A Historical Appraisal of Development in the Nigerian Society from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Periods

Alexander C. Ugwukah, PhD

1 Department of History and International Studies, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria

Correspondence: Alexander C. Ugwukah, Department of History and International Studies, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. Tel: 234-80-8079-9669. E-mail: ugwukaha@babcock.edu.ng

Received: March 26, 2021      Accepted: May 31, 2021      Online Published: June 16, 2021

doi:10.5539/jsd.v14n4p26                  URL: https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v14n4p26

Abstract

Although development studies of the Nigerian society has been done from various time frames and perspectives in order to ascertain the level of economic attainment, scant scholarly attention has been given to a wholesome historical appraisal of the Nigerian state from pre-colonial to post-colonial periods. The reason for this tendency is not unrelated to the enormity of issues and happenstances which characterized such a lengthy scope of study. However, given the necessity of an in-depth audit, it has become overly important to attempt/endeavor into a research that can offer a precise, meaningful and valuable guide for developmental indices in a country with such vast economic resources and diverse ethnic population. In fulfilment of this objective, the study adopted a Mixed Method Research (MMR) design involving elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Although the work is qualitative dominant in historical research methodology, elements of quantitative drives was derived from an earlier research-wellbeing for Nigeria (Fig. 1) which corroborated findings from the oral interviews and the secondary sources from journals, library search, books and other literature. Additionally, recourse was made to Growth, Trade and Dependency Development theoretical framework of analysis which guided the validation of the findings. Findings of the work revealed that the Nigerian state has been enveloped in developmental crises for several decades, consequent upon ethnic and cultural pluralism, improper economic planning and productivity and corruption. The work concluded that, for Nigeria to attain meaningful socio-economic development, more resolute measures of the management of its resources and diversity should be put in place through good governance. The work recommended that the federal government should design and put in place people-oriented reform programs to promote social enhancement, economic empowerment at both rural and urban areas of the country and eradication of poverty.

Keywords: historical appraisal, development, Nigeria, pre-colonial and post-colonial periods

1. Introduction

With a population of 211,400,708, Nigeria as a country has a very great potential for development given its enormous human and material resources. In spite of the unparalleled economic potentials and opportunities, the country is ravaged by high level of poverty, corruption, insecurity and other social vices, as well as infrastructural underdevelopment.

Thus, despite the various attempts and development agendas, political re-engineering and constitutional reforms, genuine development has eluded the country. This work therefore attempts to provide a historical survey of developmental phases of Nigeria with a view of proffering solutions to failures and hindrance to genuine development in the country.

The dual function of History is to enable (people) understand the society of the past and to increase (their) mastery over the society of the present.¹ For instance, colonial economic plans in Nigeria prior to the country’s political independence helped to shed high on the past and post-colonial experiences. The colonial government’s idea of development and how to pursue it were summarized in two documents which the administration described as

development plans". These were the popular ten year plan of development and welfare for Nigeria from 1946-1956, which was terminated in 1954 and replaced by the plan of 1955-1960. For the first ten years development plan of 1946-1956, the colonial administration planned to allocate national resources mainly to activities that would bring about improvements in the general health and mental condition of the people, and to the provision of those physical facilities (infrastructures) which has been regarded as the minimum necessary for the general improvement of the country and its population.

If society has been defined as an enduring and cooperating social group, whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another, then embarking on the task of an assessment of societal development in Nigeria becomes the task of a historian who must combine the skills of a sociologist and an economist. This can therefore be considered as a dual function — first of the historian in the interpretation of events and secondly, as recording the economic forces of progress of a society. Thus, it may safely be asserted that the historian who has accepted such a task is then forced, whatever his period of study, to have some rudimentary knowledge of economics, since so much of man’s activity in societies is concerned with economic matters. Economics, on the other hand, is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. Economists today agree that economics involves some of the following elements; the standard of living of a people in a society, scarcity in choice and resources, scale of preference and opportunity cost. Economics also is concerned chiefly with the description and analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services of a society. National development as is expected of this work encompasses social, political and economic development to be able to measure the entire development of the Nigerian society. Thus, defining development as a process implies that development involves a causal relationship. Economic development is the process whereby the real par capita income of a country increases over a long period of time.

Given the technicalities involved in this subject matter, it would be profitable to acknowledge that “in so far as the line between the economist and the general historian is not simply an educational and administrative device, the economic historian is a historian who has deliberately decided to study one part of history in great depth, that depth to be obtained primarily by use of economic tools”.

If society has been defined as an enduring and cooperating social group, whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another, then embarking on the task of an assessment of societal development in Nigeria becomes the task of a historian who must combine the skills of a sociologist and an economist. This can therefore be considered as a dual function — first of the historian in the interpretation of events and secondly, as recording the economic forces of progress of a society. Thus, it may safely be asserted that the historian who has accepted such a task is then forced, whatever his period of study, to have some rudimentary knowledge of economics, since so much of man’s activity in societies is concerned with economic matters. Economics, on the other hand, is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. Economists today agree that economics involves some of the following elements; the standard of living of a people in a society, scarcity in choice and resources, scale of preference and opportunity cost. Economics also is concerned chiefly with the description and analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services of a society. National development as is expected of this work encompasses social, political and economic development to be able to measure the entire development of the Nigerian society. Thus, defining development as a process implies that development involves a causal relationship. Economic development is the process whereby the real par capita income of a country increases over a long period of time.

Given the technicalities involved in this subject matter, it would be profitable to acknowledge that “in so far as the line between the economist and the general historian is not simply an educational and administrative device, the economic historian is a historian who has deliberately decided to study one part of history in great depth, that depth to be obtained primarily by use of economic tools”.

Whereas several works has been done separately on the ages (epochs) in the historical development of Nigeria, it has been difficult to combine the entirety of Nigeria’s socio-economic development from the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial in one singular effort given the cumbersoness of the several activities that may culminate in such a volume. For instance, several authors have written on the socio-economic development of Nigeria in pre-colonial times, while others have written on Nigeria’s development during the colonial period and thereafter. Given that previous literature and works focused on various phases of Nigerian’s developmental history, the ingenuity of this current work is the attempt made to trace the development of Nigeria in a combination pattern of all the phases from pre-colonial to contemporary times. The reason for this tendency is not unrelated to the enormity of issues and happenstances which characterized such a lengthy scope of study. However, given the necessity of an in-depth audit, it has become overly important to attempt/endeavor into a research that can offer a precise, meaningful and valuable guide for developmental indices in a country with such vast economic resources and diverse ethnic population. The problematic gap which this work attempts to resolve is that of presenting a continuous valid account of the growth and development of the Nigerian society with the objective of proffering solutions to contemporary problems of the country. To be clear with the terms of reference as earlier noted is the utilization of the Mixed Method Research (MMR) design involving elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Although the work is qualitative dominant in historical research methodology, elements of quantitative drives was derived from an earlier research-wellbeing for Nigeria (Fig. 1) which corroborated findings from the oral

---


5 Ibid, 316.


7 H.P.R. Finberg, Approaches to History, 17 as cited by A. Marwick above, 117.
interviews and the secondary sources from journals, library search, books and other literature. Additionally, recourse was made to Development theoretical framework of analysis which guided the validation of the findings. The study was presented through economic, political, educational and welfares indices of the Nigerian people over the years to an equitably, justifiable position, given the mass of natural and human resources available to the country. The work is divided into five sections. Section one examines the role of history to the society. Section two situates the theoretical framework. Section three articulates History and Development in context, examining the developmental phases in Pre-colonial, colonial and Post-colonial periods in context. Section four analyses Nigeria’s current state of development: issues and prospects. Section five highlights the research findings, conclusion and recommendations.

2. The Role of History to the Society

An all-important task of assessing how historical development in Nigeria has affected its citizenry necessarily requires a discussion of the role of History as a discipline to the society. The necessity for this exercise becomes overbearing as it can only but present us with a purview of our expectations benchmark of the Nigerian context of development.

Historians do not perform heart transplants, improve highway design or arrest criminals, yet taking account of these events impacts and gives us clues on how to improve on such services based on experience of the past. In a society that quite correctly expects education to serve useful purposes, the functions of History can seem more difficult to define than those of Engineering or Medicine. In the first place, History offers a storehouse of information about how people and societies behave. Understanding the operations of people and societies is difficult, though this is one of the uphill tasks expected of a historian. Major aspects of a society’s operations, like mass elections (as in the general acknowledgement of better performance of Attahiru Jega’s INEC in recent 2014 and 2019 general elections), missionary activities, and military or security alliances cannot be set up as precise experiments. Consequently, History must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behave as it does in societal settings. This is fundamentally why we cannot abort History in our calculations for a better future, since it offers the only extensive evidential base for the contemplation and analysis of how societies function.

Another reason History is inescapable as a subject of serious study in the growth of our societies closely follows from the first. The past causes the present, and so the future - this is a well-known dictum of History. Anytime we try to examine why something happened – whether a shift in political party dominance (such as that of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its successor at national level, the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2015 until now), a major change; like electoral malpractices, which witnessed a decline in the immediate past polls, increase in teenage crime rate and terrorists activities, war in the Middle East (as in the civil war in Syria) or even the terrorists manipulations of the Islamic states of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its growth which has attracted world attention, we have to look for factors that took shape earlier before these events galvanized into reality. This is often referred to as the background or remote causes of such events.

Sometimes, fairly recent history will suffice to explain a major development, but often we need to look further back to identify the causes of change. Only through historical researches can we have a full grasp of how things change and only through its in-depth study can we comprehend the factors that cause change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change. Historians who employ dramatic and skillful writing as well as accuracy attract readership. History as an art and entertainment serves a real purpose, on aesthetic grounds but also on the level of human understanding. History reveals how societies have actually functioned and this prompts thoughts about the human experience in other times and places. The same aesthetic and humanistic goals inspire people to immerse themselves in efforts to reconstruct quite remote pasts, far removed from immediate, present day utility.

History also provides identity and this is unquestionably one of the reasons all modern nations encourage its teaching in some form. Historical data include evidence about how families, ethnic groups, institutions and whole countries were formed and how they have evolved while retaining cohesion. For instance, the amalgamation of 1914 is as contentious as it is monumental for Nigeria’s identity as a nation. Analysis of change means developing some capacity for determining the magnitude and significance of change; for some changes are more fundamental than others. To this existence, the history of Nigeria from its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial perspectives presents an intriguing experience which is worth a continuous review to adjust, readjust, and refocus the priorities that will launch the country to a developed country in the near future. To achieve this feat, the study adopted a Mixed Method Research (MMR) design involving elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Primary sources include archival materials resorted to, oral interviews with a cross-section of experts in economic
sectors and Nigerian Universities while elements of quantitative drives was derived from an earlier research-wellbeing for Nigeria (Fig. 1) which corroborated findings from the oral interviews and the secondary sources from journals, library search, books and other literature.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the economic realm, the major trends in the explanation of the concept ‘development’ – the Growth Theorists and the Trade Theorists have guided this work. Foremost of the Growth Theorists is the postulation of W.W. Rostow8, who sees ‘societal development’ in terms of a basically traditional society or a subsistence sector of a developing economy’, with the aim of attaining self-sustained growth. Rostow identifies four stages as essential in delineating the process of development: the traditional society, the pre-conditions for “take-off”, the take-off and finally, sustained economic progress. He further identified three necessary conditions for a take-off stage to emerge namely:

1) A rise in the rate of productive investment from about 5% or less to (over 100 per cent of national (or net national product).
2) The development of one or more substantial manufacturing sectors, with a high rate of growth, and
3) The existence of quick emergence of a political, social and institutional framework which exploits the impulses to expansion in the modern sector and the potential external economic effects of the take-off, and gives to growth an on-going character.9

Although, these conditions have been criticized on the grounds that it is difficult to apply the European historical and social models to Nigeria, yet some generalizations can still be arrived at, if these indices are effectively utilized to reconsider the Nigerian situation.10

On the other hand, the Trade Theorists are those Development Economists like Raul Presbisch, A. Lewis and H. Singer who are critics of the International Trade Theory. These scholars see ‘development’ in terms of changes in external trade in particular and contemporary international economic order in general. They regard the unfavorable conditions of international economic relations and the effects of colonialism as constituting obstacles to the development of the “periphery of the world economic system”.11 It was Prebisch’s belief that a major limiting factor in the economic growth of developing countries is their unfavorable situation in International trade:

Through the mechanism of income drain-off; the benefits of increase of productivity in the export sectors of the periphery countries are transferred to the developed countries through international trade.12

If development involves the process of increase and utilization of the available resources in Nigeria, then there are both internal and external factors restricting the development of the country as a whole. The exploitation by developed countries has been referred to as neo-colonialism by some of these development theorists of the African background. The argument of these scholars is that colonialism (imperialism) which sought national economic gain by directly controlling another land and its people has been replaced with neo-colonial or neo-imperialism or indirect control. They charge that the economically developed countries (EDCs) of the North continue to dominate and exploit the less developed countries of the South.

According to Barraclough, History is “the attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence the significant things about the past”.13 Thus, from a historical perspective, the writings of Presbisch and other Dependency theorists may be related to the economic conception of History, the inquiry of which was given substantial vent by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German who lived much of his writing/research life in Britain. Karl Marx’s major contribution to history writing is the emphasis which he placed on the economic factor in the study of society. Marx stated that “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle”.14 He identified two classes within the society: the first identified by their ownership of the means of production and motivated by a necessity to make profits, and the second class is that of the workers (the industrial proletariat) who have no power

---

9 Ibid, as cited by Ralph Onwuka in Development and Integration in West Africa, Ile-Ife, 10.
10 Ralph Onwuka, Development and Integration in West Africa. (Ile-Ife), 11.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Arthur Marwick, 17.
except through the pressure of well-organized masses and whose goal is the improvement in their conditions of living. According to Karl Marx, the character of every society is determined by the economic structure or its mode of production. This has become known as ‘Historical Materialism’ or the ‘dialectic materialism’. He predicted that a time would come in the development of the Capitalist society when there would be class warfare between the two classes – the propertied and powerful bourgeoisie and the poor and oppressed proletariat (workers) over the distribution of wealth as the essence of politics. Thus, to justify the internal and external factors limiting development, Lenin applied Marxism in International Politics. He argued that capitalist bourgeoisie leaders had duped their proletariat workers into supporting the exploitation of other proletariat peoples through imperialism.15

The position of Lenin in due course influenced the Dependencia Theorists who hold the view that underdevelopment and poverty in the LDCs is the result of exploitation by the (Economically Developed Countries (EDCs)). However, as Rourke has further noted, dependency theorists focus on nationalist effort and unlike Marxists, do not believe that the workers of the world would unite if freed of their respective bourgeois masters.16 Rather, they contend that the EDC’s need for cheap primary products (such as oil), large external markets for the EDC’s expensive manufactured goods, profitable investment opportunities and low wage labour justify their position. And because this economic structure enriches the EDCs and impoverishes the LDCs, dependency theorists argue that the EDCs follow policies designed to keep the LDCs dependent.17

Therefore, the Trade Theorists analysis goes further to justify the imbalance in trade relations between LDCs like Nigeria and an EDC like the United States. This situation has a strong tendency of constraining societal development in Nigeria as distinct from the internal factors such as mismanagement of resources and funds, poor investment portfolio and vision, corruption among others.

4. History and Societal Development in Context

Countries across the world have always relied on their physical, natural and human endowments to leap-frog towards socio-economic development.18 It may therefore be argued that development has been seen to be tantamount to Progress. Development therefore occupies a key position in the endless quest for a veritable mode of governance. In order therefore to relate History to Societal Development, the need has arisen from the process of social change, which involves an analysis of the past, an understanding of the present and a conscious effort to shape the future. Early philosophers and sociologists have shown the awareness of social change in their various works. Auguste Comte offered his three stages of the universal pattern of social development to include: the theological, metaphysical and positive stages. Emile Durkheim in his postulation centred his developmental treatise on his classification of societies into organic and mechanistic models. To Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, modern societies evolved from the simple or traditional communities to complex industrial societies.19

Development is a multi-faceted process in all human societies. For the individual citizen, it implies improved skill and capacity, creativity, responsibility, greater freedom, self-discipline and material well-being. It also means the creation of opportunities for the realization of human potentials. Eniola has opined that development *per se* indicates the bringing to light of a new manifestation of forces already existing with the same or other characters under some manifestation.20

As it applies to the Nigerian nation, a lot of developments have been recorded through various periods of Nigerian history. These developments range from political, economic, and educational to socio-cultural, religious and even the physical features of the nation.21 In other words, political systems have changed; various economic policies have evolved, while there have been various infrastructural developments through the various regimes and administrations. Also, there has been various structural adjustment and constitutional developments programs, educational policies, the revival of cultural values, development of science and technology, cultural and human

---

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
21 Ibid, 121.
rights advocacy especially in the Niger-Delta, yet a dangerous dimension is being added with youth agitation and kidnap of foreign oil workers, and oil-pipeline vandalism. The Boko Haram insurgency in North-eastern Nigeria which has claimed thousands of innocent lives just as the nation has spread its international tentacles in international trade and foreign policies also brought to the fore. Thus as Adebayo has noted, Nigeria is a country in the throes of developments. Adesina and Adefolaju has equally observed that development involves all facets of human life, economic, social, cultural, technological as such instructively, development plans and programs must be designed to have their greater beneficial impact. Development would have occurred therefore when there has been an important improvement in basic needs of people and when economic progress has contributed to a greater sense of self-esteem for the country and individuals within it.

Three important goals of development are germane to every society including Nigeria. These include life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance involves the provision of basic necessities of life. Therefore, a country would be regarded as fully developed, if it is able to provide her citizens with such basic necessities of life as education power supply, health facilities and affordable food resources. Freedom, therefore means liberation from the evil of want, deprivation, ignorance and squalor.

Given all these indices of development, Nigeria appears vulnerable despite abundant human and natural resources. These developmental paces may better be appraised from the pre-colonial – colonial and post-colonial prisms of Nigerian History.

5. The Pre-Colonial Period

The pre-colonial period of Nigerian History was characterized by a mixture of migrations, empire building, absorption, warfare and conquests, and of course diplomacy. It has been ascertained that there are well over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Each of these ethnic groups is characterized by cultural attributes like language, value system, history and normative behaviors. This diversity has featured in most of her socio-political relationships such as party system, census, employment, resource allocation, education etc in today’s settings. Some of these kingdoms were Ife, Oyo Empire, Kanem-Bornu, Benin (Edo) kingdom and the Hausa city states of Kano, Zaria, Daura and later the Sokoto caliphate which incorporated the Hausa states.

However, the pre-colonial Nigerian society with a composition of such groups as the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Igala, Tiv, Edo, Birom, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Efik, Ibibio, and Fulani had their various religious and cultural practices before the introduction of Islam and Christianity. Inter-group relations between these groups during trade relations and cultural festivals brought peace and unity to these groups. However, far from being a perfect peaceful setting, pre-colonial tribal or ethnic relations had their own measure of intra and inter-group conflicts.

Despite these clashes, the pre-colonial societies of Nigeria had a political order that was highly organized, be it, the monarchical (kingdom) system of the South West or North or the village democratic republics among some Eastern Nigerian groups. In the Middle Belt, kingdoms like the Nupe, Kwara-rafai, Kebbi, Yauri, Gwari and Zamfara were more centralized than other surrounding ones. The Hausa kingdoms were later transformed with the introduction of Islam through the 1804 Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio. All the traditional government had adjoining institutions, which helped it in functionality such as the Oyomesi among the Yorubas, the Uzama among the Edo, the Waziri (Chief Administrative Officer), Maaji (Treasurer), Madawki in the Sokoto caliphate, the age-grade, Ozo title holders and secret societies among the Efik and Igbos etc. Some critical aspects of these systems were that rulers were expected to be wealthy to display his authority over his subjects who in turn supported every move of the king. Thus, development in this era was a manifestation of several factors which amongst others include -the ethics of hard work among the people and their ability to trade with each other and their level of civilizations at such a period.

As Olomola has noted, it is surprising indeed that Europe was unaware of West Africa, its people and their culture until the 15th century. Many of these states and kingdoms existed before the emergence of national states in Europe. For example, the old Kanem Empire in Nigeria as a political entity predated the battle of Hastings (1066) which heralded the founding of the present dynasty in England (Britain) by almost 300 years. Most of the states in the West African and deciduous forests, notably Mossi, Ife, Edo (Benin) were already about 300 years old when Europe began to show interest in the peoples and civilizations lying in Africa south of the Sahara.

To determine further, if the pre-colonial Nigerian state was developed, a juxtaposition of present attainments with

---

23 T. Adefolaju and F.R. Tinuola, 32.
24 Thirwall as cited by Ibid.
those of the kingdoms back then showed that they were quite developed, especially comparing with the same indices/standards adopted for this study. It is interesting to note that, for example, the medieval period in Europe coincided with the splendor of old Mali, Kanem and many Hausa states. While the Hapsburgs, King of Spain and Austria on the one hand, and the Valois of France on the other were locked in life and death battles over Italy towards the end of the 15th century, Songhai was at the height of its glory and splendor in the middle Niger, Bornu (empire), the rump of old Kanem was rallying to its golden age. Idris Alooma of Bornu under whom Bornu actually reached that golden age was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth 1 of England and they both died in 1603. It must also be stated that as early as 1485, the king of Benin had established diplomatic relations with the king of Portugal.26

Trade and industry flourished and attracted middlemen from as far as North Africa as Arab traders brought European goods through the Mediterranean to the Savannah and ultimately to the forest and coastal kingdoms. The Benin bronze casting industry, ivory tusks from the rainforests was much needed for the furniture industries of Europe. Thus, Ewuare the Great (the conqueror of over 200 kingdoms), King Ozolua in whose reign the Portuguese sailor, Afonso d’Aveiro visited and king Esigie were all enlightened kings whose reign witnessed unparalleled developments in terms of trade and welfare for their subjects.

Articles of trade were gold, ivory and slaves, while the imports included guns, cloths, and ornaments. There were also metals, carved artworks and cowry shells which later became the means of exchange and manilas coins replaced this thereafter. Thus, the River Niger and Benue formed the inland waterways for commercial enterprise as well as form of contact and communication for the peoples of these Nigerian societies. The systems of government in these kingdoms were well established within their hierarchy of officers, while the social life of the people blossomed. The farmers with their crops, herdsmen with the sheep and cows, and the craftsmen in their various crafts such as cloth weaving, dyeing, blacksmiths, coppersmiths and the goldsmiths – all had enterprising businesses. Yet, there was time for rest and festivities, which attracted people from other communities in merriment/celebration for successes.

The development of the pre-colonial era as was observed by early white men led Margery Perham to conclude that “these people share nearly all the joys of the civilized: singing and dancing and drinking: the display of dress and material splendor, the indulgence in oratory and the self-expression of manual art. The forms of government in these Nigerian kingdoms were more representative than their European contemporaries, because everyone in the community demanded a voice in local affairs”27.

6. The Colonial Phase

The colonial administration in Nigeria may be dated to the 1861 conquest of Lagos and the adoption of Lagos as a Crown territory. This experience was not to end until 1960 when Nigeria’s independence was granted by Britain. Before 1861, European interest in Africa centred on exploration, the conversion of the indigenous peoples to Christianity and European civilization and trade. General holdings of the European merchants were confined to the coast. It must be noted that the spread of the historical revolution contributed greatly to the demand for colonies in the underdeveloped areas of the world notably Africa, Asia and the Pacific. In Nigeria, Lord Frederick Lugard has been described as the architect of modern Nigeria with his amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates together in 1914.

At the onset of British Colonial administration in Nigeria, it was clear that non-conventional measures would be employed to achieve the colonial objective.28 To safeguard their interests, the British had to create alien ruling classes especially through their adoption of the Indirect Rule system. Thus, this new invasion of the African societies resulted into a sharp reaction to the existing cultural norm. As Duno in Eniola have noted, colonial administration, directly and indirectly institutionalized socio-political conflicts between the different ethnic groups and between the different religious groups. Ethnocentrism, parochialism and sectionalism were bequeathed to the Nigerian people through the introduction of discriminating policies by the colonial masters.29 With this trend, efforts that should have been mobilized towards societal development were dissipated on ethnic rivalry, mutual suspicion and antagonism among the groups. Also, a systemic complication of cultural values and diversities emerged as new values were placed on inter-group relations. Moreover, the innocent agricultural civilization of

28 Ibid.
29 Sikiru Eniola, op cit, 124.
pre-colonial Nigeria suffered a subtle downgrading as the rural-urban migration increased in search of a better life, leaving the rural settings in oblivion.

However, the most enduring imposition of the colonial administration in Nigeria was the transfer of political authority. The political machinery left by the administrators was structurally defective as party politics were established along ethnic lines among the major ethnic groups. This led to rivalry between some Nigerians who saw themselves as second fiddle to those who felt that governance was their birthright. This development led to a lopsided federalism that did not encourage development.

7. The Post-Colonial Era

No doubt, the shaky political foundation laid by the British as they handed over to politicians on October 1, 1960 had a negative effect on the socio-economic and political foundations of the country. After the achievement of independence, a political working arrangement was forged between the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), christened the NPC-NCNC coalition government. The Action Group was ushered in as the opposition – an idea which was alien to Africans, but was based on the Westminster type of British parliamentary democracy. Historically the drive for industrial development in Nigeria dates back to the early 1960s with the first National Development Plan for the period 1962-68. Under the First Plan the country embraced import-substituting industrialization (ISI) with the objective of mobilizing national economic resources and deploying them on a cost/benefit basis among contending projects as a systematic attempt at industrial development. The period of this plan witnessed the commissioning of energy projects such as the Kanji dam and the Ughelli thermal plants, which provided a vital infrastructural backbone for the nascent industrial sector. Other important industrial infrastructure developed during this period, which was considered crucial for catalyzing industrial take-off in Nigeria; included an oil refinery, a development bank, and a mint and security company. These developmental plans were characterized by a high degree of technological dependence on foreign knowhow to the extent the domestic factor endowments of the country were grossly neglected. Disagreements between the major party leaders, which were of course, ethnic-based, led to a state of emergency declared in the South West. The total breakdown of law and order in the South West also led eventually to a military take-over in January 15, 1966. A counter-coup followed in July 29, 1966, six months later as the first coup which led to the killing of top-notch politicians of the North was deemed an Igbo-led coup d’état. By and large, killings in the North after this event led to the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. The civil war did not allow the development strategies of the first national plan to work out as envisaged, thus there was a need for a better plan and that gave birth to the second national development plan of 1970-74.

The Second National Development Plan (1970-74), attempted to address the limitations of the ISI strategy, and placed emphasis on ‘the upgrading of local production of intermediate and capital goods for sale to other industries’. This was the first systematic effort to create an industrial structure linked to agriculture, transport, mining, and quarrying. The Second Plan coincided with Nigeria’s newly acquired status as a major petroleum producing country. As the economy benefited heavily from enormous foreign exchange inflows, the government embraced ambitious and costly industrial projects in sectors such as iron and steel, cement, salt, sugar, fertilizer, pulp and paper, among others. According to the plan, the establishment of industrial projects during this period was inspired by the need to increase the earning power of the populace; to minimize social tension by generating more employment; to make essential goods easily available; and to lay the foundation for a self-sustaining economy. The shallow nature of Nigeria’s technological capacity, however, prevented the economy from moving beyond the elementary phases of these projects, and indeed, virtually all of these projects have today either been shut down or operate at very low capacity. The period of the 1970-74 Plan also witnessed a dramatic shift in policy from private to public sector-led industrialization. Industrial planning took place in the public sector which also executed most of the industrial projects as the government invested directly in productive activities. It was clear at this time that Nigerian entrepreneurs did not have the money or the techno-managerial capacity to establish and manage such enterprises and so the government had to lead the way.

Meanwhile, after the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970, the military continued to rule the country since the failure of the first republic until 1979 when Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected the President of the Second Republic. The

long period of military dictatorship did not bring an end to the ills which the civilian administration was accused. Instead, corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, looting of government treasures, drug and human trafficking, abuse of human rights, disregard for the judiciary, money laundering, and vandalisation of oil pipelines thrived in the post-colonial period. A critical appraisal of the nature of the industrial development challenge of the 1970s reveals that the limitation was not so much that of finance but dearth of human capital including techno-managerial capabilities and skills required for initiating, implementing, and managing industrial projects. This was all the more evident by the fact that project preparation, feasibility studies, engineering drawings and designs including construction, erection, and commissioning relied greatly on foreign technical skills and services.

The Third National Development Plan (1975-80) was launched at the height of the oil boom. Despite a lack of executive capacity in the country, the plan envisaged an investment outlay of 42 billion NGN (up from 3.2 billion NGN of the Second Plan). Emphasis remained on public sector investment in industry, especially heavy industries. With easy access to foreign exchange, private firms opted for investments in the light, low technology consumer industries which were heavily dependent on imported machinery and raw materials. It became apparent that the country had entered into industrial project agreements with very little concern for the country’s capabilities for technology acquisition. While by their nature each of these projects required the acquisition of key sector-specific skills, the agreements made by the Nigerian planners were for the turkey transplantation of technology. With the boom in oil sector leading to the neglect of the industrial sector and other factors, the third national development plan could not advance the course of industrial development and there was a need for a forth development plan.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-85) coincided with the inception of a global economic recession which sparked declining foreign exchange earnings, balance of payment disequilibrium and unemployment in the Nigerian economy. As a result, the hugely import based manufacturing sector was severely hit, dwindling foreign exchange made it impossible for industries to new materials, it was evident at the end of the fourth development decade in Nigeria that existing strategies targeted at industrial development could neither solve the problem of economic underdevelopment nor the social ones created by mass poverty, unemployment, and insecurity of life and property. As a result, the pressure to seek alternative development paradigms had been triggered, not just by technical and economic imperatives, but also by social considerations.

The problem of resource control and revenue allocation became another problem of development as the Niger-Delta people felt they were short-changed with the oil from their land and the attendant degradation of the environment. Military intervention came once again in 1983, after the collapse of Shagari’s government with the military administrations of Buhari, and that of Ibrahim Babangida who introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was launched in 1986 to address the weakness of the previous policies but it became a failed development experiment. The stepping aside of Babangida for Shonekan and Abacha who were succeeded by Abdusalami, now returned Nigeria once again to civil democratic rule from 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Yar’adua and Goodluck Jonathan administered the country as executive Presidents. Muhammadu Buhari is the current president. After 61 years of independence, Nigeria should now stress the centripetal forces rather than the centrifugal ones and live with one another from any part of the country harmoniously.


Despite the anomalies highlighted on the growth phases of the Nigerian society since the pre-colonial period to the present, it is still very difficult to determine the status of Nigeria as a developed nation. From available indices, Nigeria is still regarded as an underdeveloped country in many ramifications, the most important of all these indications being its economic underdevelopment. Bello’s parlance puts it succinctly:

Nigeria’s economy can be described as an agriculture-based economy with about two-thirds of the population living in rural poverty stricken areas, urban and sub-urban areas that suffer greatly from epileptic services provided by successive governments...The urban areas are characterised by the presence of several small-scale local industries that lack both the financial capacity and the

33 Ibid.
36 Adeyemi Babatunde, 103.
policy requirements for growth.\textsuperscript{37}

As observed by Ayodele and Falokun, Nigeria’s socio-economic crisis of the 1980s which necessitated the need for economic adjustment emanated largely from the structural weakness of the economy.\textsuperscript{38} The Babangida administration birthed it when it announced on June 27, 1986 that SAP would commence a July 1, 1986 and end in June 30, 1988. It was introduced after Nigerians in a public debate rejected the IMF loan. Although, SAP was proposed to operate between 1986 to 1988, it was however actually implemented from 1986 to 1993\textsuperscript{39}

By and large, the social consequences provoked in Nigeria were quite enormous. Stagnation, unemployment, malnutrition, poverty, disease, child abuse, educational decline and collapse of the health sector, all reached dangerous proportions. Per capita income in Nigeria plummeted drastically from 778 in 185 (Pre SAP) to 108 in 1989 (during SAP)\textsuperscript{40}

As Agbakoba further substantiates:

\begin{quote}
As at 1994, 90 million Nigerians had no access to safe water to drink in spite of huge resources and endowments. Social infrastructures have declined to a point where staying alive is a hazard. The cause of all these sufferings is really and easily identifiable - a rapacious corrupt and unaccountable government of military and civil rulers asserted.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Several sources and scholars have pointed to the problem of leadership as one of the major bane of Nigeria’s developmental problem. Joseph in his own submission asserted, “We are having difficulties in Nigeria in getting national leaders because those who are presenting themselves are suckers of the nation’s blood. Such people in any land are not fit to become leaders of the people because leadership means suffering”.\textsuperscript{42} Ezekwesili has expatiated further, that both the current Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) and the Transparency Index (TI), place Nigeria amongst the lower rungs of the world league table.\textsuperscript{43} She buttressed further, despite improvements from the last report, Nigeria ranks fifth from bottom in the TI index. It does slightly better on the GCI, ranking 88\textsuperscript{th} amongst 117 nations. What is common amongst the various perception indices is the criticality of the four pillars of economic growth and development. These are: the quality of a nation’s macro-economic development; the state of the nation’s public institutions; the level of its technological readiness and the quality of leadership.\textsuperscript{44}

While the first three pillars fall within the purview of economics, even though, with strong implications for policy; the fourth represents the ability to clearly articulate a policy direction based on empirical evidence and with considerations for both national and global trends. The quality of leadership does not translate to the academic qualifications of the leadership but by a collection of factors including, the strong sense of character, vision as well as ability to interpret global and national trends as the basis for policy-making.\textsuperscript{45} According to her, this has been the distinguishing factor between a Nigerian or Singapore of say 1970 and as of today! Unfortunately, Nigeria’s leaders had the false sense of security that oil would continue to deliver revenues to support national development. The consequence of this seeming over-confidence was poor quality of policies and institutions as there was no will, vision and character to interpret the global trend and put Nigeria into different growth path.

In compliance with our theoretical framework of analysis, an attempt is hereby made through a previous study of socio-economic development indicators between Northern and Southern Nigeria to drive home the point of Nigeria’s current development status/standards.\textsuperscript{46} The Education and Poverty indices are reflected to show the

\begin{thebibliography}
41 Agbakoba, cited in Adefolaju and F. R.Tinuola, 33
44 Ibid Ezekwesili
45 Ibid Ezekwesili
\end{thebibliography}
well-being status of Nigerians between 1995 and 2005. The outcome of these indices ultimately is to account for the overall societal development of Nigeria in the period of assessment. The inquiry used the percentage of literate adults, children enrolment in primary school, household using streams and ponds as sources of water supply and accessibility to electricity in the discussion. The various measures of change in the years 1995, 2000 and 2005 are shown in Fig. 1 below.

Figure 1. Wellbeing chart for Nigeria (1995-2005)


The disparity between the North and South (reflecting villages and rural settings) was marginal as reflected - 33% for the North and 34% for the South. This closeness is evident in the northern axis of the radar chart. It is however apparent that a higher percentage of the households had access to potable water in the North than the South.

The percentage of literate adults and children can be juxtaposed against this. From the chart, it is discernible that there are indices of educational development in Nigeria. The South however fared better in this domain than the North between 1995 and 2005. Statistically, 72.6% was the mean of the Southern households that were literate adults during the period. The corresponding figure for the North was 38%, reflecting about half of the southern states. When compared states in the South-South zone witnessed increased percentage of literate adults annually, but this was not the case for the states in the remaining two zones because there was a dip in 2000. States in the South-South zone had the least literate adults of 69% in 1998, while states in the South-West zone recorded the highest with 77.2%. Further scrutiny indicated that the percentage difference of literate adults across zones in the South was small, except in 1995, when it stood at 8%. According to the Egwaikhide and Isumonah research findings, there was an increase in the percentage of the literate adults of northern geo-political zones.
Table 1. Nigeria’s poverty incidence by geopolitical zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Central</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-South</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the percentage of literate adults in North Central zone; the lowest leaped from 20.6% through 24% to 43.5% in 1995, 2000 and 2005 respectively. States in North-East had the highest adult literacy with corresponding figures of 45.7%, 55.7% and 58% in the same years. As the data suggest, the gap between zones in the North in respect of adult literacy rate was wider than that of the South. The percentage of households without electricity was higher in the North than in the South, although, the difference was not very wide. Figures also showed that 66% of the Northern households had no electricity, while it was 54% in the South. At the national level, the incidence of poverty was high, rising from 28% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1996 and falling to 54.7% in 2004. Northern region displayed a much higher rate than South. While the level of poverty in the South stood at 35.2% in 1980, it was 12.5% in the South. See Table 1 Nigeria’s Poverty Incidence by Geo-political Zones. However, incidence of poverty tended to rise in both the North and the South. The report further revealed that between 1980 and 2004, states in the North-East zone had the highest poverty rate in each of the selected years, except in 1996 when it was second with poverty prevalence of 70%. North central zone registered the lowest poverty in the North.

As regards education level, the South had always been in the lead since educationists have documented that Western education was introduced in the famous Benin Empire as far back as 1515 by Portuguese merchants and later in Abeokuta (1842) by Christian missionaries. Western education spread to Onitsha in 1858, and did not reach the North until 1909, when the first elementary school was established in Kano. Yet, the educational attainment of individual Nigerians is not exactly the major problem of development in Nigeria’s current situation. It cannot be argued that the North has been lagging in educational development as evidences have shown. Even though, the fact still remains that education worldwide is meant to engineer national productivity and development and equip individuals for balanced existence.

Given that the population of Nigeria is estimated at 211,400,708, while its nominal GDP is put at 448.1 billion US dollars, Nigeria’s population is young and needs to be employed and unemployment is becoming a security issue in the country. In an age of knowledge-based industrial and economic development, it has become necessary/critical for Nigeria to produce the right caliber of manpower to drive the economy. Osuntokun has highlighted a number of problems/solutions to Nigeria’s developmental prospects in the following paragraphs:

Nigeria can borrow a leaf from the German experience and invest in knowledge through the building first class institutions and support research and development. The universities and research institutions must also demonstrate competence and dedication so that the outcome of their research can be harnessed for Nigeria’s industrial development. The present situation where Nigerian parents spend close to 160 billion naira annually on their children studying in other West African countries because of incessant strikes at home derogates from the leadership role of Nigeria in the sub-region. One of the obstacles to this availability of funds is the current high level of corruption. It does not seem the Nigerian elite particularly those running the affairs of the country at public and private sectors realize that corruption is not just a criminal offence but has become a clog in the wheel of

development and has therefore become a security issue.\textsuperscript{48}

Also, political stability is a necessary condition of development. The bane of Nigerian politics is the instability arising out of the plural nature and the multiplicity of tongues in many African countries. The incessant coups d’état of the past are the result of the manifestation of this malady. Fissiparous religious and ethnic tendencies in the country have transformed politics into a zero-sum game. Electoral victories are most times manipulated through rigging and other anti-democratic means. Leadership selection is usually compromised by ethnic differences and affiliations to the extent that dissatisfaction with the political process is generally the outcome of electoral and political party processes. Osuntokun further asserts that the exposure of the country to the outside world of terrorism in recent times has equally affected Nigeria’s development because of its several distractions. In order to be heard, ethnic and religious factions in the country resort to arms as witnessed by violence in the Niger-Delta; ethnic militancy in the South-East and South-West expressed through cultural organisations and youth movements.

However, the most challenging problem the country now faces is the terrorism of religious fundamentalism in certain parts of Northern Nigeria. The most affected areas have been the North-East. There is growing evidence and fear that the Boko Haram movement has links with the Al Qaeda network in the Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Shabab in the Horn of Africa and ISIS. Nigeria’s international campaign against the forces of secession and fundamentalism in Mali and most recently in Cote D’Ivoire could be likened to a case of stopping fire in a neighbor’s house so that it does not consume one’s house.\textsuperscript{49}

However one can see a nexus between foreign and domestic politics. A country that is strong at home would be influential abroad; Nigeria should reinforce its domestic strength to be dependent on its economic and domestic stability. Nigeria must make deliberate efforts to support small-scale businesses which have potentials to generate huge employment. In order to strengthen its economy, Nigeria must embrace a market economy as much as possible while completely not removing the role of the state in investing in critical areas. The environment and the polity must be made friendly for Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). This is particularly important as the terrorist activities in the creeks of Niger Delta through kidnapping and pipeline vandalism constitute a nuisance to investment. Efforts must be made to clean up the corruption in the capital market to permit inflows and investments with special focus on infrastructural development, construction of power plants for the enhancement of electricity generation, mining, especially of energies as coal, limestone, etc. to supplement the oil industrial capacity, the health-sector, agriculture and agro-allied industries.

It must be acknowledged that there is a growing tendency of decline in the oil and energy sector of Nigeria. No doubt, Nigeria’s wealth is largely due to the fact of its possession of huge hydro-carbons deposits which are wasting assets and which by best estimates may last for another forty years. The United States and other western countries’ determination to reduce energy dependence have led to significant technological breakthrough in automobile and mechanical engineering. Automobiles of the future may not be powered by hydro-carbons, but by alternative energy sources friendlier to the environment. The United States which takes about 60% of Nigeria’s crude oil exports is now aggressively pursuing oil exploration and exploitation at home as well as development of huge shale gas deposit in Continental North America. Although, these efforts are not directed at Nigeria alone, yet it is enough sign for Nigeria not to lay all her hopes on the sale of petroleum alone.

To strengthen further our argument to determine Nigeria’s development prospects, this study has resorted to the calculations of Fafunwa and Awoyele.\textsuperscript{50} Fafunwa (1974) referencing Stanley (1963) listed the characteristics of developed countries as follows:


Awoyele in his own submission, is of the view that “except the fact that Nigeria can be said to be independent for a reasonably long number of years (61 years now), other indices of development listed above are not true of her.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid Osuntokun
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid Osuntokun
Nigeria has low-level economy, with a distant annual ‘par capita’ income of 1,200 US dollars, when compared with that of the G20 (the 20 richest and most industrialized economies in the world), which is about 1,000,000 US dollars. Nigeria was equally ranked as low as Number 158 in United Nation’s Human Development Program based on three dimensions: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a descent standard of living. Despite being a resource-rich country, over half of Nigeria’s population lives in poverty. Nigeria’s literacy level is below 80%.

Industries established since the 1960s have virtually closed shop (over 500 industries died within 30 years), while the surviving ones are going under daily due to over-concentration on crude oil export, and neglect of other areas of the economy. Nigeria’s rank in maternal death is equally astonishing. Despite education, Nigerians are routinely denied their rights and they hardly resist. On paper, education is geared to the needs of the people, but in practice, all known principles of education, politics, economy and even religion stand on their heads. Nigeria is indeed not a manufacturing country, because both the governments and the citizens have a penchant for foreign goods and services.

9. Research Findings

For Nigeria, therefore, to remain stable and prosperous, steps would have to be taken to consolidate democratic and economic development at home in physical development such as agriculture, housing, roads, infrastructure, telecommunications, educational facilities, health and social welfare to ensuring that its citizenry developmental indices are better enhanced. These factors must be suppressed by an articulate foreign policy through cooperation with its other West African counterparts in the sub-region through trade exchange in all spheres of its economy and by extension to other parts of the continent through its ties and relations in the African Union and to the larger world.

Finally, it must be added that Nigeria’s leadership must be committed to pursuing security of the country in all ramifications. The proliferation of small arms in the country is something to worry about. It must be noted that without security, there can be no development. Although, various past development plans aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of the country, not much success has been derived from these formulas since the early 1970s. The gaps in development potentials are attributable to many factors, the most important of which is the inability of the state to harness the development potentials in cultural pluralism. For the benefits of socio-economic development to stream down to the people of Nigeria to reduce the poverty level, improvement in social amenities such as health and education, as well as more resolute measures should be put in place to improve the lot of the citizenry.

On the political front, the leaders of the various political parties that have emerged have been plagued by ethnic loyalties. The government of President Buhari and Professor Yemi Osinbajo has been tested for its efficacy and Nigerians are yet to be satisfied with the outcome. It is however hoped that the lot of Nigerians would be bettered given a galvanization of thoughts/experience of the two leaders. Going by the level of educational development highlighted in one of the study earlier used for this analysis, it is obvious that the post-colonial government have treated education with levity. What has been done about industrialization, both at small-scale and large-scale manufacturing concerns? What has been achieved in terms of directing Nigeria’s rich natural resources, not only in petroleum sector, but other solid minerals as Coal, Asphalt, Tin, and other solid minerals to ensure that economic development is achieved in due course?

As Nwoke and Omoweh have noted, the repressive nature of the Nigerian state is borne out of the manner of political competition in the country. That is, a fierce and very bloody battle in which the winner takes all and other loses all is to blame. As the platform for such crude political struggles, the control of the state is intensified because whoever holds political power becomes the most powerful and by implication, one of the wealthiest in the society. According to the African Confidential Volume 39 of 1996, virtually all the nations past and present heads of state and presidents have been indicted as major players either directly or by proxy in the country’s energy sector. They have been so involved and maintained such strong links with the oil sector because the political class has no real productive base. One of the first major frauds ever discovered in the country’s oil sector was the controversial disappearance of $2.8 billion from the nation’s coffer under the then Obasanjo junta, during which Mohammed Buhari was the Federal Commissioner for Petroleum. Abacha’s cronism led to the looting of billions of naira out of the country, some of which were frozen in foreign banks abroad. Abacha’s reason for his quest for wealth

52 Ibid.
accumulation in the oil sector was for the purpose of perpetuating himself in office. According to Osoba, the domestic bourgeoisie is unproductive, and acts as a ‘transmission belt’ for foreign capital audited to Euro-American capital in a client-patron relationship in both the colonial and post-colonial periods of Nigeria. As a result, “the incoherence of the domestic bourgeoisie and the contradiction between it as a class and the Nigerian people stems from the lopsided nature of the global division of labor and power. He recommends that a superior people’s revolutionary culture and organization be created to overthrow the domestic bourgeoisie.”

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa Groups study on Nigeria’s path to development has demonstrated further that what obtains in the advanced capitalist states is unattainable in Nigeria. The major reason for this assertion is that Nigeria is dependent on the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and operates a mono-product (Petroleum) economy. A lot of what passed for technological development through the TNCs into the country is both inappropriate and no less than mere collection of western ‘artefacts’ in the name of ‘technology transfer’, while the country remains externally oriented to serve the parochial needs of foreign capital. Such foreign capital have been either from the Breton Wood/World Bank axis or through the Multinational oil companies such as Mobil-Exxon, Shell-BP, Chevron, Gulf, Texaco, Elf, Agip-Philips and Agip who since the discovery of oil in 1956 at Oloibiri have continued to dominate the operations of the Nigerian economic system.

10. Conclusion

Given the aforesaid and cited examples, it may be safely concluded that Nigeria’s underdevelopment has been exacerbated by a combination of internal and external factors. The major identifiable internal dynamics of the constraining factors point to the leadership in the federal and state governments which are accompanied by the political class through which most of the game-plans are carried out. This trend has equally been affected by the ethnicity-cum political party affiliations which promote a winner takes all ethos. The external factors include foreign capital and multinational companies whose effort through not entirely negative, has manifestations which leaves the masses at the whims and caprices of their employers. This is only reiterating the class struggle as expatiated by Marx and particularly by the Dependency theorists.

Thus, using Rostow’s standard which is sustained in the theoretical framework of this study– that is (i) the pre-conditions for take-off, (ii) take-off and finally, (iii) sustained economic progress, one may find it difficult to assert that Nigeria has met these conditions successfully. For the first and second conditions, Nigeria may have fulfilled the pre-conditions for take-off and to a reasonable extent met the take-off conditions. However, the third and final condition, the sustained growth in its economy is yet to be achieved given the indices earlier referred to. Although, the manufacturing sector in Nigeria has some level of production, yet, this is dominated by the multinational companies (MNCs) which as earlier noted ensures that their home base gets a higher returns on the sharing formula, since the indigenous partnership shares are eventually bought over by foreign capital, leaving the country with marginal returns and gains, with workers exploitation at a high rate which cannot sustain their domestic needs. The indigenous partnership shares are eventually bought over by foreign capital, leaving the country with marginal returns and gains, with workers exploitation at a high rate. Negligence of the development of the agricultural systems seems to be the most important hindrance to development. Transforming rural practices in farming to large-scale industrial farming is therefore of utmost importance.

To some extent, Nigeria may have registered itself in the class of democratically stable countries with the political dispensation which emerged since 1999 and has been sustained till date. It seems logical to assert that the country is on the path of a political, social and institutional framework which could exploit the impulses to expansion in the modern sector and the potential external economic effects of the take-off and adapting to an on-going growth character. Can the Nigerian society of today truly boast of life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom in all aspects? It is difficult to acknowledge that these conditions have been met as has earlier been indicated. If the basic necessities of life – good drinking water, food sufficiency, housing, basic health facilities and access to hospital and dispensary services, clothing and education, has not been met then those questions might not truly be answered in the affirmative. The indices earlier given in this study on the poverty level of the country does not portend Nigeria as having met these conditions.

Going by the assertion of Presbisch which states that a major limiting factor in the economic growth of developing countries is their unfavorable situation in international trade, one may concur that there is an uneven pattern of


54 Ibid.

55 Okwudiba Nnoli as cited by Nwoke and Omoweh above
development in Nigeria. The tendency to have a very small, very wealthy upper class and a vast, very poor lower class is the result of the class struggle between the haves and have-nots in Nigeria. If we must take the quantitative initial results used for this study, the poverty tendency is highest currently in Nigeria in the North-East axis, where a lot of terrorists and insurgent activities have been acknowledged. Rapid urbanization, a tendency in the Nigerian society of the present is not entirely a fair welfare indicator. As Rourke has noted, from 1965 to 2005, the share of the South’s population living in the urban areas grew from 22% to 43%. This situation leaves the rural areas more undeveloped and vast agricultural lands abandoned due to the search for jobs, better health and other social services continues in the towns.

11. The Way out

Authorities have to design and put in place people-oriented reform programs to promote social enhancement, economic empowerment at both rural and urban areas of the country and eradication of poverty. Government should find alternative means of infrastructural investments that will ensure that the Nigerian Society is adequately rewarded in the investments of the country’s major industry – Petroleum and diversification that will ensure that other natural resources are adequately tapped to the benefit of growth and sustainability. In this regard, President Obasanjo’s Natural Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDs) program of mobilizing government process and developing the private sector as the engine of growth and forging a balance between the private sector and public sector and the Millennium Development Goals (2015) needs to be revisited. Government should harness these sectors through the evolution of programs to take care of the youth unemployment and to the weak and marginalized. A lopsided situation whereby the MNCs continue to dominate the proceeds of Nigeria’s wealth leaves a big question mark on how the wealth can trail down the ladder to the masses at the bottom of the poverty ring. There equally seems to be a vital need for a mass re-orientation of the Nigerian cultural values which when thoroughly harnessed can strengthen the path of societal development in Nigeria.

Copyrights
Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).