

Nigeria and the Political Economy of Underdevelopment: Focus on Selected Issues

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Abstract

There are several manifestations of underdevelopment in the political economy and, in general, the governance of several countries in Africa. Unlike most parts of Europe, United States of America, Australia that are advanced in development, and even Asia where remarkable economic growth is rapidly paving the way for development; especially through the provision of essential amenities in health services, education, potable water and energy among others, the political economy of Africa is yet to lay a sufficiently solid foundation for sustainable development.

Using Nigeria, for the obvious reasons of its huge human and material endowments as well as the comparative advantage of its ethnic diversity; as a case study, this paper attempts to critically examine some of the probable causes of underdevelopment in Africa. It focuses particular attention on leadership failure and general abuse of official privileges that have, over the years, combined to exacerbate the problems of corruption, the culture of impunity and "big manism". The paper notes that these are at the core of the problematic issue of underdevelopment in most parts of the African continent.

Data for this study will essentially be gathered from secondary materials. In other words, its methodology will be narrative, descriptive and analytical. It adopts an eclectic framework of analysis, which combines prominent explanations on the colonial origin of the state in Nigeria, the subsequent emergence of mostly ill-prepared political

and economic leaders as well as the effects of all of these on the country's public policy processes. While emphasizing Nigeria's fourteen-year old democratization, which began with renewed hope in 1999; for examples of contemporary challenges that have confronted the country, it also draws on examples of best practices, effective leadership and development oriented programmes from across the world, in making its suggestions for Nigeria and many other parts of Africa.

Keywords: Political economy, underdevelopment, leadership

Introduction

What is so important about the relationship between politics and economics in Nigeria? How deep or broad should this relationship be? In what ways can this relationship and its management affect the development aspirations and goals in Nigeria? What are the distinctive characteristics, in respect of the personnel (leaders, followers and the reciprocal exchanges between them) and processes, which enhance openness, accountability and the rule of law in countries like the United States of America, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Netherlands and United Kingdom, among others, that have for long been classified as developed and best governed in the world? To what extent are these characteristics existing in many parts of Asia that are popularly described as the "Asian Tigers"; because of their phenomenal economic growth and general improvement in the living conditions of the ordinary citizens? What about the few emerging political systems like Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa in the continent of Africa? Why does it appear so difficult for Nigeria to imbibe these traits and lay its long-awaited foundation for sustainable development?

These and similar other questions that may arise in subsequent sections will provide the guide for this paper. Meanwhile, in addition to the foregoing brief introduction, the paper has four other sections. These are namely, Conceptual clarification; Dynamics of Nigeria's Socio-Political and Economic Life; Selected Issues; and Conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Although they are not specifically stated in the topic of this paper, there are two basic concepts that are often mentioned in connection with the political economy of Nigeria, as well as the overall level of development in the country. These are namely, leadership and corruption. In view of the age long debate on these concepts; but more importantly, the insignificant improvement that it is yet to bring, in terms of effective leadership and reduction in the level of corruption, an attempt will be made to offer basic explanations on these two terms. Essentially, this will be done in connection with their effects on the general underdevelopment in the country as well as the phenomenal increase in the culture of impunity, in Nigeria's relatively more recent past.

To start with, it is necessary to note that leadership is a concept with a very wide applicability. In fact, it is so wide such that it is often pointed out that there are almost "as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Stogdill, 1981). Drawing from this assertion on the applicability of leadership, as a concept, it is considered appropriate to note that it has a function in all forms of human assemblage or collectivities (Yagboyaju, 2013). In this sense, whether formally or informally, leadership must involve a coordinating figure and other people - subordinates or followers. By the latter's willingness to accept directives from the leader, "group members help define the leader's status and make the leadership process possible" (Stoner and Wankel, 1986).

In other words, the leadership process involves certain "reciprocal exchanges between the leader and the led" (Yagboyaju, 2013), which make their relationship quite meaningful. Therefore, without subordinates, all the leadership qualities that may be possessed by an individual-politician, president, minister, governor, administrator, supervisor, unit head or manager, who wears the title of leader at a point in time, would be irrelevant. Drawing from this, leadership can be described as involving an unequal distribution of power among leaders and other group members. While leaders "have the authority to direct most of the activities of group members, the latter often cannot similarly direct the leader's activities" (Stoner and Wankel, 1986). However, in view of the broad participation of the electorate in the selection process of democratic systems, group members or followers often influence the direction of the activities of their leaders.

With the involvement of leadership in the important aspects of life like politics and economics, as well as several others in the ubiquitous relationships between the top and lower sections of human organizations and political systems; leadership is, undoubtedly, one of the “intrinsic elements for efficient and effective management” as well as administration, and “it is very important in setting and attaining organizational goals” (Okunade, 2008). By inference, if leadership is as important to administration and administrative goals as asserted in the immediate foregoing, then it must also be important to the progress of civilization, a central aspect of which is the actualization of the multifaceted development goals – covering politics, economics, security, social issues and even the amicable resolution of conflicts for sustainable peace (Yagboyaju, 2013).

In the light of diverse postulations on the concept of leadership, some of which have been highlighted above, rather than attempt to construct a definition for the concept, this paper will collate some general attributes to advance a broad explanation and operationalization of the term. In this sense, the term can be applied to refer to life experiences and life chances which: imbue a person with a vision and a set of goals; endow that person with the skill to articulate the vision and the goals in such a way as to attract a significant following; provide the person with the skill to specify the means and to organize and mobilize the followers towards the realization of the vision and goals; and give that person sufficient understanding of the followers in order to devise and pursue goals that are rewarding to both the leader and the followers (Adebayo, 2007).

Quite importantly, it must be noted that there are certain characteristics and attributes which, over the years and across the ancient, medieval and contemporary ages, enhance the attainment of set goals by most of the world’s oft-mentioned great leaders. These include imaginativeness (active mind and wisdom), firm character, clear conscience, disciplined personal lifestyle, accountability and stewardship, among others. These attributes; like imaginativeness, which enables the leader to think ahead, and a combination of almost all the other characteristics to enable him or her to grow a persuasive trait that will assist in sustaining his or her leadership functions, also constitute a distinction between the leader and “strong men” or “big men” who, most especially since the first military coup of 1966, have been in charge of politics and governance in Nigeria. More detailed explanations on the fundamental differences between these phenomena highlighted in the immediate foregoing, will be provided in a subsequent section of the paper.

Before this is done, it is necessary to examine and briefly explain the concept of development and, by extension, underdevelopment. In the writings of Parsons (1951), Durkheim (1959) and Weber (1978), among others that are well documented on the concept of development, particular emphasis is placed on the socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions of the phenomenon. The main thesis in most of these studies, according to Onuoha (2007), has to do with the fact that “value system is central to the changes and fundamental transformation” which, in etymological terms, brings about development. In other words, development as characterized by the transformation from the traditional and mechanical modes of production, to the organic form-which emphasizes division of labour, ensures higher productivity and prosperity, is essentially all about change in the value system (Yagboyaju, 2012). Meanwhile, the value system consists of norms, beliefs, attributes and habits, which help to define what is good or bad, important, worthwhile, desirable and worth striving for in any particular society. Therefore, in this sense, development can be defined as the:

process of actualizing man’s inherent capacity to live a better and more rewarding life. It implies increased skill and capacity to do things; greater freedom, self confidence, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being (Nnoli, 1981).

For further clarification, this definition may need to be x-rayed. It is, for instance, important to note that although elements of economic and physical growth are inherent in this conceptualization of the term, it will be a misnomer to equate growth with development. While both are interrelated, and at times wrongly interchangeably applied, it must be clarified that growth may not necessarily lead to development. Growth is about numbers, which may include “tangible, quantitative macro-economic development in terms of economic indices such as increase in income per capital, increase in output and GDP, increase in external reserves, increased trade revenue, and balance of payments surplus”, among others (Oluwa, 2012). On the other hand, development is more about qualitative improvement in the living conditions of the citizenry in terms of basic human needs and necessities, which make life comfortable for the people and enhance their standard of living. These basic necessities include food, drinkable water, clothing, shelter, health care, public sanitation, education, job opportunities and infrastructure. In essence, while growth emphasizes

increase in the amount of money and physical facilities, development is more concerned with the number of people who directly benefit from the increase.

In the light of this, it is apt to note that although economic growth is a fundamental aspect of development, a country or society that is experiencing the former may not necessarily have the latter. In other words, economic growth and its indices like gross domestic product (GDP), per capital income and increased national wealth can only lead to development when it is instrumental to greater access to the good things of life. Incidentally, apart from the ones that are frequently listed like food, shelter, drinkable water, affordable health and education, Olopoenia (1998) noted that political and economic freedom, and personal self-esteem, which come from "an individual's capacity to participate in meaningful and socially productive interactions with other members of the community", are also included.

Quite importantly, the relatively recent history of Nigeria will clearly show that the country was, for instance, under President Olusegun Obasanjo reported; both in domestic and international economic assessments, to have recorded phenomenal economic growth. At least, this manifested in the phenomenal increase in its external reserves and the prompt settlement of several, age-long foreign debts, at that point in time. Another aspect of Olopoenia's view on development, which must be noted here, has to do with the "individual's capacity to participate in meaningful and socially productive interactions..." (Olopoenia, 1998). In simple terms, this can be interpreted as effective participation in politics and governance, as a whole. Meanwhile, certain attributes of democracy such as effective participation in the process of selecting representatives and leaders, transparency and accountability make it a governmental or political system with a higher probability for the actualization of development aspirations and goals.

In more practical terms, in view of the fact that democratic practices in several parts of the developed world and, even, in some developing countries, contribute to the reduction of corruption, poverty and general deprivation; while also enhancing human capacity building, higher literacy level and a generally conducive environment, "democracy or whatever title is given to any form of participatory and open government is a desideratum for development" (Mimiko, 2012).

Equally important to note and explain is the concept of underdevelopment. Obviously, underdevelopment is not the absence of development because each society has developed in one way or the other, and to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, underdevelopment makes a lot of sense only “as a means of comparing levels of development” (Rodney, 1972). It is very much tied to the “fact that human social development has been uneven and from a strictly economic view-point some human groups have advanced further by producing more” (Rodney, 1972); and becoming wealthier. Quite disturbingly, in spite of Nigeria’s phenomenal earnings from the sale of crude oil, its huge human and several natural resources like good climatic conditions as well as mineral resources such as gold, bauxite, uranium, zinc, lead and many other endowments, which domestic and international studies have confirmed over the years, the country is still classified among the least developed in the world. Curiously, not only has its peers like Brazil and Malaysia, who emerged as prospective medium powers about the same time, industrialized and have become forces to reckon with; South Africa, Botswana and a few other relatively less endowed countries, in terms of size, population and natural endowments, are ranked better than Nigeria in terms of development.

In view of the fact that corruption, especially the variety that involves government and other public officials, is generally regarded as the major impediment to development in Nigeria; and being an important aspect of the selected issues under focus in this paper, it is considered necessary to briefly explain the concept of corruption.

Corruption in its multifaceted dimensions and identifications, which include supportive corruption, transactional corruption, extortive corruption, political corruption, defensive corruption, investive corruption, nepotistic corruption, autogenic corruption, personal and institutional corruption, traditional and modern corruption, local, national and international corruption, representational, petty and grand corruption (Oladele, 2013), can be summarized under three schools of thought. First, is the moralist school, which argues that corruption must be viewed from “a good or bad prism”. The second is the “structural-functionalist school”, which holds that rather than view corruption as good or bad, it should be “understood and engaged in terms of the role it plays in the functioning of the system” (Oladele, 2013). For instance, does it grease the wheels or does it impede the wheels of development in a society? The third is the radical school, which is based on the works of Karl Marx and postulates that

corruption is simply “a feature of capitalism which in itself dictates competition that eventually breeds fraud, waste and abuse”.

However, for clarity and better understanding, it may be necessary to consider the position of Heidenheimer, Johnston and Le Vine in their seminal work published in 1989. In it, they identified three definitions of corruption. These are namely: the public office-centred, which views corruption as an act of misuse of public office for personal gains; the market-centred which situates the acts of corruption in terms of its being an extra-legal act used by individuals or groups to influence actions of public bureaucracy, in particular; and the public interest-centred, which views corruption mainly as a damager of public interest in which case the very act of corruption negatively impacts public interest.

Meanwhile, it must be noted that whichever way corruption is defined, it is antithetical to development in many ways. This is, for instance, not only because it causes the squandering of scarce resources that are meant for developmental purposes but, more importantly; also because it erodes the confidence of the generality of people, particularly the ordinary citizens who, in their large population, are the worst affected by a corrupt system. More poignantly, the peculiar Nigerian situation, which this paper analyzes in greater details in the subsequent section, is characterized by a worse form of corruption because of the growing culture of impunity which, although can be traced to the country’s dark past under the military, remains uncontrolled even fourteen years after the reintroduction of civil rule in 1999.

Dynamics of Nigeria’s Socio-Political and Economic Life

What is the nature of the fundamental processes in Nigeria’s socio-political and economic life? This question is considered important because in the attempt to address it, the paper will also try to explain the nexus between the selected issues and concepts that were defined in the preceding section, and the performance of Nigeria’s entire public policy processes, which is a major barometer for the measurement or evaluation of development in the country.

Meanwhile, several explanations have been advanced to characterize the socio-political and economic life of Nigeria and its citizens. While many of such studies were particular about Nigeria, several others focused on the entire African continent and even many other parts of the less developed world. In the early genre of these scholarly efforts, which

included Nicolson (1969), Dudley (1973), Ekeh (1975) and Nnoli (1978) among several others, emphasis was placed on the effects of colonialism, the forceful amalgamation of diverse ethnic nationalities as well as the manipulation and politicization of ethnicity. Obviously, the effects of colonialism, the amalgamation of diverse ethnic nationalities, as well as Nigeria's large and rapidly growing population; which inhabited an environment within elusive and difficult to police borders, cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, governing such a country would task the most "auspicious governance clime to its very wits (Olukotun, 2012). It was, therefore, not surprising that Britain merely administered Nigeria, through a remotely controlled arrangement of indirect rule system, leaving the "natives" to worry about the hard grind of constituting political order (Olukotun, 2012).

However, with the passage of time and, especially, the discovery of crude oil, which was later characterized by poor management of the phenomenal earnings from the sale of the product, the focus of scholars shifted significantly from the colonial and ethnic factors to the class issue. Prominent studies, which can be directly or indirectly linked to this line of thought, include Ake (1981), Callaghy (1987), Chazan and Rothchild (1992), Joseph (1991), World Bank (2000) and a host of others. In all of these, whether in the "strong societies and weak state" perspective by Alavi, Chazan and Rothchild; the "partrimonial" perspective by Clapham and Callaghy, or the "prebendal" perspective by Joseph and "state capture" by the World Bank, the common line of argument is that there are multifaceted governance crises and low level of development in Nigeria, as well as several other parts of the less developed world because the state is generally weak. In the light of this, it cannot perform its basic functions that should enhance development. Therefore, it is not surprising that the weak states are generally characterized by nepotism, incompetence, instability, poverty, violence and corruption.

While the logicity of these explanations and arguments may not be doubtful, I wish to focus more on the role of the leadership and followership in analyzing the character of the state and its effects on the entire public policy processes in Nigeria. In other words, how and why has leadership, in contemporary Nigeria, contributed to the socio-political and economic underdevelopment of the country? What significant role did the followers play in all of it?

In addressing these questions, Ake (1996) when responding to a poser raised on how politics underdevelops Nigeria, argues that the “high value placed on political power has created an obsessive preoccupation with politics which has greatly impeded economic progress”. It must be noted that this can hardly be separated from the pervasive nature of the state in Nigeria. In other words, in Nigeria, the state is everywhere and its powers, which appears boundless, makes it hardly impracticable to operate any aspect of life without the exercise of state powers and control. In the light of this, it is not surprising that politics itself is characterized by:

...relations of raw power in which right tends to co-exist with power, and security depends on the control of power. Thus, also making the struggle for power everything and its pursuit by every means (Ake, 1996).

In the light of this, economic decisions, among several other interconnected areas, are invariably made on the basis of political considerations. These, for instance, include major economic decisions “in regard to the infrastructure, the location of industries, incentives to the capitalist sector, licensing, government ventures, wages, labour and productivity, monetary and fiscal policies, the award of contracts, etc” (Ake, 1996); and, of course, the running of public institutions and parastatals, all of which are replete with economic irrationalities and limited developmental impact.

Drawing from the above, it may be necessary to examine the composition of the public sector in Nigeria. Meanwhile, focus will essentially be on the recruitment of its personnel and the selection of its leadership. Equally important to note is the interaction between the three important sectors – government (public sector), business (private sector) and civil society, which crystallizes the productivity and competitiveness of nations. However, out of these three, it is the leadership of the political class and public bureaucracy that is ultimately most responsible for how well the country performs.

In clearer terms, the public sector is made up of these two key layers – the political leaders “who are subject to more frequent turnover based on constitutionally mandated electoral processes that promote democratic competition on the one hand”, (Ezekwesili, 2011); and “the tenure – track civil service of technocrats”, which has a considerably longer

term mandate to manage the bureaucracy that “helps translate the vision of the former into concrete deliverables in the form of services to citizens” (Ezekwesili, 2011). Hence, whereas the political actors are subject to the electoral test in deriving their legitimacy, the civil or public servants in the wider spectrum that includes not only the ministries and departments of the core civil service but also the agencies or parastatals, “derive their legitimacy from a competitive professional process that recruits them on the ground that they are capable of implementing programmes and providing efficient and effective services” (Ezekwesili, 2011).

Usually, political leadership can to a very significant extent determine the quality of the technocratic leadership of the public service through the appointments they make regarding the heads of public institutions and the civil service. Therefore, in many ways, this confirms the broad and deep relationship between politics and economics. Meanwhile, this should help in explaining why and how successive political leadership in Nigeria; especially since the first military coup in 1966, have been confronted by legitimacy crises, is yet to successfully lay a solid foundation for the country’s economic transformation agenda.

In other words, with the possible exception of the immediate pre-independence and post-colonial era, which was characterized by a relatively high level of infrastructural development, educational advancement, relative comfort and general well being of the citizenry, particularly in the then regional settings, Nigeria has, for a greater part of its political independence, been confronted by the challenges of underdevelopment. In essence, the fundamental flaws about the country’s leadership can, for instance, be traced from the termination of the First Republic and the military coup of January 1966. For example, despite the supposed revolutionary and ideological fervour of the coup plotters and their acclaimed mission to combat corruption in public as well as private places, they only succeeded in killing some prominent political figures in the North and their friends in some other parts of the country; but were unable to take over power.

Therefore, while the coup plotters supposedly had revolutionary ideas, Major General JTG Aguiyi-Ironsi and others who eventually formed a new government did not appear to believe in these ideas. Thereafter, the allegations of marginalization and abuse of office against Ironsi and his close advisers led to the July 1966 counter-coup. It also coincided with the revenge ethnic killings of Igbos in the North, which sprang from allegations

that the killings from the first coup deliberately targeted some sections of the country. Apparently, the counter-coup also led to a breakdown of the command chain in the military, as the then Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu - Ojukwu, military governor of the defunct Eastern Region, refused to recognize Colonel Yakubu Gowon and his regime, which emanated from the counter-coup.

Although subsequent coups and counter-coups, which brought in Generals Murtala Muhammed, Olusegun Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and Abdulsalami Abubakar, who handed over to enable the commencement of the Fourth Republic in 1999, proclaimed the fight against corruption and abuse of office as their major goal, it is, in a way, appropriate to argue that they were generally nothing but dissatisfaction with leadership.

However, it is necessary to critically examine the role of the ordinary citizens – the generality of the followers, especially in respect of some of the past regimes that are often singled out for their relatively better performance. These are namely, the Murtala Muhammed (1975-1976) and Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985) military regimes, which are generally acclaimed to have performed better in terms of the restoration of discipline and relative orderliness in Nigeria. Incidentally, these two regimes are, so far, part of the shortest in the country's political history. Meanwhile, in view of the shortness of these regimes, despite the acclaimed relatively better performance, it is necessary to ask some pertinent questions. For instance, why were the two regimes that purposively set out to pursue an anti-corruption agenda so short-lived, while others that rhetorically fought the problem lasted much longer? Would Nigeria have fared better, in terms of socio-political and economic development, if these regimes stayed longer?

To address these questions, I will combine prominent explanations from most of the theories that were discussed in a preceding section of the paper, for the adoption of an eclectic framework of analysis. Thus, I concur that colonialism and the artificial beginning of the state in Nigeria were manipulated and exploited by many ethnic demagogues, who emerged as political leaders towards the end of colonial rule and in the immediate post-independence years. Subsequently, in a neo-patrimonial and prebendal manner, the political class and bureaucrats; many of the latter being the appointees of the former, seized their public offices for purposes that were largely sectional and personal. In effect, the state and its institutions were

captured by its own very officials; therefore, incapacitating the entire public policy process. In short, they made it almost impracticable for strong institutions, like the ones in the developed world, to emerge and catalyze development aspirations in Nigeria.

However, my thesis is that while the urgent need for strong institutions in Nigeria is never in doubt, it is apparent that the country needs “strongmen” or transformational leaders to build such strong institutions. In the light of this, it is apt to argue that although the procedures that brought about the Murtala Muhammed and Muhammadu Buhari regimes were defective, the regimes could have laid the proper foundation for Nigeria’s developmental take-off. Indeed, from the United States of America, Western and Eastern Europe, up to the relatively recent history of countries like Malaysia, Singapore and many others that are often called the “Asian Tigers”, the world’s history is replete with examples of “effective leadership under the regimes of strongmen produced by the military” (Akinyemi, 2012). These include Franklin Roosevelt (USA), Winston Churchill (UK), Adolf Hitler (Germany), Joseph Stalin (Russia) and Lee Kwan Yee (Singapore) among several others. Nigeria could have also been a success story by a strong man.

Of course, several factors must have accounted for the unsuccessful story of Nigeria. In the first instance, internal contradictions such as ethno-religious considerations and class issues within the military itself could have been responsible. Secondly, it could be as a result of the fact that the generality of the followers who had been let down repeatedly by their past leaders, lacked the patriotic zeal to endure the initial pains that often accompany a transformational agenda. Therefore, they regarded the administrative and leadership styles of the Buhari regime; in particular, as too harsh to be defended when it was overthrown. Thirdly, and quite importantly, the lack of sustainable effective leadership, which had over the years eroded the functionality of institutions in the country, also fuelled the control and checks on the activities of competitors.

Finally, in view of the criticality of the role of strongmen and the required support of active followers, it may not be surprising that Nigeria, even after fourteen years of democratization in the Fourth Republic, is yet to effectively tackle the most devastating socio-economic legacies, corruption and impunity which, although did not start under the military, grew phenomenally between the mid-1980s and late 1990s, when military rule and its absurdities climaxed in the country. The simple interpretation

of this is that the supposed majoritarian rule in Nigeria has, for fourteen years, so far been unable to reduce the level of corruption, poverty, deprivation and underdevelopment, in general.

Why, in spite of the possible opportunity to reject a non-performing administration and retain a performing one, through the ballot box, has the generality of ordinary Nigerians (followers, who form the bulk of the electorate) not voted leaders who can transform the national economy through politics? I will now attempt to address this question in my analysis of selected issues in the next section.

Selected Issues

The specific issues that will be addressed in this section are namely, the party system; electoral process and administration; and budgeting, fiscal responsibility and accountability. These carefully selected issues will be analyzed in line with their relationship to the phenomena of leadership, corruption and underdevelopment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2013.

In most democracies and other participatory systems of government, particularly those with development aspirations and goals, which transcend mere economic growth, the party system is quite essential. In simple terms, the party system is a "network of relationships through which political parties interact and influence the political process" (Agbaje, 1999). Although the number of political parties is a factor in the party system of any society, it will be wrong to reduce the party system to a number game. Of greater importance, for instance, is the "relevance" of parties "in relation to the formation of governments", and in "particular whether their size gives them the prospect of winning, or at least, sharing governmental powers" (La Palombara and Weiner, 1966). Also important is how these "relevant" parties relate to one another. For example, is the party system characterized by co-operation and consensus, or by conflict and polarization? In addition, the factors that account for co-operation or conflict are very important (Yagboyaju, 2012).

If the party system is this important, what constitutes a political party and what does it do? Essentially, a political party is "a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office by supplying them with a label- a party identification by which they are known to the electorate" (Wilson, 1992). More lucidly, the basic functions of political parties can be summarized as:

Identifying and training leaders; developing policy platforms; presenting the best aspirants and candidates for office; regulating office holders; conducting research on party and political development; encouraging public discourses; and committing openly to the sustenance of democracy in every regard (Ihonvbere, 2009).

While the effective performance of these functions enhances governance and the overall development of such countries as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany and several others, the lacklustre performance of most of the major political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic partly account for the level of underdevelopment in the country. For better understanding, it is quite useful to have a closer examination of the activities of the country's major political parties, between 1999 and 2013. These parties, with at least one representative in either a State Assembly, or the National Assembly, Governorship or Presidential level, include the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), Kowa Party (KP), Labour Party (LP), Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA), Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN) and Accord Party (AP). However, for ease of reference, greater emphasis will be placed on PDP, which has controlled the central government; dominated the National Assembly-thus, producing most of its key officers and won more governorship seats since 1999.

To start with, the process of selecting the chairman and other officers of the party, right from Chief Solomon Lar's tenure in 1998/1999, through Chiefs Sunday Awoniyi, Audu Ogbeh and Barnabas Gemade, as well as others who emerged later, up to 2013 when Alhaji Bamanga Tukur emerged, has always been controversial and scantily democratic. Rather than adopt direct election and primaries as recommended in the party's constitution, for party officials and candidates respectively, PDP has over the years consistently opted for the controversial "affirmation" and "consensus" methods that are more prone to the manipulations of political godfathers and financiers. This, in a way, accounted for the high turnover of the party's chairmen, especially at the national level. Indeed, it also accounted for the mass resignation of the party's national officers in 2013 as

well as the case instituted against it by its erstwhile national secretary, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, among several other contentious issues.

While Oyinlola's case is still pending in court, PDP appointed Professor Wale Oladipo, from Osun State, as its protem national secretary. Incidentally, such practices are also rampant in the state chapters of the party. In the preparations for the 2011 general elections for instance, PDP's controversial selection of party officials, which was held at different mini-conventions, produced multiple and parallel executive councils in Ogun, Osun and Adamawa States, among others.

Undoubtedly, these practices have grave consequences and implications for Nigeria's democratization and development aspirations, in general. In the first place, if the PDP, in spite of its fifteen years of existence, cannot conduct the simple assignment of primary elections, it may not be surprising that the party is yet to significantly impact on the level of development in the country. Secondly, the lack of internal democracy in PDP, which apparently affects almost all the other major political parties in varying degrees, must have accounted for the large scale of irregularities and controversies that characterized most of the general elections conducted since 1999. This is because political parties that cannot uphold the tenets of internal democracy, as enshrined in their own constitutions, are unlikely to have regard for such principles on a broader level.

In another dimension, just like the selection of party officials, the choice of party candidates is equally controversial, rancorous and full of irregularities. Again, although it is more common in PDP because its tickets have, so far, been the most attractive, there are evidences of such malpractices in many of the other major political parties. It should, for instance, be recalled that such irregular selections or imposition of candidates produced Sir. Celestine Omeiha as the PDP candidate and, subsequently, the winner of the governorship election in Rivers State in 2007. However, almost two years later, Hon. Rotimi Amaechi secured a court verdict, which pronounced him the rightful candidate of the party and, was therefore sworn-in to replace Omeiha as governor of the state. Similarly, the refusal to conduct direct primaries and other intrigues, within the PDP, were the reasons given by the then Vice President Atiku Abubakar to contest the 2007 presidential election on the platform of the defunct Action Congress (AC). Incidentally, Atiku Abubakar secured a court verdict, which directed PDP to comply with its constitutional provisions on

the conduct of direct primaries, before leaving the party in 2007. No doubt, all of these accounted for the unnecessary distraction at the highest level of government and the general over-heating of the polity, at that point in time.

It must be noted that it is most improbable that “the best aspirants and candidates for office”, as espoused in the functions of political parties above, will ever emerge in this type of a system, which discourage merit, decorum and respect for the rule of law. Drawing from this, it should not be surprising that several other issues that leaders and political parties amicably resolve in other societies easily snowball into irresolvable conflicts and violence, all of which impede development in Nigeria.

In recent times, indirect examples of such issues include the *Boko Haram* insurgency that has crippled many parts of the North and constantly distracts the attention of the central government; while direct examples include the controversial Nigeria Governors’ Forum election held in May 2013 and the equally controversial attempt to impeach the Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly by five out of the thirty-two members. In the ensuing fracas, which was widely reported in the first two weeks of July 2013, the legislative chamber was destroyed, while at least one legislator who was badly injured was hospitalized and even flown abroad for more comprehensive medical attention. It is equally bewildering that in spite of the admittance by the Commissioner of Police, Joseph Mbu, that the impeachment attempt was reported in advance, the police could not prevent the invasion of the House of Assembly by suspected armed thugs who accompanied some of the legislators. This, in so many ways, is a reminder of the dark past when, for instance, the then Governor Ngige of Anambra State was abducted; and Governors Dariye and Ladoja of Plateau and Oyo State respectively, were impeached by groups of legislators who did not form the required quorum for the exercise, but were indirectly supported by the police.

Meanwhile, in the preceding discussion on the party system, there is a role for the opposition either to co-operate or antagonize the ruling party for public good. Obviously, this has not effectively been so in Nigeria’s fourteen-year old Fourth Republic. Rather, at the central and other levels, the government is the party, “the only party, and the gravitation of all is towards the party to get a piece of the action” (Fagbenle, 2013). This, no doubt, accounts for the easy movement of stalwarts and leaders from one party to another; and, consequently, the sustenance of

politics without distinguishable ideologies, which compounds the problems of underdevelopment in Nigeria. On the whole, it all boils down to the structural deficiency of the country; “a deficiency that in turn produces a malapropos economic relationship whereby the government is the source of livelihood of 80 per cent of the people” (Fagbenle, 2013). Disturbingly, fourteen years after the reintroduction of civil rule and its accompanying high hopes of a liberalized economic landscape that will transfer focus from government alone, everyone from the biggest corporations to the smallest one-man business “still looks up to the government either for sustenance or for that elusive “big break” (Fagbenle, 2013).

Other aspects of development, which the recruitment of the supposed representatives of the people have, over the years, adversely affected include electoral administration; in which the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the worst affected. For example, apart from the possibility of infiltration of INEC by loyalists of the powerful and influential politicians, the whole agency itself is involved in several time wasting cases instituted by aggrieved contestants. In fact, prior to 2010, when its image began to improve, the agency was severally indicted for collusion in almost all the court-decided electoral cases; in which several results were overturned. Obviously, this dent on the image of INEC also meant an erosion of the confidence of the generality of the electorate in the capacity of the agency as an unbiased umpire and platform for development in the country.

However, the manifestation of the effects of the abysmal performance of political and, to a lesser extent, technocratic leaders has, in the last fourteen years, been felt more in the areas of budgeting, fiscal responsibility, accountability and effective legislation in general. In particular, budgeting is key to development aspirations in any society. This is because a budget, which contains both estimated incomes and expenditures, provides a guide and plan for financing activities of the government during a fixed future period; usually one year. Apparently, in view of the fact that it has to do with incomes and expenditures, it covers virtually all aspects of life, with a view to actualizing development goals within a stipulated time. Therefore, the budget is, ideally, all about service to the electorate and the generality of the citizens.

In the light of this, budgeting is accorded huge attention all over the developed world as well as in many developing countries. However, the

case has not been so in Nigeria, especially in its fourteen-year old Fourth Republic. Meanwhile, the problems that have, over the years, confronted the budgetary processes are multidimensional. For instance, most budgets between 2000 and 2012 were passed in March and signed by the President in April. Therefore, "allocations or cash releases to Ministries, Departments and Agencies normally began in June when the financial year would have been half gone" (*The Punch*, 2013). Incidentally, this period is a time for heavy rains when road construction and execution of other projects are difficult in Nigeria and, in its swampy areas; totally impossible.

Disturbingly, the late passage of the annual budget, "release of funds per project rather than bulk releases, delays in cash-backing and, of course, procurement challenges" have been identified as the causes of low implementation (*The Punch*, 2013). In fact, ₦750 billion was returned in 2008 and 2009 to Federal Government coffers as unspent funds, while in 2012 budget implementation was below 50 per cent. Meanwhile, it must be noted that money not spent does not necessarily mean money well spent. This is because the unspent budgetary allocations, if not eventually looted by the officials in charge, simply means that there is little or nothing to utilize for the improvement of electricity supply, fix bad roads, repair decrepit railway tracks, supply potable water, improve health and educational facilities and make the country's air space safer, among several other urgent socio-economic needs.

In another dimension, it is quite worrisome that unlike in most developed and developing countries, where key aspects of life such as education, health and many others classified as capital expenditure get more attention, recurrent expenditure, which largely takes care of the salaries, allowances and other privileges of elected and appointed public officials is considered more important in Nigeria. For instance, in the 2013 budget, while the recurrent outlay stood at N2.38 trillion (initially N2.41 trillion), the proposed capital expenditure was only N1.62 trillion (originally N1.54 trillion). Incidentally, the slight increment of N63 billion, introduced by the legislators, is most probably meant for their "constituency projects", a self-serving political indulgence that "swells up abandoned projects in the 360 Federal Constituencies and 109 senatorial districts, and fosters corruption in contract awards" (*The Punch*, 2013). While this trend has continued for so many years, it must be noted that education, which has so far proven to be the pivot around which many developed countries tie their development, has received insignificant

attention from successive administrations since 1999. The sector had only 9 per cent allocation in the 2013 budget; a far cry from the 26 per cent recommended by UNESCO. Meanwhile, the allocation to the health sector is even lower than that of education.

Drawing from the above and in line with the obvious disregard for fiscal responsibility and accountability by many of the top political office holders, it may also be useful to cite the example of the jumbo salaries and allowances that are collected by this same group of Nigerians. For ease of reference, and because of the controversy that it has generated since the commencement of the Fourth Republic, the emoluments of the federal lawmakers will be selected to buttress the analysis here. For instance, at a public forum in August 2013, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, one-time member of the Obasanjo administration's national economic team, noted that for eight years up to 2013, the National Assembly alone received more than "N1 trillion for salaries, allowances and sundry expenses" that largely fell under the recurrent sector of the successive budgets (*The Punch*, 2013). These and such other expenditures on salaries and allowances, which particularly favoured elected and appointed political office holders, and to a lesser extent some other categories of public officials, accounted for the average of "82 per cent recurrent spending" throughout the period of 2005-2013 (*The Punch*, 2013).

More specifically, Itse Sagay, Professor of Law, revealed that the Senate President earns as much "as ₦88 million a month" (*Sunday Punch*, 2013). In addition, the *Economist* magazine of London, in August 2013, did a comparative review of the wages of political office holders in Nigeria as against those of their counterparts in older democracies and advanced countries like United States of America, France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Japan and Canada that are, incidentally, also members of the G7 group of world's richest countries.

Despite being very secretive about their emolument, the magazine was able to "come up with a figure of \$189,000 (₦30.24million) as the annual basic pay of a federal lawmaker" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*). This is apart from several other allowances which, when added up, will shoot up the "total annual pay of a member of the House of Representatives to an estimated sum of as much as N146.4 million" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*). Meanwhile some additional allowances are also collected by principal officers and committee chairmen in both arms of the National Assembly.

Even with the basic pay of \$189,000, the Nigerian lawmaker is second only to his Australian counterpart who earns "\$201,200 per annum" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*). This is simply outrageous and antithetical to the development of Nigeria because while \$201,200 is just three times Australia's Gross Domestic Product per person, the \$189,000 earned by a Nigerian legislator is "116 times Nigeria's GDP per person" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*). Also, while the Australian lawmaker's basic pay and other privileges are made open, his Nigerian counterpart collects other hidden allowances that are most probably far higher than the basic pay. This is why Sagay and several others like the *Economist* magazine of London argued that the Nigerian federal lawmaker is the highest paid legislator in the world.

Granted that Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world, it is curious that it also "harbours one of the largest populations of the poor in the world" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*). With a minimum wage of ₦18,000 (less than \$120) a month, for workers in the public sector of its economy, it may not be incontrovertible that up to 70 per cent of Nigeria's entire population still live on less than the United Nations poverty threshold of \$2 per day. How can a country justify paying a class of public servants \$189,000 per annum, while it can hardly pay others less than \$120 per month? This is part of the incongruities that can lead to "serious distortions in the social structure" (*Sunday Punch*, *ibid*), while also fuelling the political economy of underdevelopment. It also partly explains why as at 2012, "70 per cent of the annual budget" (Nwachukwu, 2012), went to recurrent expenditure, with only 30 per cent left for capital projects. With such an arrangement, it should not be difficult to explain why Nigeria lags behind in the provision of basic amenities that will enhance the productivity of the generality of the populace and, ultimately, bail out the country itself out of the entanglements of underdevelopment.

Disturbingly, the elected and appointed public officials, especially at the topmost levels, have not only fixed outrageous salaries and allowances that are not in conformity to the reality in Nigeria to themselves, they also appear not to understand why the electorate and the generality of ordinary citizens, whose living conditions are worsened by the infrastructural decay and the intolerably high level of poverty, should be informed on the management of the wealth of the nation. This is against the practice in well-ordered and development-oriented societies like the United States of America, Germany and United Kingdom, among several others, where parliamentarians perform oversight functions more effectively. In the case of Nigeria, as at 2013, there are 54 committees in the Senate and 89,

in the House of Representatives, most of which are well-funded, standing committees that have powers of oversight on government agencies in charge of budget implementation. Had the National Assembly been alive to its responsibilities, in respect of the oversight, the country would probably not have as many as the “over 11,886 abandoned projects” that the Bunu Sheriff-led Presidential Project Monitoring Committee reported in 2013 (*The Punch*, 2013). Meanwhile, according to this same report, the country needs about ₦7.8 trillion to complete these projects, which probably had budgetary allocations under successive administrations between 1999 and 2013.

Similarly, the total disregard for fiscal responsibility and accountability is the most probable reason for the profligate and ostentatious styles of most public officials since 1999. At the presidential level, for instance, it may be useful to buttress this argument with the frivolous expansion of the Presidential Air Fleet, at a time of mass unemployment and dwindling revenues, for which Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance, raised an alarm because of its dire consequences. Incidentally, while President Goodluck Jonathan, within three years in office expanded Nigeria’s executive fleet to 10 aircrafts, as well as approved the purchase of two additional helicopters “to ensure the President, Vice President, their families and other top functionaries travel in luxury at public expense” (*The Punch*, 2013), many leaders elsewhere are doing otherwise. It must, for instance, be noted that in 2012, President Joyce Banda of Malawi, sold the country’s only presidential jet which incidentally caused a major disagreement between her predecessor, Bingu wa Mutharika, and the World Bank, IMF and other agencies who were worried about the possible consequences of extravagance on a national economy whose budget relied on 40 per cent of donor aids. However, Nigeria’s First Lady, Patience Jonathan, proudly dispatched a presidential jet to bring Banda from Lilongwe, Malawi’s capital, and returned her home, as the keynote speaker at the Global Power Women Network Africa Summit in Abuja, in 2013.

Similarly, other developing countries like Ghana, where former president, John Kufuor, “once disposed of a spare presidential aircraft and retained only one” (*The Punch*, 2013), should serve as a useful example. Disturbingly, the austere lifestyle of President Jose Mujica of Uruguay, who “drives a 1987 Volkswagen Beetle, stays at his wife’s farmhouse and donates 90 per cent of his monthly salary to charity” (*The Punch*, 2012), also seems not to fascinate Nigeria’s leaders and “big men” in general.

Finally, and more shockingly, this extravagance, which negates fiscal responsibility and development, in general, is also exemplified in the unusually large convoy and entourage of officials at most public functions within and outside the country. For instance, on a particular trip to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, during the United Nations Earth Summit, the online news site, *Saharareporters*, reported that President Jonathan's entourage consisted of 116 government officials. The breakdown of the delegation was given as "25 personal aides, 18 aides of Mrs. Patience Jonathan, two members of the National Assembly, five ministers, two state governors and 63 officials from the Ministries of Environment, Foreign Affairs, National Planning and Petroleum Resources" (*The Punch*, 2012a). Meanwhile, on the contrary, Prime Minister David Cameron and cabinet members, of a more comfortable country-Britain, took pay cuts "in response to the global recession and the spending cuts that the government introduced" (*The Punch*, 2013b). Furthermore, Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York (USA), and one of the world's richest and most influential men travel without much fun fair.

Conclusion

Nigeria's political economy in the Fourth Republic (1999-2013) has, so far, been characterized by abysmal performance and evident underdevelopment. In fact, in spite of the phenomenal increase in the earnings from the sale of crude oil, which partly accounted for the remarkable economic growth, increase in foreign reserves and the payment of some long standing foreign debts, access to the good things of life such as potable water, health services, improved environmental conditions and reduction in the level of poverty for the generality of the ordinary citizens did not significantly improve.

Among the numerous plausible explanations for the intolerably low level of development which, incidentally, also includes the lack of effective participation in governance and public affairs by the generality of ordinary citizens; this paper pinpointed the deliberate incapacitation of the state and most sensitive public institutions by the political and economic elites as well as numerous public bureaucrats, whose appointments were mostly influenced by the former. Meanwhile, the most notable features of the weak state include nepotism, corruption, personal rule, deprivation, alienation, high level of poverty and violence. In particular, the nepotistic tendencies manifested in the hijack of the selection processes of the major political

parties by godfathers and financiers, who merely imposed their favourites that were not necessarily the best candidates. However, none of these characteristics portends greater danger to the country's political economy, democratization and development aspirations in general more than the lack of order, flagrant disregard for the rule of law and, sometimes, disobedience to judicial pronouncements as well as the growing culture of impunity.

Incidentally, while Nigeria's First Republic which many regard as the golden era of development in the country, was not totally free of abuse of privileges and due process, the evident disregard for a "belittling doctrine as equality of all citizens before the law" (Iwu, 2008), and many other blatant absurdities that are antithetical to development coincided with the return of military rule and emergence of a new breed of super-rich Nigerians, particularly from the mid-1980s. It is therefore, not surprising that most of the leaders who took over at the beginning of the Fourth Republic and thereafter were either part of the country's dark past under the military or the newly created special breeds of fabulously wealthy individuals, who seem to be above the law.

Meanwhile, drawing from experiences across the developed and developing countries, as well as the world's ancient, medieval and contemporary history, the challenge of underdevelopment in Nigeria can be effectively tackled by restoring the functionality of the state and public institutions. In other words, the country needs strong institutions to address the problems of weak leadership, corruption and a culture of impunity among several others that have, for so long, caused underdevelopment. However, there is also the need for "strongmen" who, as a matter of fact, must first emerge to serve as the pivots around which the yet to emerge strong institutions in Nigeria will initially revolve.

Singapore under Lee Kwan Yee, United States of America under Franklin Roosevelt, Adolf Hitler's Germany, Joseph Stalin's Russia, United Kingdom under Winston Churchill and Ghana under Jerry Rawlings and other strongmen regimes that laid solid foundations for restoration and development at different points in time in their countries, are examples that suggest it is also possible in Nigeria. Finally, the electorate and followers, in general, must engage more in governance and public affairs by actively supporting development-oriented administrations and opposing non-performing ones. However, for more impactful engagement, civil society

organizations, professional bodies, the media and other enlightened groups, who can adopt best practices in other climes to help in building an unofficial opposition and a whistle-blowing team, have a fundamental role to play.

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