

The Role of Political Leaders in Development Crises in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The roles of political leaders are to build the society by harnessing resources available for the development of a nation. Regrettably, Nigerian political leaders have failed in their main duty which is to assemble resources humanly and materially for development. Because of this, Nigeria at the moment battles with high rate of poverty, high level of unemployment, high rate of political instability, corruption, insecurity of lives and property and lack of infrastructural facilities in all sectors of the economy; thus, this paper examined political leaders and development crises in Nigeria. It asserts that the bulk that make up political leaders in the country are self-serving rulers rather than men and women with credible characters, hence the large disparity between the haves and have-nots in the country as well as the underdevelopment or no development syndrome becoming cyclical. In order to break this cycle, the paper recommended amongst others, the need for accountability and transparency to serve as yardsticks for bringing to power, selfless leaders who will govern with the people's interest at heart. Also, in order to promote development and good governance, existing, sound anti-corruption policies must be implemented.

Keywords: Political leaders, Development, Patriotism, Productivity, Nation, Destruction.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership means the ability to lead, direct and organise a group. In the words of Norman Schwarzkopf leadership is an effective combination of strategy and character, however, of the two elements, character is the most preferred for leadership [1,2]. Accordingly, leadership is a process of social influence by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent [3]. A leader therefore is expected to demonstrate qualities, which involves but not limited to good character, vision, tact, prudence, and ability to lead by example. Irrespective of the economic and social policies that have been implemented by successive governments, Nigeria has remained a dawdler in economic, social and political developments. A key factor responsible for this malfunction of most development programmes in Nigeria has been the failure of political leaders to effectively pull together human and material resources for development [4]. [5], t interest is the main force behind the acquisition of political power. The question however is: to what extent is class interest synonymous with masses interest? This question is quite crucial

because by the nature of politics, even in a democratic set-up, political leaders tend to manoeuvre the class of unconscious masses in favour of their profligacy. This shows that in most democracies including Nigeria, the quantity strength of the mass people have continued to count less because of the scheming political skills of the politicians. In the Nigerian state, just like most budding democracies, the political skills of political leaders have remained violent because of the use of violence, thuggery, ethnicism, religious bigotry and other negative factors in manipulating the masses for the attainment of political power [6,7,8,9]. Hence, after they succeed in getting into power, they focus on enriching themselves rather than carrying out key development initiatives that can change the lives of the people.

According to [10], Nigeria is yet to witness significant development after half a century of her political independence, and this is attributed to the occupation of sensitive state offices by a crop of visionless and rudderless men and women who are only concerned about how to appropriate and grab collective wealth for personal aggrandizement. Political leaders in

Nigeria since Independence have so impoverished the country that her social and economic institutions have virtually collapsed. Political leaders embezzle public funds with impunity due to weak and ineffective institutions to check the excesses of corrupt politicians [11]. Also, they take undue advantage of these shortcomings to circumvent the few institutional restraints put in place to loot the treasury. They get involved in grand corruption and acquire wealth through questionable means which they use to bribe their ways to remain in power for life. Nigeria is currently under-developed because the society has been according undue respect to politicians while the youths literally lick the feet of their political masters just to gain relevance if any. Hence, an attempt to understand development crises in Nigeria must be accompanied by a much bigger effort to come to terms with the

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted Class Relation theory as propounded by Karl Marx. The theory posits that an individual's position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process, and argues that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. According to Marx, a class is a group with intrinsic tendencies and interests that differ from those of other groups within society, the basis of a fundamental antagonism between such groups. A class is those who share common economic interests, are conscious of those interests, and engage in collective action which advances those interests. All people in one class make their living in a common way in terms of ownership of the things that produce social goods. Within the Class Relation theory, the structure of the production process forms the basis of class construction. Marx distinguishes one class from another on the basis of two criteria: ownership of the means of production and control of the labour power of others. From this, Marx states "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great classes directly facing each other": while the bourgeoisie own the means of

problem of corruption and its implications on development. This is not to suggest that corruption is the only problem facing Nigeria, however, corruption has been the bane of the nation's development and the rising level of unemployment as well as insecurity are some of the key evidence of this anomaly. Unfortunately, the political class can be said to be responsible because most of the stolen state wealth has been siphoned abroad by this set of people, to acquire estates in developed countries, buy chieftaincy titles across the country and establish a "political empire". It is for this reason that this paper investigated how the political class engenders development crises in Nigeria, with specific focus on corruption in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examined how political leaders engender corruption in Nigeria as well as the implication on development.

production and purchase the labour power of others; Workers, or proletariat, do not own any means of production or the ability to purchase the labour power of others. Rather, they sell their own labour power. Class is thus determined by property relations, not by income or status. These factors are determined by distribution and consumption, which mirror the production and power relations of classes. The Nigerian political class control government machinery. At the state level, they also control government apparatus. Unfortunately, this class of politicians are only good with the technique of circulating money without a talent for creating new wealth hence are implicated in the country's development crisis. The political class occupy strategic positions and are therefore expected to make key decisions that can impact positively on different sectors in the country as well as the masses. Evidently however, the Nigerian state has persistently maintained a retrogressive path because the class in charge of is only concerned about its own selfish interest. Thus, in Nigeria, the masses are being forced to contend with whatever the political class (bourgeoisie) throws at them.

Conceptual Clarifications Political Leaders

Political leaders refers to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-

making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. It could also be described as the human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organised territory [12].

The Concept of Development

Development is a relative concept [13], however, it is possible to arrive at some specific indicators of development that are widely acceptable. Thus, one can say that every human society aspires to strong, efficient and dynamic economic and political institutions that anticipate the yearnings of their people and respond to them accordingly and promptly. It is also possible to argue that in every society, there are minimum expectations which all members share. These include access to functional health facilities, access to safe drinking water, universal qualitative education, and equal opportunity for all members in public affairs where competition based on merit is upheld over and above other considerations. All these are universal values that transcend cultural and political boundaries. Applied to human societies, development refers to a state, condition or stage, which entails positive transformation in both quantity and quality of life for all members of a particular society. Where there is corresponding decline or retrogression in the quality of life for a significant portion of the population, it is described as the state of under-development [14]. In effect, development and underdevelopment connotes a relational state in which one mirrors the exact absence of the other. [15], observe that development means “quantitative growth, qualitative improvement, and

expansion in the capabilities, capacities, and choices of individuals, groups or states”. Also, [5] writes that development is “the modification of the biosphere and the application of human, financial, living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of life”. One major point that clearly demarcates these concepts of development is the recognition that improvement in the quality of life of all members of a human society is the fundamental objective and primary goal of development. The point here is the emphasis on empowerment and skill building among members of the society to be able to transform their living conditions. [6], raised some fundamental socio-economic and political questions in his definition of development when he put forward that the questions to ask about a country’s development are... What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from higher levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development,’ even, if per capita income doubled.

Political Leaders and Corruption in Nigeria

The World Bank conceptualizes corruption as: “The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when officials accept edicts or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefits even if no bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism, the thief of state assets or the diversion of state

revenue.” Adding to this definition, [9] captures corruption as the mismanagement of public funds for private gain. For instance, funds that are supposed to be used for development purposes in Nigeria are pocketed by politicians at the detriment of the nation’s development. [12], point out that political corruption happens in a democratic setting. Discourse on the causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria will be incomplete without discussing the issue of the massive

corruption being perpetuated, and still being perpetuated, by successive administrations. Corruption, which has permeated the entire social structure of Nigeria, has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economic base. Funds meant for development projects have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled and stashed away in foreign banks, while some incompetent and corrupt bureaucrats and administrators in the public enterprises and parastatals have liquidated these organizations [8]. Despite the government's effort through anti corruption agencies to curtail corruption, the menace has continued unabated. The EFCC has been accused of not doing enough to prosecute corrupt politicians and Nigeria has consistently remained at the bottom of the corruption index ranking because of the high-degree of corruption in the country [9]. Currently facing a slew of allegations of fraud including the diversion of recovered funds and seized assets, [7] writes that the suspension of Ibrahim Magu, the head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), follows a familiar trend of top bosses of the Nigerian anti-graft agency being hounded out of office in very questionable ways for allegedly questionable behaviour. Since its inception, the EFCC has been accused of being a political tool used to target enemies of the ruling politicians in Nigeria. For example, Mrs Farida Waziri was removed from her position by President Goodluck Jonathan on accusations that the EFCC had been selective in its investigation. Nigeria's EFCC was established in 2003 partly as a response to the pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering after the group named Nigeria as one of the 23 countries that were uncooperative in the global fight against money laundering. But, according to Transparency International, Nigeria currently ranks 146th out of 180 countries scoring a miserly 26% despite the 17 year run of the anti-graft agency [8]. The cause of underdevelopment in countries like Nigeria has polarized the academic world into three groups. The modernization theorists such as Emile Durkheim, David Apter, David McClelland and Wait Rostow argued that

developing countries have to follow the development path of Rich Western Nations before they can develop. However, the dependency school of thought that has the likes of Walter Rodney, Francois Perrous, Kurt Rothschild, Walden Bello and Kunibert Raffer counter the modernization theorists' assumption of underdevelopment in third world countries. Their argument is that the rich Western nations are responsible for the underdevelopment of countries in the global south. The third group that has emanated from what Samuel Huttenton called the 'conflict of interest' is the African scholars that posit that African leaders are the cause of the economic woe of the continent. In the fold of this new school of thought are [9,14]. Their hypothesis is based on the fact that Africa is endowed with natural resources and money that is accrued from the sale of the mineral resources to other countries that are supposed to be used to increase the quality of life for Africans are misappropriated by African leaders. It is on this account that Adewale asserts that "corruption is an act of diverting the resources that should have been used for the developmental purposes of the society to private or personal use. The accumulation of the nation's economic resources for personal benefits has variously contributed to the leakage of capital from Nigeria for illegal deposits abroad." He further states that corruption has a crowding effect on the growth and development of the country. "It's contributing effects on poverty and poor infrastructural development is more worrying" [4]. In a similar vein, Akindele (2005) cited in Adewale (2014) evaluates the interface between corruption and development. The empirical results of the study after using some economic variables denote that corruption hinders economic development. He concluded that there is a strong negative relation between corruption and development nexus and corruption remains the core barrier to the development of any society. [2], further examined the crowding-out effect of corruption in Nigeria's fourth republic. Using the simulation approach to evaluate the effects of financial corruption in Nigeria, he pinpointed

from his empirical findings that corruption retards economic growth in Nigeria which implies that corruption has a crowding-out impact on economic growth.

Corruption is a by-product of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, funds that are allocated to different development sectors are often mismanaged by the political leaders. For instance, the Minister of Finance once bemoaned the absence of physical development in most states of the federation despite the huge federal allocation to these states. According to [3] corruption leads to the use of resources to finance elephant projects at the expense of infrastructural development such as schools, hospitals, roads, water supply and electricity supply. [6], posits that corruption dents a nation's capacity to provide the basic necessity of life for the populace. Corruption is the main factor responsible for Nigeria underdevelopment in all sectors [9]. The former Governor of Abia State, Uzor Kalu once accused the former Minister of Works Tony Anenih of the embezzlement of N3 billion that was meant for the maintenance of federal roads. Corruption in Nigeria has been blamed for the high-rate of poverty in the country, for example, the official released of the poverty profile of Nigeria by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that 112 million Nigerians live in relative poverty. This data was supported by the confirmation of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) representative in Nigeria that said 100 million Nigerians live in destitution. Of recent, Nigeria was named poverty capital of the world with a large number of poor people [7]. Poverty is a by-product of insecurity. The security challenges that are facing Nigeria have been blamed on the high level of corruption and poverty in the country. The hypothesis is that corruption breeds poverty and poverty breeds insecurity. [5] gave a summary how political corruption hinders development in the new democratic dispensation in Nigeria. These include: poor social welfare, loss of public trust and legitimacy by the government, increase insecurity, increased poverty and unemployment, low investment, etc.

According to the [3] report of unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria, "[the] combined unemployment and underemployment rate for the entire youth labour force (15-35 years) was 52.65% or 22.64 million (10.96 million unemployed and another 11.68 million underemployed), compared to 45.65% in Q3 2016, 47.41% in Q4 2016, and 49.70% in Q3 2017". In a recent report by Nairametrics (2020), data from the National Bureau of Statistics reveals that Nigeria's unemployment rate as at the second quarter of 2020 is 27.1% indicating that about 21,764,614 (21.7 million) Nigerians remain unemployed. According to the report, Nigeria's unemployment and underemployment rate (28.6%) is a combined 55.7%. This means the total number of Nigerians who are unemployed or underemployed as at the second quarter (Q2) of 2020. The data also reveals that the worst-hit are Nigerian youths with over 13.9 million currently unemployed. The data further shows that the highest unemployment rate (40.8%) is for youths between the ages of 15 - 24 years. This is followed by those within the ages of 25 - 34 years at 30.7%; NCE/OND holders and those with nursing degrees recorded an unemployment rate of 30.8%; the unemployment rate amongst second-degree holders (M.Sc/MS/MAdm) stands at 22.9% while the unemployment rate of those classified as Doctorate degree holders is 23.3%. The implication of this according to the NBS report is that, Nigeria's youth population eligible to work is about 40 million out of which only 14.7 million are fully employed and another 11.2 million are unemployed. Thus, a high level of youth unemployment is synonymous with increased insecurity and poverty, a situation that is also seen as a ticking time bomb. To put things into context, Nigeria's unemployed youth of 13.1 million is more than the population of Rwanda and several other African countries. The youth population is also about 64% of total unemployed Nigerians suggesting that the most agile working-class population in the country remains unemployed. The Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the economic condition in the country making it even harder for employers to

create more jobs while the private sector has continued to downsize in order to reduce overheads and stay afloat. The recent data indeed buttresses the extent to which the political class has impoverished the nation and left it in shambles.

According to [4], the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among youths in Nigeria have made them vulnerable to the manipulations of political class. These jobless youths, when showered with some cash with promise for more, are more prone to be used as political thugs and political assassins by aggrieved politicians, insurgent fighters and suicide bombers by religiously motivated terrorist groups and their religious demagogues, and saboteurs by

Implications for Development

In reality, it is impossible to reflect on any social ill in the country that is not traceable to the embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, particularly as a direct or indirect consequence of the corruption perpetrated by the callous political leadership class since independence. The cycle of poverty keeps growing with all its attendant consequences even as the rate of unemployment remains perpetually high. By giving mediocrity advantage over intelligence through nepotism and cronyism, intellectual capital, which is the bulwark of development and advancement, has continued to drift abroad in search of greener pasture [7]. Ironically, the scourge of corruption has left the country in a position of being too rich to be poor and too poor to be rich. Thus, this has made it inevitable for every Nigerian to be a victim of corruption [6]. For instance, it can be argued that the crisis in the Niger Delta region, the Boko Haram insurgency and the Fulani Herdsmen crisis in the Middle Belt region are partly responsible for the Nigerian economy's entry into recession since the nation experienced a sharp drop in oil production and sale, and in the production and sale of food stuff respectively [4]. To show the economic consequences of insecurity for example, [5] purports that: ...the Nigerian economy lost a whopping N1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) owing to Boko Haram's activities. FDI flows to

greedy multinationals. For instance [7] believes that Mohammed Yusuf while alive went recruiting his members, most of whom were largely unemployed and uneducated youths, from mosque to mosque and from one Almajiri school to the other. The disillusionment and impoverishment of these jobless youths and the [2] asserts, made them easy prey in the hands of demagogues like the late Yusuf. Little wonder they were more sympathetic to the ideals of Boko Haram because they saw it as a way to rid themselves off a system which is responsible for their sufferings and less concerned to bring them out of the abyss of their misery [5]. Thus, Nigeria presents a veritable case for understanding the connection between corruption and political malaise.

Nigeria have been depleting over the years. FDI flows fell to 4693.83 million USD in 2014 from 5608.45 million USD in 2013, and further fell to 3064.17 million USD in 2015. These statistics are quite similar to the World Bank's where FDI flows fell from 8841.11 million USD in 2011 to 7069.93 million USD in 2012, 5562.87million USD in 2013, and to \$4655.85 million USD in 2014 [8]. The implication is the rising unemployment currently witnessed in the nation. According to [8], it is estimated that there are almost 2,152,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Nigeria as of 31st December, 2015. This figure is believed to be on the increase. Also, according to Gov. Kashim Shettima of Borno state, insurgency particularly in the Northeastern region of Nigeria perpetrated by Boko Haram has led to the death of almost 100,000 persons [7]. Unfortunately, this high level of insecurity creates political instability. The insecurity has aggravated incessant cases of kidnapping, restriction of movement and proliferation of arms and explosives [11]. Added to this is the fact that it creates room for human right abuses. According to [12], the Nigerian military extra judicially executed more than 1200 people; they have arbitrarily arrested at least 20000 people; and at least 7000 people have died in military detention in the course of security operations against Boko Haram [13]. In the same vein, Nigeria has not been spared of extreme poverty as she was

recently described as the poverty capital of the world. [14] defines poverty “as a state of long-term deprivation of well-being, a situation considered inadequate for decent living”. In 2019, the Punch Newspaper reported that no fewer than 94,470,535 million people in Nigeria lived in extreme poverty. In a report by [11], poverty level increased in Nigeria from 27.2% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1996, an increase of about 141.2%. In absolute terms, the reports observes that the number of poor rose from 67 million in 1996 to 68.7 million in 2004, with the urban poor increasing to about 40% and the rural poor to about 60%. By 2010, it is believed that about 70% of Nigerians lived under \$1 per day, no less than 92% of the total population live on less than \$2 per day [4]. These figures generally represent the level of poverty in Nigeria, but in reality, it does not capture its depths. Its depth can best be seen from the thousands of urban slums that criss-cross the country in which millions live in infested conditions without access to sanitary facilities, drinking water, medical care or affordable education for their children. So deplorable is the condition in terms of shelter for

Conclusion/Recommendation

It is obvious that political class engenders underdevelopment in Nigeria. This paper examined political leaders and development crises in Nigeria. It asserts that the bulk that make up political leaders in the country are self-serving rulers rather than men and women with credible characters, hence the large disparity between the haves and have-nots in the country as well as the underdevelopment or no development syndrome becoming cyclical. In order to break this cycle, accountability and transparency have to be guaranteed and the people have to be involved in bringing to power selfless

Ugwuozor
example, a whole family of ten or more lives cramped in a single room without ever hoping to escape from the clutches of abject poverty [5]. The streets of urban areas provide another mirror that captures the depth of poverty in Nigeria. On these streets, children of school age hawk, young women prostitute, young men peddle drugs and tout in motor-parks, and the aged and physically challenged beg for sustenance. The question to ask at this stage becomes: what is the political class doing about the increase in poverty rate despite the country’s rich natural and human resources? Consequently, the activities of politicians remain the single most critical impediment to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria, and with over 70 percent of the youths being unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable, it will always be easy to recruit the already frustrated youths to carry out the dirty biddings of the bourgeoisie; and if this malaise continues, the hope of having a well developed Nigeria and a political leaders that puts the interest of the masses above its own will remain narrow.

leaders who will govern with the people’s interest at heart. Thus, to promote development and good governance, existing, sound anti-corruption policies must be implemented. In addition, the legislature and the judicial arm must be functional and alive to their responsibilities and learn to put the people first. Similarly, selflessness is a quality that is deeply lacking among the Nigerian political leaders; therefore, political elites must learn to accommodate the people’s interest in their act of governance as this is the major reason why they were elected.

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