

POLITICS OF LEADERSHIP AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The study provide an analyses to the causes of Nigerian's underdevelopment with the emphasis being on underdevelopment. This study verify Nigeria's underdevelopment and prospects for development. Findings for this research project are based on secondary data used. Dependency theory is used to verify Nigeria's underdevelopment status. This research work is carried out to assess the cause of continued underdevelopment in Nigeria. Based on the findings, looters of public funds should be made to face the wrath of the law without fear or favour.

Introduction

All underdeveloped societies are in need of development not because they want to be like Europe and America who are usually looked upon as models, but because they desire a better living standard for their people. Another reason why countries seek for development is that underdevelopment is a stage that shows that a country is trying to develop or has moved on from the traditional stage. An underdeveloped country such as Nigeria is one in which for some reasons have been backward in developing its economic and other resources, with the result that its citizens have a lower standard of living than that enjoyed in the more advanced countries of Europe and American (Hanson, 1979).

Due to underdeveloped nature of the country, Onuoha (1995) posited that characteristic which are common in the country include low per capital income, population explosion, high rate of illiteracy, technological backwardness, prevalence of hunger and disease under utilization of the factors of production and the existence of traditional Institutions. Still, according to Onuoha, other features of underdevelopment in the country are poverty, low industrial based, political instability, infrastructural inadequacies, trade and balance of payment problems, corruption, poor leadership violent of fundamental human right etc.

Besides colonialism and imperialism, underdevelopment persists in the country even after independence. All the above mentioned characteristics of underdevelopment continue to exist in the country after several years of independence. A lot of factors have attributed to the continued underdevelopment status of Nigeria. It is therefore the continued underdevelopment nature of the country that called for this study to critically asses the cause of continued underdevelopment of Nigeria with particular reference to the period 1999 to 2015 when the country experienced full fledge democratic governance that is supposed to enhanced development.

Underdevelopment is a sickness and dilemma to a society. It is a situation whereby a country is backward in developing her economic resources, with the result that her people have a lower standard of living than that enjoyed in the more advanced countries. A country with abundant human and materials resources is supposed to be a developed society. Nigeria is blessed with the abundant resources compared to what is obtainable in Europe and America. Despite the above situation, the standard of living in the country is low and characterized by so many underdevelopment features such as inequitable distribution of wealth and income, predominance of Agriculture, Deficiency of capital, unemployment and underemployment, technical backwardness.

Considering the country's position, the following research questions are considered pertinent for the study has accounted for more than two thirds of the gross domestic product and more than 80 percent of total government revenue. The economy, according to NDHS (National Demographic and health Survey 1999), has fluctuated between growth and decline within the past two decades.

The Concept of Development and Underdevelopment

Development literature is replete with explanations as to the causes and solutions to underdevelopment. Development, according to Okereke (1999) is seen as the qualitative improvement in the living standard of members of the society. The quality of life is therefore measured by such indicator is literacy rate of employment, the distribution of income, availability of good drinking water, good roads, regular supply of electricity, decent housing medical facilities and access to them etc. Obinezie (1999) in his conceptual and theoretical clarification of development asserted that the concept development has no definite meaning as it has been interpreted to mean different things to different people dependent on their intellectual, ideological beliefs and the issue in question. He further enunciated that within the period 1950-1960, development was essentially seen as an economic phenomenon, and was used to imply the capacity of a national economy who initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time and which also generates and sustains an annual increase of its gross national product at the rate of five to seven percent or more per annum.

This concept of development was later rendered irrelevant by the experiences of a large number of developing countries such as Nigeria. This was because despite the achievement of the stipulated level of growth of between five to seven percent, the living condition of the masses remained in most cases unchanged and in others, it even deteriorated. The above therefore portrayed underdevelopment rather than development. As a result therefore, there was a clamour for the redefinition of development when he said. The questions to ask about development are therefore. What has been happen to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have become less severe, then beyond doubt this a period of development for the country concerned.

To summarize what is said so far in a few words, the condition of underdevelopment implies that a country has a low per capital income because she has deficient technology and her work systems and processes are inefficient, her institution are backward as a result of which she becomes unable to develop her resources in any way, near their full potential, backwardness of political, economic and social institutions and inefficiency in work methods and systems are the hallmarks of underdevelopment.

Causes of Nigeria's Underdevelopment

Nigeria's continued underdevelopment is attributed to so many factors both internal and external. According to studied carried out by scholars, the following are seen as the causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria:

- (i) **Colonialism:** This factor as a cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment is highly and critically analyzed by Rodney (1972) in his work "how Europe underdeveloped Africa", Rodney started that the pattern of arrest of African political development has some features which can only be appreciated after careful scrutiny and the taking away of the blinkers which the colonizers put on the eyes of their subjects. Besides, the above political subjugation of Africans, Nigeria inclusive, the colonizers, according to Rodney also exploited the economy of African countries to their advantage. This

economic exploitation according to him has remained a key factor towards the continued underdevelopment of Nigeria and other African States.

A critique of the above situation however argued that the colonizer's had long left the shores of Nigeria and that with the abundant human and material resources endowment of the country. Nigeria was in a good position to get away from underdevelopment. It is in view of the above critique that Gabriel (2013) warned; "Nigeria's underdevelopment, blame our leaders not colonialists".

(ii) **Poor Leadership:** This is seen as another cause of Nigeria's continued underdevelopment. Aderibigbe (2011) asserted there is no vision, the people perish" is an aphorism that has become common knowledge among the Nigerian political leaders, who often articulated vision is colourful and expensive development plans, policies, programmes, etc. but mostly for chanting. According to Erich (2000 and 2006) immediately after the Nigerian Civil War in January 1970. The Gowon led federal government (1966-1975) came up with the vision of "3Ks" Re integration, rehabilitation and reconstruction, as part of a follow up development plan to the "No Victor, no vanquished" declaration to end the war. Due to leadership problem marginalization set, up till date that vision cannot be fully implemented. In the assertion of Onah (2006) the Gowon administration launched the second National development plan with five main goals. Over two decades after the plan was launched in 1970, none of its five goals has been achieved.

The Obasanjo led federal government (1976-1976) introduced "operation feed the nation". The Buhari/Idiagbon administration (1983-1985) introduced the "war against indiscipline" after the Shagari government of 1979-1984 had introduced the "Green Revolution". Abacha led government captioned its own "war against indiscipline and corruption", the administration also brought in Babangida "Better life programme" and introduce the "vision Zolo". The Babangida led administration (1985-1993) known for its "Maradonaism and self styled "evil-genius" had the longest list of development vision and programmes, including the "National directorate of Employment", the "Directorate for foods, Roads and Rural infrastructure". Better life for rural woman programme, "Peoples Bank", "Community Bank" and the "National Economic Reconstruction Fund". The Obasanjo led their Republic (1999-2007) came up with the "National Poverty Eradication Programme" the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the sectoral reform agenda and the mentioned "vision 2020" Conah 2006 and Abdulhamid 2008), the Goodluck Jonathan administration introduced the "SURE - P" and the "LI-Win" Empowerment Programmes. All the above development visions, policies and programmes are often paraded alongside the notional goals, treaties, conventions, protocols etc; which the political leaders merely declare.

In line with the above position therefore, Oghe (2008) submit that the past government programmes have not succeeded in meeting the yearnings and aspirations of Nigeria's, adding that crime, corruption, unemployment, and electoral malpractices are still very much with us Onah (2006) opines that all development plans are visions fails in Nigeria because of poor handing by corrupt hungry politicians/bureaucrats, leading to growing poverty symptoms, including electoral Frauds untrue and inefficient representative, violence religious crises and crises in the Niger Delta Regions, hostage taking, food insecurity, low agricultural production poor health and image; low GDP and GNP: and high unemployment rate.

Reacting to a report, Aniekpon (2008) challenged Nigeria leaders, rulers and political heavy weights to think of where Nigeria was heading for an individual could burn a whopping N270 million and gather only the ask for a fetish deal, in a country of grinding poverty where many homes cannot solve even problems that may requires just N1000.

Nigeria civilian and military governments deliver low economic growth and increasing poverty since the 1970s. this is why Anya (2008) asserts that there is poor development or underdevelopment because Nigeria's political leadership has failed to work for social and economic transformation of the country.

In line with the above, Okeke (2008) posits that one of the problems of the country is uncoordinated development vision, abandoned development programmes and policy summer sautt. They are products of corruption and political leadership ineptitude that characterized the country. These factors therefore

combined to masterminds underdevelopment and failed Nigerian state, inspite of abundant natural and human resources in the country.

- (iii) **Corruption:** It is worthy of note to state that no meaningful development can take place where the country and her citizens are swimming and neck-deep in the waters of corruption. Idongesit (2011) asserts that the level of governance corruption in Nigeria has been described as endemic and epidemic as it takes place at the highest echelon of government. Corruption is one of the major causes of under development in Nigeria. Those who ought to fight corruption are the same people perpetuating it, thus corruption has become virtually legalized (especially among the ruling class). Corruption among the ruling class has greatly damaged the image of nationally and internationally. A study of the actualities of all political office holders in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015 reveals that the political leadership class is only using their position in the government and other instrument of the state to perpetuate corruption thereby hindering development. It is leadership corruption which leads to underdevelopment that instigated (1988) to state that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of political leadership. Corruption either by government or citizens is a tool for underdevelopment of society. Leadership corruption is seen as one of the most epidemic cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria.
- (iv) **Over Concentration on oil Economy:** It is a known fact that agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria economy. Due to mismanagement and lack of vision on the part of our past leaders, agricultural sector of our economy was abandoned for crude oil based economy where they can see easy money to loot.

According to Oduand and Agida (2005) the dominance of petroleum crude oil export in the Nigerian economy led to instability in the economy. Still in their position, national development plans and budgets since 1970 have been based on the fortunes or otherwise of the oil sector and this has been a very disappointing experience. The country's optimism and anticipated prosperity have turned to a harsh austerity which does not allow development to occur in the country. The so called Nigeria's "mono-product economy" has caused a very serious imbalance in the economy, resulting in mass unemployment. Nigeria government dependence on oil was/is a result of neglect of the agricultural sector, when the "oil glut" and oil crises came, the country finds it difficult to develop.

(v) **Low level of Technology:**

This is one of the causes of Nigeria continued underdevelopment the geographical entity called Nigeria depends on foreign countries for almost everything. Even with our crude oil we are still importing fuel due to low level of our technical knowhow. The government is not helping matters. Past administration in this country made little or no effort to promote industrialization through science and technology. The after effect is the country's dependence on industrialized nations for her goods and services. A country without science and technology cannot grow and develop.

Characteristics of Underdevelopment

Odu (2004) enunciates that poverty is a very big and complex obstacle to both the progress of an individual and a state. It is a cause as well as an effect of underdeveloped countries in the world because like the development because like the developed countries. They have common characteristics.

Tadaro (1980) identifies the following characteristics of underdevelopment:

- (a) Low standard of living
- (b) Low level of productivity
- (c) High rate of population growth
- (d) High and rising levels of unemployment
- (e) High dependency burden
- (f) Dependent economics that are tied to those of the developed countries.
- (g) Low rate of industrialization, and dominance, dependence and vulnerability in international relations.

In the same way Odu (2004) added to Todaro's list as follows:

- (a) Low per capital income
- (b) Inadequate capital
- (c) Poor quality of education
- (d) Political instability and poor quality or national leadership etc.

Dependency theory will be used in explaining Nigeria's underdevelopment situation. Dependency theory has it that the condition of underdevelopment is precisely the result of the incorporation of the third world economics into the capitalist world system which is dominated by the West and North America "(Randall and Theobald 1998), hence in development studies, dependency implies a situation in which a particular country or region relies on another for support, survival and growth .

Nigeria is not the only country that was colonized but after independence some other third world countries that were under colonial administration rather than continually depending on their former colonial masters to structure their economic system or determine the progress of their economy, had to rely and make judicious use of their resources of make sure that they develop.

Nigeria was colonized by the British and even after their independence in 1960 Nigeria still let foreign policy affect their economy, they still depend on the industries of the former masters; this dependency does not give room for development.

Nigeria is full of raw materials but lacks the ability to make effective and efficient use of these raw materials to enhance development. To compare Nigeria with other countries using Japan for example; Japan and even China have less raw material compared to Nigeria, but their leaders (government) have the necessary skills to make judicious use of all the limited resources they have to enhance development that even Nigeria with much raw materials have to depend on China for technologies such as phones, cars, television etc.

Dependency theory is used to explain that there other economically backward their world countries such as under-developed countries of Asia Adriva and Latin America which over the fears have been liberated from underdevelopment, but looking at Nigeria the case is different, Nigeria seems to be going backward as years go by.

Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses are proposed for this study in both null and alternative forms:

1. **Hi:** Nigeria is an underdevelopment country
2. **Hi:** There are causes of Nigeria's underdevelopment

Conclusion

As emphasized earlier all underdevelopment societies are in need of development not only because they want to be like Europe and America, who are usually looked upon as model, but because they desire a better living standard for their people.

The findings of this study have shown that the opposite is the case in Nigeria. Continue underdevelopment is a cause for concern. It is attributed to so many factors. In the past, it was attributed to colonialism but today, it is seem in the high of corruption and poor leadership.

A critique of colonialism argued that with the abundant human and material resources endowment of the country, Nigeria is in a better state to get away from under development. Gabriel (2013) warned "Nigeria's underdevelopment, blame our leaders not colonialists". Form personal observation and experience, it obvious that corruption, poor leadership, electoral malpractices, nepotism, greed etc are the major causes of Nigeria's continued underdevelopment. The past government in the country could not meet the yearning of Nigerians. Plans and visions of past administrations failed in the country because of poor handling by corrupt hungry politicians and bureaucrats, leading to persistent poverty symptoms electoral frauds, untrue and inefficient representatives, violent, religious crises in the Nigeria Delta region, Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, food insufficiency low agricultural production, poor health, high unemployment etc. Nigerian military and civilian regimes since after independence delivered low economic growth and increasing poverty in the land. The elite refuse to work for social and economic transformation of the country.

From the foregone therefore, is concluded that the continued underdevelopment of the country is cause by a few cabal who are the elites of the country. The leadership of this country should be held responsible for underdevelopment woes. We must thank God for Buhari's good intention infighting corruption. A success of this exercise will bring more hope and development to the country most especially to the down-trodden masses of this country who are the victims of the underdevelopment status of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proffered on how to curt all underdevelopment in Nigeria. The fight against corruption must to seen as everybody's concern and not that the president Buhari alone.

Electoral processes in the country should be sensitized to ensure free and fair elections. There must be orientation campaign to enlighten Nigerians on the demerits of indiscipline, nepotism favouritism, corruption etc.

Looters of public funds should be made to face the wrath of the law without fear or favour. The judiciary system in the country be sanitized and made to be purely independent and free from the influence of other arms of government. There should be adequate motivation of employees to reduce corruption.

Our religious leaders who are in need of material wealth should desist from misleading Nigerians into corrupt practice, through the continued emphasis on material wealth instead of spiritual wealth. Our traditional rulers titles to public fund looters. They should exist from it. Patriotism must be uphold in the country so that we can achieve development.

Moral instruments and citizenship education is a panacea for the development of the country through maintenance of morality and values. All hand must be a deck. The leaders and the followers, the preacher and the laity the ruler and the ruled, the leader and the led should join hands together and contributed towards the development of the country.

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