or procedure. If these criteria can be identified and measured, political systems can, according to Huntington, be compared in terms of their levels of institutionalization. Also, it will be possible to measure increases and decreases in the institutionalization of particular organizations and procedures within a political system (394).

Huntington tries to accommodate all existing political systems in his theorization. Again, the compass here is broad and universal, and the stress on institutionalization makes it typically Western. Huntington's paradigm suggests that the more the level of institutionalization in a society, the more developed it is. Thus, while he has enough scope in his theorization to fit in the non-Western political systems, and while he accepts that political systems do not have a uniform line of development, he seems to be laying too much emphasis on the qualitative superiority of the well-institutionalized politics of the Western world.

Following Huntington is Riggs; and his view is based on the interpretation of Pye's concept of political development. He analyses equality in terms of masses participating in the formulation of policies, and capacity in terms of the ability of political and administrative system to deal with its goals. He notes that both equality and capacity will suffer unless the polity is properly differentiated. A developed polity, for him, is likely to have all these aspects in perfect coordination. Thus, Riggs prefers to maintain a balance between equality and capacity. He sees equality as a symbol of the leftists and capacity as a symbol of the rightists. He maintains that there should be a balance between these two attributes of development otherwise there would be a "developmental trap" (Riggs, 340-341). He also argues that "so long as politics takes the form of struggle between the rightists and the leftists, each will view its specific demands - for increased capacity or more equality - as the epitome of political development. Both will be likely to miss the point that, only by establishing a



balance between the two principles, will it be possible to heighten the level of structural differentiation, and thereby to enable both of the goals of equality and capacity to be realized to a greater degree" (341).

When Riggs' theory is applied to the third-world nations like Nigeria, the political systems seem to be externally languishing in 'developmental traps'. Also, basing his theory on the traditional Western bias that the ideal balance between equality and capacity can only be achievable in the well-differentiated political systems of the Western world, Riggs, like his co-theorists seems to have evolved a theory that remains practically elusive to much of the third world political systems.

### **MARXIST THEORY OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

This theory of political development is propounded within the ideological matrix created by Marxian socialism. It emerges as an alternative to the capitalistic model of development. Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin, are its major proponents. Marx is of the view that all historical changes are determined by the mode of production. A change in the mode of production brings about change in the relations of production. Production is a process that creates relation between man and man. Hence, "in the social production of their means of existence, men enter into definite, necessary relations which are independent of their will; production relations correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The aggregate of these productive relationships constitute the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a juridical and superstructure arises. The mode of production of the material means of existence condition is the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary it is their social existence, that determines their consciousness" (181). So, the economic system is the foundation on which the political, legal, ethical and intellectual superstructures exist. Each society is marked by its known mode of production (181).

Marx also analyses historical development of Western society in five modes of production and five kinds of societies. The societies include: primitive communist society, slave owning society, feudalistic society, capitalistic society and socialistic society. The mode of production leads to the formation of classes. The struggle among the classes is the most fundamental concept. Thus for Marx, "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle" (181). Class struggle is an unavoidable concept that results from the contradiction between the productive forces and productive relation. It is the motive force of social and historical change. It continues till the achievement of stateless and classless society. However, the stage is succeeded by the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat which is a prelude to the withering away of the State. So, it is Marx's view that "between the capitalist and communist society lies the period of change of one into the other... a

political transition period in which the State can be nothing else than a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (Marx, 29-30). When the tasks of the revolutions are fulfilled, the dictatorship of the proletariat will lead to classless society and state will gradually wither away.

Marxist theory of Political Development is basically the product of industrialized West which lacks universal applicability. The society and cultural set up of the third world systems are completely different from that of the Western societies. So, it would be an unnecessary attempt to apply the parameters of Marxian theory of development in the context of third world countries including Nigeria.

After Marx, Lenin, in his work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, was confronted with the problem of bringing quick socio-economic transformation in Russia. It is not clear whether he accepted Marxism as a remedy to the then socio-economic conditions of his society, but it is certain that he was highly impressed by the revolutionary zeal of Marxian philosophy. He believed that in the absence of a bourgeois class in Russia, his goal could be realized through a highly organized and deeply committed political party. He stressed upon the intellectuals and the Communist party to lead the proletarian revolution. He knew that Russia in 1917, in terms of its socio-civilization level of progress, was somewhere on the margin "between civilized countries and ... all the oriental, non-European countries" (Lenin, 509-512). It was also closer, in terms of socio-economic conditions, to the underdeveloped East than to the developed West. Though the objective of his theory identified with the general line of world development, in which, Russia was required to proceed to overtake the other nations, his methods had to be different. They had to be novel and revolutionary. Hence, Marxian theory was abstract in nature, while Lenin interpreted it to suit the changing conditions of his time. He made it a dynamic creed with a revolutionary fervour. However, Lenin's theory of development could not provide a universal model for the study of Afro-Asian countries, as he did not clearly spell out the dynamics of development among such countries.

Following Lenin was Joseph Stalin. He concentrated socialism in one country, i.e. Russia. He thought that socialism could be possible in Russia given its untapped resources, which, if properly utilized, could make Russia strong and withstand the capitalist onslaught. His doctrine of revolution in one country had strong repercussions, for "If the passing of slow quantitative changes into rapid and abrupt qualitative changes is a sign of development, then it is clear that revolutions, made by oppressed classes, are a natural and meritable phenomenon" (Stalin, 356). However, Stalin did not provide any help to the underdeveloped nations with a view to strengthening the defence and economic independence of Russia. His theory of communism was limited to Russia even though its leaders chose to stay safely away from the Communist movements launched in Asian countries such as China, India, Indonesia and Japan. The

Marxist theories, though were framed in the Afro-Asian countries with an indigenous outlook, could not still provide solutions to the rising socio-economic problems of the political setups.

### **Dependency Model of Political Development**

This theory seeks to weave a conceptual counterpoint to the liberal theories of development. Many scholars, especially those from the Third World, have laid emphasis on the dependency theories of development, within which political development in the Third World could be studied. They sought to build upon the essential Leninist proposition of colonial expansion during the late stage of capitalist development. They argue that the sense of dependency induced in the colonies persists in the post-colonial political context, where the development or underdevelopment of the erstwhile colony tends to have an independent external variable rooted in colonial tradition of exploitation.

Lenin explains the dependency theory in his theory of imperialism. He holds that the Capitalist imperialism is the result of the competition among the colonial powers for the economic and political division of the world. For him, "not only are there two main groups of countries, those owning colonies, and the colonies themselves, but also the diverse forms of dependent countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependency" (Lenin, 742-743)

Andre Gunder Frank equally defines capitalist development in the centre and underdevelopment in the periphery through metropolis and satellite relationship. He gives four reasons for his proposition. Firstly, the underdevelopment is not original in nature. The presently developed countries were never underdeveloped in the process of development rather they might have been undeveloped. So, the current underdevelopment found among the third world countries is nothing but the consequence of capitalistic domination over the world. Secondly, the distinction between the capitalist and the feudal or pre-capitalist is false as all the capitalistic countries have passed through the same stages. Thirdly, metropolis-satellite relationship is not only found at the external level but it is also found in the internal lives of the colonies and neo-colonial nations.

Fourthly, war and depression forced some of the third-world countries to go for capitalistic development but such capitalistic developments led to underdevelopment. Fifthly, acute underdevelopment was found in those countries where they had become very close to the metropolis. In fact, Frank's work on underdevelopment has influenced other scholars to study underdevelopment in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Frank, in his *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967), also took Brazil and Chile as case studies to examine this theory (Frank, 184).

Dos Santos equally argues that dependency occurs due to the expansion of capitalistic economy. Hence, underdevelopment is caused by the exploitation of

the dominant nations over third world countries. He explains this duality thus: "By dependence, we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of inter-dependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or negative effect on their immediate development" (Dos Santos, 231-236).

Dos Santos formulates several types of dependency models to explain the theory of underdevelopment. He avers that the relationship between the Europeans and colonies, wherein the former holds monopoly over land, mines and manpower resources of the later, marks the colonial dependency. Financial-Industrial dependency is marked by the domination of hegemonic centres over the investment of capital in peripheries by acquiring raw materials and agricultural products. The new-dependency theory is marked by the entry of multi-national corporations through investments in the peripheries.

Furthermore, Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy explain the dependency theory via monopoly capitalism. Their views are closer to Marxian line of thought. Whereas Lenin views imperialism as the combination of bank capital with that of finance capital, these two Latin American scholars believe that the corporate capital is replaced by the capital investment of multi-national corporations. They make the Marxian philosophy more up-to-date. However, they give credit to Lenin for pointing out the fact that 'imperialism constitutes a monopoly stage of capitalism which composed of large-scale enterprises'. They also studied the United States of America through this approach. Their work entails that the external impact of monopoly capitalism of the centre over the peripheries remains the major foundation of dependency theory in the twentieth century (Chilcote, 261-262).

In all, the dependency theorists from Gunder Frank to Paul Baran, seek to study the phenomenon of chronic underdevelopment of the third world societies from the Marxist angle. Their conceptual frameworks deal with the basic issue of capitalist domination, and they seem to understand the economy of the world through the Marxian worldview. Marx's theme of capitalist exploitation is projected on to the international economy at large. While their theorizations do explain, to a substantial degree, the causes of underdevelopment of the third-world societies, they do not provide any plausible models of economic and political development. They have also not shed sufficient light on the impact of Western political models, advocated by many countries in the third world, on the socio-economic development of those countries. It may very well seem to a follower of dependency theory that Western models of political development also signify a sense of dependency; for many countries in the third world, including Nigeria, are seeking to redress their socio-economic grievances by adopting the western modes of governance.

## ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIAN EFFORTS TOWARDS ACHIEVING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has, no doubt, been making some frantic efforts to foster economic, social and political well-being of her citizens. Many administrations are reported to have, in the past, thought of and actually presented plans which were geared towards achieving sustainable political development in the country. Such plans encapsulated programmes that were to improve the status of socio-economic and political structures, thereby enhancing the general welfare of the citizens and the nation as a whole. In fact, development and growth have always been the government's top priorities since the attainment of independence. This has been the case because development planning, as experts believe, is the only avenue where the allocation and utilization of resources can be adequately handled (Ibietan and Ekhosuehi, 297).

According to Ogunmike, the first practical plan for political development in Nigeria was in 1946. The plan had a specific objective of fostering economic growth and improving the general welfare of Nigerian citizens. In 1962, the development plan which reflected the independent status of Nigeria was introduced and was operational for a period of six years. The plan aimed at maintaining and improving the growth of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by suggesting strict dependence on multi-lateral aids. 50 percent of the nation's total investment was to come from abroad. This plan, however, came to an abrupt end as a result of the collapse of the First Republic and the subsequent eruption of the civil war. And, out of the 50 percent of foreign aid which was expected, only about 14 percent was received, thus leading to the inability to achieve the identified objectives (Ogunmike, 19).

After the civil war, the second development plan was launched, spanning from 1970 to 1974. This plan came at a period when Nigeria's sale of crude oil and other products were at increase. Hence, its priorities anchored on agriculture, industry, transportation, man-power, defence, electricity, communication, water supply and provision of social services. It also aimed at restructuring the nation that had suffered from post-war violence (Ogunmike, 20).

The third plan for sociopolitical and national development of Nigeria, which spanned from 1975 to 1980, was considered quite ambiguous as much emphasis was laid on rural development and agriculture. In fact, this and all other development policies aimed at generating government's revenue, reducing the need for importing foreign products, bringing income inequality to a minimum level, eradicating poverty as well as controlling inflation. The plan relatively succeeded in indigenizing the economy, establishing free education and other industrial projects. There was an increase in the GDP rate, while the

manufacturing, building and construction sectors were also not left out in the transformation process (Ogunmike, 65).

The fourth development plan was also established in 1980, followed by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), all with the aim of restructuring and diversifying the economy, achieving a stable fiscal income and providing job opportunities over a stipulated period, laying foundation for non-inflationary growth and enhancing the possible growth of the private sector. Other national development plans such as National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), Seven-Point Agenda and the Transformation Agenda have also been launched in response to the development challenges in Nigeria and as national plans for a long-term and integral prosperity (National Planning Commission, 2004). Despite the outlined and many other development plans by the Nigerian government, a genuine or sustainable development, politically, culturally and socio-economically, is yet to be attained in the land given a number of challenges.

## **FACTORS AFFECTING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

As recent researches have revealed, there are various factors that militate against political development in Nigeria. The outstanding among them are: the challenge of history, the problem of socio-economic inequalities, the problem of imposition of unrealistic development policies and poor assessment/implementation, corruption and poor management of resources and lack of credible leadership.

### **The Challenge of History**

Some legacies of colonial rule, according to Gambari, have created serious challenges for political development in Nigeria. The colonialists, as part of their imperial agenda, split Nigeria into Northern and Southern regions with different land tenure systems, local government administration, educational systems and judicial systems. While large British colonies like India and the Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two; one for the North and one for the South. This arrangement made it appear as if these two regions were separate countries, held together only by a shared currency and transportation system. Many members of the Nigerian elite class in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world views that were shaped by regional institutions. Some had little or no knowledge of the welfare or suffering of their neighbouring region. Hence, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive. The situation continued even up to the period of decolonization struggle, as Nigerian nationalists from the two regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. Nigeria never had a central rallying figure like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Instead, each region threw up its own champions. This scenario of regionalism has been a major challenge to holistic political development in Nigeria (Gambari, Online).

Even though the Nigerian founding fathers tried to deal with the issue of regionalism by advocating for federalism and a policy of unity-in-diversity, the situation has remained almost the same. In fact, there is a serious lack of consolidation of Nigerian federalism around commonly shared values and political positions, indicating that this challenge of divisive historical legacy is unabated, and is undermining our efforts at an integral socio-political development. One recent manifestation of this attitude is the distinction that is often made between 'indigenes' and 'settlers'. This division has also been a source of domestic tension and has undermined our struggle at building a common nationhood. While we should learn from history so as not to repeat its mistakes, we must never see ourselves simply as victims of our history. It is rather the collective responsibility of Nigerians to do away with discriminatory and divisive spirit which is inimical to true political development.

### **The Problem of Socio-Economic Inequalities**

Another factor that has impeded political development in Nigeria is the issue of socio-economic inequalities. How can we expect Nigeria as a nation to be politically developed when we have no sense of common citizenship? Can the phenomenon be practicable when, for instance, the inhabitants of Ogoni land have a radically different quality of life from those in Abuja? Or when a young man in Ikom is more likely to die of snake bite than the chap in Ikeja? Through resource control and equal opportunities for all, mature nations have succeeded in establishing a base-line of social and economic rights which all members of the national community have enjoyed and which have encouraged development. Not to enjoy these socio-economic rights, as we experience in Nigeria, means that the people involved are marginalized from national life. This then is the reason many Western European countries have succeeded, to a greater extent, in fostering political development because they try to guard against any form of 'social exclusion' or the exclusion of insignificant segments of their citizenry from enjoying basic social and economic rights.

In Nigeria, however, not only are many of our citizens denied basic rights such as the right to education and health, there is also serious variation in the enjoyment of these rights across the country. As a consequence, many Nigerian citizens are not motivated to support the State and society, because they feel that the society or government does not have adequate concern about their welfare. Also, socio-economic inequalities across the country fuel fears and suspicions which keep our people divided. They pose two related challenges to political development in the country. Firstly, high levels of socio-economic inequalities imply that different Nigerians live different lives in different parts of the country. Thus the chances of surviving child-birth or receiving education and skills vary across the country. If different parts of Nigeria were separate countries, some parts would be middle income countries, while others will be poorer than the poorest countries in the world. In fact, socioeconomic

inequalities are a threat to a common citizenship and holistic political development. A largely marginalized citizenry, increasingly crippled by poverty and lack of basic needs, can hardly be expected to play its proper role in the development of the nation. Nations are built by healthy and skilled citizens. So, for Nigeria to achieve true political development, she needs to first establish a social contract with its citizens as a basis for demanding their loyalty and support.

### **Imposition of unrealistic Development Policies and Poor Implementation**

Speaking about the problems of imposition and poor implementation of development policies, Osakwe is of the view that the nature of Nigeria's development strategies has contributed to the slow pace in achieving poverty and unemployment reduction in the country. For him, the country has not actually gone through the due process of structural transformation (43). This is true given the reason that most of the development strategies that have been so far adopted by Nigerian successive administrations have been quite ineffective in enhancing the growth of productive capacities and structural transformation which form the pivot for generating any productive employment opportunities and reducing poverty to a minimal level. These ineffective strategies, according to Ibietan and Ekhosuehi, are made manifest in the lack of proper coordination and harmonization of programs/policies both within the tenure of a given administration and by those succeeding it (297). In other words, most Nigerian leaders are fond of presenting policies which have not been properly assessed and are too cumbersome or difficult to achieve within the short period spent in office. As such, most plans for national development are usually abandoned at the end of such tenures and subsequent governments also fail to continue with the plans which were left uncompleted. This therefore explains reasons for numerous abandoned projects found in Nigeria.

Again, political and national development problems in Nigeria can be attributed to lack of experts or competent personnel and reliable institutions who can creditably handle the interpretation and implementation of development plans and policies. This has become the case because the nation's successive administrations have never been really keen about providing qualitative education to the Nigerian citizens especially those who have the zeal to learn but are financially incapacitated. Even those who are already educated and have gotten what it takes to salvage the nation are often ignored perhaps on a flimsy account of not having god-fathers to speak on their behalf.

Furthermore, development policies and plans can hardly function in Nigeria since her public officials entrusted with the duty of making such plans/policies are not always concerned about the general welfare of the masses but are interested in enriching themselves. Hence, in a bid to cover up their evil and selfish agenda, unrealistic policies are often made and simply imposed on the citizens without considering what their real or basic needs are. But, from what Huntington has suggested in his theory, political development can only be



attained when the State's political and economic institutions or governmental organizations are efficient and there is proper secularization of policies and conscious involvement of the people in decisions making, probably through fair and active representation.

### **Corruption and Mismanagement of Resources**

Nigeria as a nation is caught in the web of corruption, and this has seriously impeded her political development. Often times, funds which are set aside for implementing development policies are usually siphoned into private pockets to the detriment of the entire nation. In fact, most Nigerian public officials and politicians are dishonest. The corruption perception index of 2010, released by the Transparency International, has confirmed this claim. It reveals that Nigeria has failed to achieve her political and socioeconomic improvement over the last six years. It statistically places Nigeria at 134th position out of 176 countries that were assessed (Eme, 404).

Economically, corruption has led to the depletion of national wealth. Nigeria, before the current economic recession, was sitting on some of the largest oil reserve in the world, yet she could not boast of any substantial progress due to misappropriation of funds by her public officials. As Okechukwu and Inya (58) have observed, between 2000 and 2008 alone, Nigeria earned roughly 370 billion US dollars in oil and gas export. In spite of this, the average life expectancy of her citizens stands at 48 years, and over half of her teeming population cannot have access to clean water, good roads, electricity, medical care and education. Perhaps one factor responsible for this pitiable scenario is the fraudulent act of funneling public resources to uneconomic high-profile projects, such as dams, power plants, pipeline and refineries etc, at the expense of less spectacular but fundamental infrastructural projects such as schools, hospitals, roads, the supply of power and water to rural and urban areas. Also, depletion of the nation's natural resources has hindered the development of fair market structures and distorts competition, thereby deterring investments.

In short, corruption has completely undermined Nigeria's socio-economic and political development strategies. It is, for example, a major factor that has hampered electricity supply in the land. Most industries rely on generating plants as source of power to run their daily operations. This situation constitutes a major setback to both local and foreign investors who do not see profitable returns on their investments. As a result, successive administrations, since the return to civilian rule in 1999 have singled out the power sector for a major reform. The Obasanjo's regime (1999-2007) committed huge sum of money (\$16b) to revamp the power sector. The Yar'Adua/Goodluck administrations thereafter declared a state of emergency in the sub-sector, all with the aim of upgrading and improving electricity supply in the country. Yet, no monumental improvement has been recorded because there is an endemic corruption and

poor management of resources in this sub-sector of the nation's economy. In fact, corruption has bastardized the power sector. It has, in the words of Muttiullah "... made power supply a difficulty in Nigeria" (55). There are many unresolved challenges of development in Nigeria but the issue of the upsurge of corruption in the power sector is troubling. The damage it has done to the power supply in Nigeria is astronomical as the ailing power sector has been a serious bane of meaningful development in the country.

Apart from hampering electricity supply, corruption has equally succeeded in disrupting useful development programs like the Family Support Programme (FSP) and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in Nigeria. These policies were initiated by the Abacha's regime and were anchored by his wife who found a gold-mine in the business of "pretending to care for the poor". According to the *Tell* magazine of 3rd August 1999, "FSP gulped over 10 billion Naira of tax-payer's money at a time Abacha was retrenching helpless civil servants nation-wide". This entails that the programme at the end did not see the light of the day or tackle the problem of poverty due to corruption. A glance at these few areas indicates that corruption has defied all measures adopted to combat political underdevelopment in Nigeria, apparently, because those waging the corruption-wars are themselves corrupt.

### **Lack of Credible Leadership**

Lack of credible leadership which can recognize and articulate the specific needs of the people has also posed a challenge to Political development in Nigeria. According to Dike (20), leadership has become a bane to development in Nigeria in the sense that our so called leaders do not actually understand that leadership entails assuming responsibilities for certain important issues. Such ignorance has given rise to inappropriate check and balances and mechanisms to regulate the affairs of government officials and institutions. As such, politics is seen as a "do or die" affair, while ethical politics is relegated to the background. The leadership structure in Nigeria is poor due to inadequacies in accountability and transparency of public affairs managements in the nation (Gberevbie, Shodipo and Oviasogie, 20).

Also, Chinua Achebe (17) and John (199-201), have observed that the trouble with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. Leadership is a critical factor in political development and nation-building, and should, as Gambari has suggested, be understood in two perspectives: (i) There should exist the personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment, and competence of individual leaders at the top and (ii) there ought to be the collective qualities of common vision, focus, and desire for development of the elites as a whole. These two perspectives are absent in Nigeria. The standards for recruitment and the performance of our individual leaders as well as the elite class have, over the years, been found wanting (Online). But, Nigerian citizens do not need leaders who see themselves as champions of only some sections of our population. We do not also need leaders who do not understand the economic and political

problems of the country, not to talk of finding durable solutions for them. We do not advocate for leaders who are more interested in silencing their opponents, than in pursuing justice. We do not even seek for leaders, who preach one thing and do the exact opposite, or who place themselves above the constitution and the rule of law. We, rather, need leaders who lead by upholding and respecting the law. More so, we do not need leaders who have no sense of the future, other than that of their private bank accounts in foreign lands.

For Nigeria to succeed in achieving true political development, she must have a leadership that is committed to the rule of law and has a demonstrable sense of fair play and democratic tolerance; a leadership with ability and integrity; and, above all, a leadership that can see beyond the ostentatious pomp of office. Nigeria, in short, is in need of leaders who have a vision for the nation's progress better than the one they inherited; leaders who will lead by deeds and not by words; achievers, not deceivers. In fact, our nation should have a leadership that will not only leave its foot-prints on the sands of time, but one, which by dint of hard-work, dedication and commitment, will live forever in the hearts of Nigerians. Of course, leadership is not everything. But it is an extremely important factor in a nation's sociopolitical development. Hence, we can never boast of having a nation that is integrally developed until we are able to have a set of leaders with ability, integrity, commitment and vision.

### **The Need for Strong Institutions in Nigeria**

Given the many challenges of political development in Nigeria, there is no gain saying the fact that the country needs strong institutions. Already, we have on grounds institutions for fostering public integrity, which include: Independence Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC); Institutions for public service delivery like the Nigerian Civil Service; the judicial institutions, which are charged with the responsibility of arbitrating disputes not only between the various levels of government, government and citizens, and among citizens but also among private sector agents; and institutions for economic governance which include the Central Bank, other Banks and Stock Exchange, Insurance Firms, Deposit Insurance, Courts and Fiscal Authorities, responsible for regulating the supply and flow of money and the financial system, allocating capital to firms and individuals, insuring against commercial risks, insuring individual bank depositors against financial loss, enforcing contractual obligations and collecting revenue for the government respectively.

The above listed institutions, in the assessment of many Nigerians, are apparently weak. Their weakness consists in the fact that many or almost all of those who pilot their affairs are uncommitted, incompetent and corrupt. But, we do not need several bodies or institutions with fanciful nomenclatures but poor delivery in a developing country like Nigeria. What we rather need are strong

institutions characterized by their possession of competent and highly skilled personnel or persons who have technical expertise and moral competence to interpret the rules or implement the goals of the organizations and ensure that the institutions inspire public confidence. Only such institutions, through their excellent delivery, can foster sustainable political development in our nation.

As recently observed by Goodluck Jonathan, the former President of Nigeria, "there is no way a nation will grow with weak institutions, because everything about politics is about the people, not about the individuals. As long as you are interested in the people, you are interested in the growth of the society and the development of the nation. The only thing that will make this possible is that the institutions must be strong" ("Strong Institutions: Key to National Development"). What this statement implies is that having strong institutions, which are above the influences and caprices of some selfish individuals but are concerned about the general welfare of a citizenry, is a necessary condition for political development. Perhaps the ex-President said this as an expression of his dissatisfaction with the poor level of institutions in Nigeria, while calling on the current administration to do the needful so as to improve the economy and socio-political status quo of the nation.

Analyzing further the need for strong institutions in Nigeria, Clement Ofuani, a commentator on national issues, recalls what transpired at a news conference which the ex-President of America, Bill Clinton, had with the Russian ex-President, Boris Yeltsin, in Helsinki on March 21, 1997. He reports that at the conference, a certain journalist posed this question: "To both Presidents, both of you have had problems with your individual parliaments, and yet you each have made arms control agreements here, that, you know, the parliaments will want a say: To Mr. Yeltsin, can you guarantee that the Duma will follow your lead and ratify this? And to Mr. Clinton, how can you assure Yeltsin that you won't have a rebellion in the Congress over the anti-missile defense agreement?"

While President Yeltsin said: "As far as Russia is concerned, I expect that the State Duma will make a decision based on my advice", President Clinton, the leader of the incontrovertible global super power of the time prefaced his response with a quip: "Boy, I wish I could give that answer", which generated laughter around the world. The essential lesson one could learn from the encounter Ofuani has reported is: Although President Clinton was the leader of the most powerful nation on earth, yet he was less powerful as a President than his Russian counterpart because of the differences in the relative strengths of the institutions in both nations ("Strong Institutions not Strong Men").

In Nigeria, it has often been said and believed by many that our President is more powerful than the US or Russian President. Perhaps, some people will guffaw at such a seemingly preposterous proposition but this, in a way, is true given how our leaders often place themselves above the rule of law. In fact, it is not only about the President, the governors as chief executives of their states,

and the council chairmen as chief executives of their local governments are even more powerful because over time, they have been considered to be above the institutions they take charge of. The widespread indiscipline, impunity and corruption that are prevalent in our nation today are attributed to the phenomenon of chief executives who place themselves above the law and institutions.

In the 1999 Constitution we are currently operating, provision is made for controls over public funds. The constitution stipulates that no fund should, in principle, be withdrawn from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation by the President except as approved by the Act of the National Assembly. Similarly, the provision prohibits withdrawals from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State by the State Governors except as approved by the law of the State House of Assembly. Despite such prohibitions, it is common experience that the nation is daily inundated with news of unbudgeted and extra-budgetary spending (“Strong institutions not Strong Men”).

It was indeed a profound commitment in many ways than were fully perceived and appreciated when the former President, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, made commitment to the rule of law a cardinal aspect of his administration. Such a commitment ensured the executive obedience to the court orders and brought some relief to the nation. However, in the period preceding his ascendancy, the reverse became the case. Court orders were flawed at will by the executives; an attitude which opposes what obtains in the United States, whose Constitution we copied, albeit improperly (“Strong institutions not Strong Men”). In fact, in the United States of America, institutions are so strong that the Congress can and has once compelled the Attorney General to appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate the President that appointed him. But, in Nigeria, the Attorney General perceives his role as being the chief legal defendant of the President or the Governor in the State rather than the Chief Law Officer.

Again, in Nigeria, it is never strange news that law enforcement agents routinely seek the body language and sometimes the nod of the chief executive in matters involving investigation or prosecution of criminal acts. Even the judiciary is not independent as judges are known for often bending to the body language of the executives in determining matters that are brought before them. What about the bureaucracy? It is, of course, an institution that is supposed to be guided by regulations that have the force of law. A bureaucrat is one trained to be obedient to the rules and regulations such that if the Chief Executive gives an unlawful directive, it becomes his duty to refer him to the requirements of the law. But it is so sad that in Nigeria this institution has become a rubber stamp in the hands of the executives.

More worrisome is the fact that this malaise is not limited to the public sector alone in Nigeria. Even corporate governance in the private sector has displayed similar “strong men” mentality. In the early ‘80s, for example,

majority of the multinational corporations in Nigeria were headed by Nigerian Chief Executives; a fall out from the indigenization exercise. But by the late '90s, practically all the corporations had gone back to foreign chief executives, some of whom were appointed from some smaller African nations. As Ofuani has noted, there were instances where publicly quoted companies were literally shut down because all the executive directors and top managers had to accompany the chief executives for in-law's burial. The executive directors that were expected to provide independent checks on the chief executives often found themselves kowtowing to the same chief in order to remain relevant ("Strong Institutions not Strong Men").

Of course, the chief invariably ceased to be bound by the organization's rules. More so, in the crazy days following the banking consolidation, the bank chief executives became the strongmen with their entire institutions at their beck and call. It was not an uncommon sight to see branch managers in a particular State trooping to the airport to welcome or see off the visiting chief executive using official vehicles bought and maintained by poor shareholders. The outcome of this malaise was, to state the fact, the financial meltdown and banking failure that followed. But our country needs to be delivered from these evils which have contributed immensely to her underdevelopment. We need chief executives at all levels that are prepared to lead the way in providing exemplary disciplined leadership by submitting themselves to the laws of the land even in moments when they prove inconvenient to their persons. We need too strong institutions that are ready to check their excesses.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it suffices to say that Nigeria is walloping in poverty not as a result of lack of resources, but because she lacks, among other factors, strong institutions to make and execute her development plans and policies. In fact, it would be illogical and unreasonable for anyone to think or claim that true political development is possible in Nigeria when the government is yet to do the needful, namely: choosing and empowering men and women of proven competence, impeccable integrity and vision for national progress to run the business of her development-oriented institutions.

As we earlier noted, the institutions Nigeria is having at the moment are all weak in the sense that those operating them are incompetent and morally perverse. More so, our leaders and politicians, having succeeded in undermining the rule of law, often influence their activities in order not to be indicted and prosecuted. Hence, the institutions, especially the so called EFCC and ICPC have become worthless bulldogs which can, at best, be employed by the Party in power as weapons for witch-hunting its political opponents. To put an end to this unfortunate situation, and then achieve a laudable political development for our nation, the government needs to take cognizance of the following recommendations:

1. The existing institutions should be strengthened through recruitment of competent, committed and morally sound personnel.
2. More but strong institutions should be established where and when need arises.
3. The staff of the institutions should be empowered through good salary and other incentives to deter them from being corrupt.
4. The institutions should have their autonomy, that is, they must not be subject to the control of the executives, and
5. The institutions must operate within the confine of the rule of law.

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