CHAPTER THREE

THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN INTERROGATION

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Abstract

The chapter attempts to interrogate Nigeria's development crisis to offer a helpful development template for the much-desired positive transformation of the country. In so doing, the study relied on secondary sources of data collection and adopted political-development theory as its analytical framework. The study found that the challenges of developments in Nigeria today are multi-variable in causation and multi-dimensional in nature. The chapter recommended what needs to be done to re-strategize the Nigerian society and economy towards achieving the country's rapid socio-economic and political development

Introduction

Nigeria started at independence in October 1960 as a federation of three regions but has today metamorphosed into a federal system with 36 state structures. Over the years, especially since the end of military rule, there have been persistent agitations and sometimes threats of secession for restructuring of the Nigerian federation to give more powers and autonomy to the federating states. The Nigerian federal system is characterized as a unitary system in all but name; hence, disparate groups continuously assert diverse and often conflicting interests (Jega, 2001). The federating states are unviable and highly dependent on the federal centre for sustainability. The existing balance of power is perceived as skewed and requires restructuring or re-examination of the basis of the country's federal system.

There is, therefore, an inherent crisis within Nigerian federalism, which has continued to constrain efforts at national development. The country has experienced various forms of crises of development. Indeed, Nigeria has always seemed like an impossibility. From her independence in 1960, observers questioned the country's viability as a multi-ethnic and multi-

religious state. The question often asked is, how can a country divided along two major religions and hundreds of different ethnic groups possibly stay together? (Iweala, 2022). The skepticism climaxed when the devastating Nigerian civil war broke out in 1967. Many had concluded that Nigeria wasn't meant to be after all. Ever since the civil war, the Nigerian political project's main aim has been preserving the country's unity and territorial integrity. This intends to prove domestic and foreign prophets of doom wrong on the country's viability. As Iweala (2022) noted:

> Each year, supposed experts from outside Nigeria declare that the state has failed and will soon disintegrate. And yet each year, Nigeria does not disintegrate. Instead, like a chronically sick patient who lacks proper diagnosis and thus adequate treatment, it soldiers on, its conditions steadily worsening, though,

At independence, Nigerians had hoped that with political freedom, there would be a better life economically and socially in the form of improved material conditions and a better future for the coming generations. However, these hopes and aspirations were dashed as the country went into crisis, which culminated in a very bloody civil war. The military took over power and ruled for over three decades, the result of which the nation is still suffering in the form of general retardation in socio-economic and political development. When the country returned to democratic rule in May 1999, once again, the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians were raised as the new dispensation was expected to bring assistance to the economically and socially battered and retarded nation.

But Nigerians were again dissatisfied and disappointed with the performance of successive governments as they were further marginalized from essential services that are vital for decent livelihood or standard of living. The provisions of crucial public services such as health -care, education, water, electricity, good roads, and housing, among others, which are significant, if not the primary responsibilities of government in meeting the needs of the citizenry, were either inadequate or non-existent. By all accounts, Nigeria's path towards enhanced growth and development has not been an easy one. It has been replete with several challenges and setbacks. These numerous challenges have included the national question, the quality and capacity of leaders, the nature of the followership and how best to manage the natural and human resources the

country has been endowed with, and endemic corruption in both public and private life, among others. No sector of Nigerian society could be considered immune to the developmental challenges bedeviling the country.

Conceptual Clarifications
Development
The concept of development is susceptible to a wide range of interpretations. There may be many views on the concept's meaning, as there are scholars and practitioners. In most literature, the concept of development has been used interchangeably with modernization, growth, change, innovation and transformation (Odo, 2017). According to Fayemi (2009), development denotes transforming a state of being into a better one. It entails expanding and adapting the capacity of society to satisfy the material and cultural needs designed to achieve, among others, increased productivity within a balanced economic system, eradicating poverty and disease, and liberating the people from their constraints. The process, therefore, necessarily involves individual freedom and social security, cultural buoyancy, educational and economic liberation, self-reliance and sustainable socio-political order. Development has also been subjected to several approaches. For instance, in third-world countries, development has moved from emphasizing modernization to economic growth, popular participation, and human capital development (HCD) (Fayemi, 2009). Development must represent an improvement in the quality of life in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It is a change or transformation from a lower state of well-being into a higher one. As Odo (2017) noted, development involves bringing about fundamental and sustainable societal changes embracing quality of life. Social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens. Equitable distribution of societal wealth and democratization.

In other words, from whatever perspective one looks at the concept of development, it ought to mean the development not of things but of people and the satisfaction of their essential needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health, education, etc. A process of growth or development that does not lead to fulfilling these basic needs cannot be regarded as development (Varma, 1978). A growth process that benefits only the wealthiest minority and maintains or even increases the disparities between and within the society is not development. The theory of development

advanced by Western social scientists and gleefully accepted by the political elites in developing countries because it suits them, namely, that rapid economic growth benefiting a few will trickle down to the masses of the people, has proved to be wrong and illusory (Varma, 1978).

In addition to the basic physical needs, other goals and values of development include freedom of expression and the right to participate in the decisions made by the political system in the country. The development also includes the right to work, which means not just having a job but also finding self-realization in work and not being alienated through production processes that use human beings simply as tools (Varma, 1978). According to this theory, the exclusive pursuit of economic growth guided by the market forces and undertaken by and for the powerful elites has destructive effects inside developing countries. The wealthiest 5% engross all the gains while the poorest 20% grow poorer (Varma, 1978). Development in the context of this Chapter encompasses socio-economic indices such as education, health, agriculture, water, electricity, and housing and political dimensions such as a well-developed democratic culture, which guarantees healthy political competition.

Theoretical Framework
The Theory of Political-Development
The theory of political development was propounded by a group of political scientists in the United States of America (USA) during the Cold War period (Varma, 1978). The theory was linked up with the normative view prevalent in the USA, which was that communism would lose its appeal in third-world countries once the people achieved the minimum level of economic development (Varma, 1978). However, the economic growth and development process did not move in the direction assumed by American scholars. On the contrary, economic growth created widening gaps between the rich and the poor. For instance, industrialization and urbanization associated with financial aid from Western Europe and America led to the devastation of rural areas and the enlargement of urban slums among third-world countries.

Also, there were glaring ethnocentric notions behind the works of the proponents of the political development theory. They seemed to believe that the political values, institutions and processes, which were good for the USA and Western Europe, were automatically good for the rest of the world. However, the fact remains that the USA, for instance, had built up

its impressive super-structure as a world power based on liberty. But in third-world countries, political order is mostly fragile; hence, values of liberty and freedom often need to be revised. The political development theory had been premised on the assumption that the nature and role of elites play crucial roles in the development process (Varma, 1978). Accordingly, societies with functional elites can achieve significant progress, while societies with a preponderance of dysfunctional elites hardly move far toward development. Elites are, therefore, considered functional or dysfunctional in the entire development process. Bringing the theory to bear on the challenges of development in Nigeria unravelled the nature and dimensions of the crises based on which recommendations or suggestions on the way forward have been proffered.

The Challenges of Development in Nigeria
Nigeria is a country of incredible ironies. For instance, despite its rich human and material resources endowment, no less than 80% of its population languishes in poverty, destitution and youth unemployment, estimated at 60% and life expectancy of 47 years (Elaigwu, 2015). The country has a market population of over a 200million people and abundant gas and petroleum resources. It has arable land for agriculture and considerable capacity for agro-allied industries. Yet, the nation spends billions of naira annually on importing food, petroleum products, textiles, starch, and toothpicks (Elaigwu, 2015). The country is, therefore, grappling with the problems of poverty and underdevelopment despite being rich.

To explain this paradox, many scholars have resorted to adopting the "Blame Game" theory approach, which constantly shifts blame rather than accepting responsibility and squarely facing the challenge. According to Omar (2011), such scholars have often attributed the worrisome contradictions in Nigeria's development path epitomized by the country's continuous underdevelopment to our colonial history. First, the blame for the country's lack of meaningful development in the face of plenty was heaped on the doorsteps of British colonial masters, whom they argued arrested and distorted our natural pace of development and made Nigeria subservient to the colonial economy. This argument has been considered a weak and unacceptable explanation for Nigeria's failure to achieve meaningful development, given the experiences of countries like China, India, Malaysia, etc., which shared a similar colonial history with Nigeria.

Another school of thought blamed the long-drawn military incursion into Nigeria's political sphere for the apparent lack of appreciable development after many decades of political independence. The lack of good and purposeful leadership is also blamed for the continued poverty and underdevelopment in the nation (Achebe, 1998).

However, a sober reflection on Nigeria's development challenges and the way forward suggests that we should, first and foremost, accept responsibility for our individual and collective failures in the efforts towards national development rather than passing the bulk. Any attempt to continue to indulge in the blame game syndrome as we have always done would result in the continued socio-economic drift of the country with dire consequences. Over the years, Nigerians have been almost a permanently discontented people. With abundant human and material resources, Nigerians of all social rungs continually lament the country's lack of progress compared to other nations of the world with whom Nigeria shared similar historical antecedents. Although there are different views as to what is accepted as development or progress, almost all levels of the elite, at least, look at India and Malaysia, which have similar ethnic and religious configurations with Nigeria, if not more daunting as fast developing (Barkindo *et al*., 2011). For instance, India has seven times the population of Nigeria with comparatively less endowed natural resources, yet not only so far ahead of Nigeria but already well on its way along with Malaysia towards the advanced nations of the world. Nigeria, on the other hand, has, since independence, remained instead a toddler in so many indices of development (Odo, 2017).

The Critical Factors of Nigeria's Development Challenges
As noted earlier, Nigeria is an interesting paradox. The country is richly endowed with abundant natural and human resources, yet this is not matched by the slow pace of the country's development. Nigeria is today one of the worst affected countries by all known human tragedies from terrorism and insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, rape, armed robbery, corruption, poverty, the most significant number of out-of-school children, amongst others (Odo, 2016). These challenges' persistent and stubborn nature and character make the country's stagnant development a critical contemporary issue. In interrogating these challenges, the Chapter identified many factors as possible causes of the country's poor development. These include, amongst others;

Lack of Good Leadership
There is no doubt that good leadership has eluded Nigeria for decades, the consequences of which are grave for national development. A general lack of political legitimacy has characterized governance in Nigeria. This is mainly because successive governments have not been able to steer the country to achieve the promise of independence, which borders on the general improvement in the welfare of the citizenry in its various facets. Corrupt and inept attitudes of the political leadership have ensured that government after the government had remained unresponsive to the needs, wishes and aspirations of the people (Aiyede, *et al*, 2010). General insecurity and lack of social justice and equity constitute the harvest of post-independence governance in Nigeria. Thus, leadership has been identified as a significant challenge to development in Nigeria. According to Achebe (2010), the trouble with Nigeria is squarely a failure of leadership.

Nigeria is where she is today regarding socio-economic and political development because we have yet to figure out how to deal with the contradictions inherent in the existence of the Nigerian state and the activities of its ruling elites. As Okpeh (2011) noted, the dialectics of Nigeria's political economy is that it needs to be more articulated and incurably restive.

The leadership in the country since independence has failed to deal with these contradictions, hence the persistence of the development crisis. Thus, profiling leadership in Nigeria since independence would reveal why the country is where it is today in terms of development. In this respect, leadership in the Nigerian state could be discussed in at least three interlocked phases associated with peculiar limitations arising from the nature and character of the country's political economy at independence.

The first phase spans the brief period between 1960 and 1966, and it was primarily characterized by what is generally called first-generation leaders. These crops of leaders engaged in the decolonization process and were critical factors in what eventually became the type of independence Nigeria got. They were inexperienced and lacked the suave and astuteness required to manage the contradictions of a neo-colonial social formation. They conceived political power in absolute instrumental terms, and consequently, their violent contestation for it jeopardized the political process. Okpeh (2011) said this was responsible for the census controversy

of 1962-64, the Action Group crisis of 1963, the federal election crisis of 1964-65, and the regional election crisis in the Western Region in 1965.

The preceding crises were bi-products of intra-ruling class tussle directed not only at capturing power but also controlling the centre (federal government), which, though politically weak, had all the dominant resources. The hopes and aspirations of Nigerians for a meaningful development at independence were dashed as the country moved from one crisis to another.

The Military Incursion into Nigerian Politics
The second phase of leadership in the independent Nigeria commenced with the military coup of January 15, 1966. This was the era when the military wing of the ruling elites assumed the leadership of the Nigerian state. With the military at the corridors of power, people expressed the hope that the army possessed the appropriate nationalistic credentials to rebuild the nation in the interest of the generality of Nigerians. However, after ruling for about three decades, the records of the military's performance were at variance with the people's expectations. As Okpeh (2011) noted, the military emerged on the corridors of power a virgin and ended up a political prostitute.

Besides securing the indissolubility of the country through the successful prosecution of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970, military involvement in politics was an aberration with dire consequences on the country's development process. The prolonged stay of the military in the political leadership of the country undermined the growth of democracy and intensified militarization as well as criminalization of the Nigerian state. The consequences of this were the phenomenal rise in corruption, nepotism, ethnic parochialism, favoritism, and crass opportunism that became the defining characteristics of Nigeria's national life. The third and last phase commenced in 1999 and is characterized by the dominance of retired military officers turned democrats and their civilian counterparts. Their acceptance of democracy is not so much because it is a valuable means for ensuring people's participation in governance. On the contrary, the leadership during this period accepted democratic ideals as a theoretical template for the survival of their class.

Accordingly, the political leadership during this period was without responsibility because the masses of the people for whom democracy is

meant were locked out of its dividends. In the words of Okpeh (2011), the leadership of this era is most unpatriotic, corrupt, deceitful and wicked. It has made and spent more money than any other. Yet, the country experienced the worst form of lack of development, with the most vicious form of poverty eating up the mass of the people, and Nigeria became ranked as the world capital of poverty.

The National Question in Nigeria
 The crisis of Nigerian federalism, otherwise known as the national question, is at the root of all the crises of development that have bedevilled the Nigerian state from independence to date (Jega, 2001). The national question in Nigeria is essentially about actual inequalities, regional imbalances, relations of ethnic domination, cultural and religious antagonisms, competition, and perceptions arising thereof. As Jega (2001) noted, these issues have never been satisfactorily addressed, hence the recurrent clamours for the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to decide, among other things, how to restructure the Nigerian federation to foster national development. The country's structural imbalance has continued to pose challenges to national development. Nigeria adopted federalism as a political compromise formula to assuage the fears and suspicions of domination among Nigeria's heterogeneous population. The mutual fears and doubts of domination among the Nigerian groups were heightened by the structural imbalance in the federal system and the differential spread in the pattern of Western education. According to Elaigwu (2011), in a national system, there should not be any state so much more potent than the rest to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. For instance, the lopsided federal structure in Nigeria's First Republic generated fears and suspicions among groups. The Northern Region held the whole country to ransom with 79% of the country's total land area. The Eastern and Western Regions had 8.3% and 8.5%, respectively, while the Mid-Western Region had 4.2%. According to the 1963 census figures of Nigeria, the regions accounted for 53.5%, 22.3%, 18.4% and 4.6% of the total population respectively (Elaigwu, 2011).

It was, therefore, not surprising that in the southern part of the country, there was always the fear of domination by the Northern Region's large population. The federal structure, as it existed then and even now, made it virtually impossible for the South to control political power at the centre,

given the ethno-regional politics of the country. Similarly, given the Southern head start in Western education, the Northern Region feared Southern domination in the Nigerian state's economic and public service sectors. This is most appreciated given that Western education has become a passport to occupational roles in most modern political systems, including Nigeria. The Northern control of political power has been counterbalanced by the South's monopoly of economic power in the country. This has been the delicate balance on which Nigeria has been surviving since independence.

Every attempt to tilt this balance has always been violently resisted either way. For instance, according to Elaigwu (2011), the military coup of January 1966 leaned on what had been a delicate balance on which Nigeria had been able to survive since independence in favor of the South. The concentration of political and economic powers in the hands of southern leaders following the January coup altered the delicate balance upon which Nigeria has been surviving. As Elaigwu (2011) further noted, political power had been the North's safeguard against the South's economic and educational advantages. The counter-military coup of July 1966 represented a Northern reaction to what it saw as the sudden takeaway of its last card, i.e. the political card, thereby tilting the balance of power in favor of the South. These imbalances constitute serious challenges to development in Nigeria as centrifugal forces continue to haunt the country's federal balance.

Corruption
Over the years, Nigeria has established a dubious reputation as a place where everything gets done once money changes hands. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society, but the problem is not so much with corruption itself but the impunity with which it is being practised (Oyedele, 2011). No society is corruption-free, but what matters is that proven corruption cases are brought to justice irrespective of the status of the offenders. For instance, cases of large-scale corruption in the country against senior politicians and others run for years in the courts, hardly leading to convictions and sometimes getting a presidential pardon *(*Abdallah *et al., 2014).* Former State Governors and other political appointees stood trials for years with no end in sight for their cases, which typically involved allegations of corrupt enrichment to dozens of billions from public coffers. A number of former ministers and federal lawmakers

have also been facing long-drawn graft trials, being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

 Successive governments in Nigeria needed more political will to fight corruption. Investigators need to bring good cases to the judges where there is no political will. And if they are not getting good cases to the judges, they can only work based on the cases before them. Sometimes, those cases may not be constructed in a way that gives the judges the right impetus to conclude trials. Worse still, as Justice Mustapha Akanbi noted, "And then, of course, we have found some judges making orders that you should not investigate a particular case, especially when it involves some of the big men" (Abdallah, 2014). While corruption is globally ubiquitous, it differs across systems regarding its manifestations, magnitude and character. In Nigeria, despite increasing public outrage and the political resolve at all levels of government to combat corruption, the scourge has not abated, and its costs have continued to ravage national development. For instance, corruption has deprived Nigeria of the much-needed funds for anti-poverty and other federal development programs.

Corruption has remained one of the severe challenges of development bedevilling Nigeria since the country's political independence. Corruption has weakened the moral fibre of Nigerian society and created a legitimacy crisis for successive governments. As Bolarinwa (2011) argued, Nigeria's political history is a progressive development of the culture of corruption. Corruption has not only wrecked incalculable damage to the conduct of government business in Nigeria, but it has also undermined development efforts. Furthermore, corruption has subverted the rule of law and due process, eroded confidence in state institutions and vitiated Nigeria's drive for self-development. The image of the Nigerian state within the global community has also not been spared by the monster called corruption, as Nigerians on foreign travels are often subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment at various airports around the world (Bolarinwa, 2011).

The effects of corruption on Nigerian society and economy are so devastating that political structures and institutions of the state have sunk into atrophy and exploited for the personal enrichment of the ruling elites. Corruption has been so entrenched in Nigeria that formal and informal organizations have severally and collectively colluded to deplete national resources, jeopardizing development efforts. Nigeria's consistently prominent position in the league of the world's most corrupt nations

underscores the pervasion of the scourge in the country's political economy. Corruption thrives in Nigeria in all facets of the country's national life. Political and bureaucratic elites have become most daring in their corrupt practices while the capacity of public agencies for service delivery has seriously nose-dived. Indeed, corruption has arrested service delivery and development in Nigeria. The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria robs the country of good governance, which would lead to national development.

Corruption has not only continued to deny the government huge revenues but has also seriously diminished the capacity of public institutions for efficient service delivery. An equally deep culture of impunity reinforces Nigeria's profound culture of corruption. Accordingly, the international community considers the Nigerian state a friendly environment for corruption. Corruption has played a significant part in wreaking havoc on the Nigerian economy. The Nigerian political elites in positions of authority embezzle and loot from public funds. The looted funds are often deposited in foreign accounts, thereby undermining development in Nigeria while contributing to building foreign economies.

Corruption is bad for development as it stunts growth and development activities due to mismanagement or diversion of public funds intended for the development of infrastructures and the economy as a whole. According to Edoh (2009), resources meant for development are siphoned into private pockets, and development projects still need to be executed. However, Nigeria is a society where people glorify wealth regardless of the source, thus making the race for material acquisition a state project. In the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, President Muhammad Buhari was propelled to office by Nigerians based on his message of "change" and the platform of fighting corruption (Iweala, 2022). However, once in power, Buhari disappointed many of those who had voted for him. Buhari's government failed to deliver on its ambitious agenda to fight corruption, so much so that an individual, the Accountant General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was in May 2022 arrested for allegedly embezzling $200m (US Dollars) of public funds. This calls for a complete re-think of the current approach to fighting corruption in the country. Nigeria can only make serious headway in development with a firm control of crime. As President Buhari noted, "If we don't kill corruption, corruption will kill us" (Odo, 2016).

The General State of Insecurity in Nigeria

There are a plethora of security challenges bedeviling Nigerian society today, but the most potent of them all is Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. The Boko Haram insurgency that sprouted in the northeastern region of Nigeria in 2009 dwarfed all other security challenges that have bedeviled the country since the end of the Nigerian civil war. Despite the appreciable level of progress in combating the Boko Haram sect, as well as official declarations by the government, the sect remains a formidable threat to national development in Nigeria. Other security challenges include the spate of kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, herders /farmers clashes, banalization of oil and gas pipelines, cattle rustling, and banditry, amongst others, which have combined to create a general air of insecurity in the country. Besides scaring and discouraging foreign investors from coming to do business in Nigeria for lack of safety for their lives and capital, the general state of insecurity in the country is also a source of great worry for Nigerians. People are afraid to move freely to engage in meaningful socio-economic activities for fear of being kidnapped, raped or killed. There cannot be development where there is no security of lives, property and investment. This is the story of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria must still move forward on all the globally acknowledged human development indices. Through human and natural resources endowments, Nigeria can become a significant player in the global economy. However, the country is faced with many challenges, which have continued to constrain its development. In the Chapter, we have attempted to interrogate the challenges of development in Nigeria and noted that while the anxieties and agonies over Nigeria's development crises tend to give an impression of dark clouds on the horizon, there are rays of hope in the country's tunnel of development as Nigerians resolve to take their destiny in their own hands through collective actions towards addressing the vital challenges of development in the country. The outlook looks fragile given the country's high population growth rate and declining Gross Development Product (GDP) per capita. There is, therefore, an urgent need to implement high-impact initiatives to grow and develop the country.

Recommendations

The political leadership must restore people's trust and confidence in government, uphold the rule of law, re-establishes security of lives and property and bring back those fast-receding virtues of accountability, integrity and justice in governance. This guarantees peace, security and stability, which are fundamental to the country's development. Furthermore, the Nigerian economy is excessively mono-cultural while the political leaders continue to pay lip service to the issue of diversification. The Chapter strongly recommended the immediate and urgent diversification of the Nigerian economy to achieve growth and development.

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