

BAD LEADERSHIP, CORRUPTION AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY: MAJOR THREATS TO NIGERIAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Nation's development is the aim in view of each country at the dawn of its creation, and Nigerian right from her independence in 1960 has been making attempt as far as its development is concerned, but the woes in political leadership could not allow her. Nigeria is developing very fast in human population as the rate of its population growth is alarming. But on the side of economic development, one sees woes as the satisfaction of Abraham Maslow basic needs which are yet to be fulfilled upon its citizen, as the need for food, water, shelter and even clothing is still enormous, not to mention of other needs like education and provision of basic infrastructures and the likes. The sole reason for this developmental retardation is mainly owing to bad leadership and corruption of both the leaders and the masses. In a bid to answer questions pertaining to Nigerian development and Nigerian political hegemony we employ the method of analysis in this research. We analyze words for better comprehension as for the efforts made in the past for better Nigerian development and the present developmental retardation of hegemonic political party and leadership of nowadays will actually point strategies for true democratic practices for economic improvements. In this research, the researcher finds out that political hegemony in Nigeria is always strong and does last for years, however, can always be broken by revolution and especially by the unity of the citizens who are really anxious for true democracy and better development of their nation. Finally, the researcher recommends practice of true democracy for better dividends and development. Political hegemony by any political party should be halted and Muslim - Muslim ticket saga springing up in Nigerian democratic practice should be stopped in this its nascent stage and call on more Nigerian youths for active participation in politics so as to take over their country.

Key words: Nigeria, Development, Leadership, and Political Hegemony.

Introduction

No philosopher philosophizes in vacuum; rather, using critique of their environmental situations with the synthesis of thoughts of other thinkers, they proffer solution to the challenges of their own moments.

Philosophers in the past have helped in creating solution to salvage the social and political situation of their respective nations. Plato did such in the city of Athens, likewise, Aristotle, John Locke, John Rawls, Karl Marx and others. And Karl Marx once said that philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways by identification of its constitute elements as Ionian or pre-Socratic philosophers did but, Marx continues by saying that “the point is however, to change it”¹. So, it is the task of the philosophers to change or transform the world. We now first identify the problem of Nigerian development and then proffer solution, of course with philosophical insight or circumspection.

Nigeria till date is still referred to as the giant of Africa, of course owing to its enormous human and natural or mineral resources. However, possession of these resources did not benefit her much, owing to non utilization and bad political leadership, corruption and the likes. Her leaders till date do things in the same old and corrupt ways but expect greater dividend or change, which we know is impossible and these made its counterparts like Dubai, China, India, Indonesia and other Asian countries to out shine Nigeria greatly in the area of development. Nowadays, while many countries are seriously building up itself on some sectors of development, Nigerians are still in gross electoral malpractices as it is quite evident in this 2023 presidential election where INEC chairman and his cohorts worked hard in preventing a good and honest candidate to emerge. This of course has led to many elections court litigations to arise, as they suggested to whosoever is aggrieved. Certainly, there are so many ills that pose as threat to nation’s development like insecurity, kidnapping and robbery, but we have chosen the above as mega or major threats to Nigerian development and we now define each terminology and analyze it as well.

Development

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines development as the process of gradually becoming bigger, stronger or more advanced². Development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components.³ Development is the result of society’s capacity to organize resources to meet challenges and opportunities.⁴

According to Pantaleon Iroegbu, development means: *the progressive unfolding of inner potentialities of a given realities. It is to de-envelope, that is, to bring out to light existential, functional and epistemic, what was enveloped, folded or hidden*⁵. Etymologically, development comes from French word *developer*, this means to bring out from envelop, something that was enveloped. It is to “de”, “un” and “velope” to wrap from this, “to develop” literally means to unwrap. Thus, development entails the unwrapping, unfolding, un-veloping, unveiling, outgrowth or growing out of envelopment, hidden or latent. Development is the unwrapping of potentials ⁶. In the same vein, Lebreton holds that development has to do with growth and creativity of all human potentials achieved at the lowest possible cost in human suffering and in sacrificed value.⁷ Human development in contrast to “envelopment” implies

advancement, evolution, expansion, improvement, increase, progress, addition, boost, buildup, enlargement, flowering, maturation, maturity, progression, reinforcement, ripening unfolding, elaborating etc. Development means a progression from a simple or lower to a more advanced, matured or complex form or stage. It is also defined as a gradual advancement or growth through a series of progressive changes. Development is a process not a level. It is a path to achieve certain goals, a striving towards perfection. Development is a movement from bad or good to better, from better to best, from primitive to civilization, from stone age to machine age, from slavery to freedom, feudalism to capitalism, from illiteracy to literacy, from ignorance to wisdom, from abject poverty to relative richness, from colonialism to political independence, from political independence to economic development, from tribalism to nationalism, from nationalism to pan-Africanism.

For Walter Rodney, it is *an overall social process which is dependent upon the outcome of man's effort to deal with his natural environment*⁸. He thus sees development from an economic point of view. Development is a process that is on-going. In other words, it is dynamic rather than being static. Development embraces so many sectors of life, but in this research, we are mostly concerned with the dividends of Nigerian democratic political leadership, which is the pivot or fulcrum of other sectors of development. We see the *raison d'être* of (Nigerian) development.

Betterment of Nigerian man is the aim of Nigerian Development

Truly, development is a many-sided process. It involves material, social, spiritual and moral dimensions. A genuine development in Nigeria is one that is accessed in terms of the welfare of human beings or Nigerian citizens who at the same time serve as agents and shapers of the developmental process. This implies that the human person is indispensable, for he/she is the determinant of development. And the main aim of development is to better the lots of mankind. African countries are under developed and are characterized by poverty. "All over towns and villages are faces of malnourished people, squalid living conditions, diseased with scanty medical facilities, roadside beggars, street children, etc"⁹ The above words of African Synod fathers are applicable to Nigeria and even Nigerians of nowadays.

In 2022, an estimated population of 88.4 million people in Nigeria lived in extreme poverty. The number of men living on less than 1.90 US dollars in a day in the country reached around 44.7 million, while the count was at 43.7 million for women¹⁰. Certainly, one can easily doubt the above statistics or figures, but one fact that will easily convince one that Nigeria (the giant of Africa) is really suffering from abject poverty is when one measures Nigeria with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Here, one will see that Nigeria have not even provided for its citizens or measured up with number one goal, not to mention of other goals. However, this issue of poverty is not peculiar to Nigeria; it cuts across Africa at large. Thus, African synod fathers continue:

One common situation without any doubt is that Africa is full of problems. In all the nations, there is abject, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The result stare us in the face: misery, wars, despair. In the world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected¹¹

By MDGs, we mean sustainable developmental goals which are the blue print to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Sustainable development goals is a global goals or a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all¹² (by 2030). The 17 SDGs were adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015 general assembly, with 169 targets to reach or to be achieved by 2030. The goals and targets are universal, meaning they apply to all countries around the world, not just poor countries. Thus:

The 17 sustainable development goals to transform our world: 1. No poverty; 2. Zero Hunger; 3. Good Health and well being; 4. Quality Education; 5. Gender equality; 6. Clean Water and Sanitation; 7. Affordable and clean energy; 8. Decent work and Economic Growth; 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10. Reduced Inequality; 11. Sustainable city and communities; 12. Responsible consumption and production; 13. Climate action; 14. Life below water; 15. Life on land; 16. Peace and justice, strong institution; 17. Partnership to achieve the goal¹³

Is Nigeria Developed or Underdeveloped?

Nigerian is rich in both human and natural resources. Natural resources available includes: crude oil, natural gas, gold, lead, marble, bauxite, iron ore, sand stone, lignite, clay coal, tin, and columbite and others. The proven Nigeria oil reserves are 23. Billion barrels, the gas reserves are 160 Trillion cubic meters. Over 40 million tones deposits of talc have been identified in five states¹⁴ Nigeria is the largest oil producer in the African region and one of the ten largest crude oil and gas producers in the world.¹⁵ Nigeria has agricultural land area of 70.8 billion hectares and crop production is the largest subsector of agriculture in Nigeria. Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava and yam¹⁶. With the brief exposure of some Nigerian wealth and resources, the question that agitates the mind is "why is Nigeria not yet developed? The expected answer is "Bad leadership and corruption".

Leadership / Bad Leadership

Leadership is an action of leading a group of people or an organization, motivating them to work and focus towards a planned objective. We do talk of autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and paternalistic leadership. Nigeria and many other countries are practicing democratic leadership as democracy has come to stay. Political leadership is a concept central to understanding political processes and outcomes.

Political leadership is seen in discussion of the works of classic authors such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Max Weber and Robert Michels. Aristotle defined democracy as “The rule of the many for the good of the poor” as opposed to oligarchy which is “The rule of the few for the good of the wealthy”¹⁷ In the classical definition of Abraham Lincoln, (on November 19, 1863 at union cemetery in Gettysburg, Philadelphia) democracy is: “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”¹⁸.

Democratic Leadership: Democratic leadership is shared leadership where group members participate as everyone is given opportunity to participate and ideas are exchanged freely and discussion is encouraged, however, under the control and guidance of the leader of the group.

Modern democracy is representative, and is an acceptable fact by any rational human being in our populated and pluralistic world. However, democratic governments assume different forms based on a nation’s political culture. Most countries like the United States, Nigeria, etc, distinguish between the Executive and legislative arms of governments. And both the president and legislators are elected by the populace. Whereas in typical constitutional monarchies like the United Kingdom and Norway, only the legislators are elected, and it is from their ranks that a cabinet and a prime minister are chosen¹⁹

The beauty of democracy stands out when compared with other forms of government such as dictatorship, oligarchy or monarchy. “In these rival forms a single person or a select group rules. With democracy this is not so. The people themselves rule and they rule themselves. The same body is both ruler and ruled”.²⁰

Democracy as a system of government has institutions that promise to guarantee the people’s self rule and attainment of the common good. So, democracy is a form of government that best protects human rights because it is the only one based on recognition of the intrinsic worth and quality of human being. It recognizes the masses for it is the masses that elect their representatives. Democracy is characterized by: Rule by the majority. The rights of all the citizens are equal. There is right to dissent and disobedience. And it provides norm for political participation. Similar to these characteristics are the basis for democracy, which includes: Good government policies that must reflect what people want. Quality information on the government and debates will also be available. It’s government of the majority. Constitution is seen as the basic rule book or supreme rule of the law. Citizens are of equal rights.

Bad Leadership the first threat to Development

Bad leadership has been the bane of Nigerian underdevelopment.. Nigeria is a product of strange amalgamation of about 250 ethnic groups in 1914 by a representative of British imperial majesty, Sir, Lord Lugard. Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. So, the federal republic of Nigeria can be traced to British and Roman colonialism (Roman colonized British) and this link explained the modeling of Nigeria constitution after European concept of law and justice.

Therefore, on paper, Nigerian constitutional law provides the principle that could sustain good governance and ensure a just and egalitarian society because it was an offshoot of English law. For instance the popular law of general will was the basis for 1999 Nigerian constitution. a thorough look at the Nigerian constitution will show that all the major concepts of Rousseau General will is contained in the Nigerian constitution, of which if applied and implemented, the problems and issues of bad leadership will be a thing of the past.

In a clearer elucidation of \Nigerian democracy, one sees that the political class or the managers of democratic governance in Nigeria are ill equipped or ill disposed to render selfless services to the country. They submerged the general will to an individual class will or sectional will. The executives are draconian, corrupt and incompetent; this is evident in eight years Buhari's regime. The legislatures are sycophants and ill equipped to perform the function of check and balances on the executives while the judiciary is afraid to render justice. The concern for positive change and transformation arose out of the way successive government have dethroned general will and substituted it for individual will while piloting the affairs of the country. Nigerian politicians are bereft of the idea of good governance. This stemmed from the age longed practice of god-fatherism which encourages the enthronement of stooges. This scenario enables people with less moral standard to bastardize and loot the treasury for their self-aggrandizement and personal gain. Men of proven integrity, ability, zeal and determination who can better the lot of the masses are discouraged from aspiring to lead by such vices as god-fatherism, rigging of election, kidnapping, elimination of dissenting voices and opposition. This just concluded Nigerian 2023 Presidential election is best fitted example. The aforementioned ills have inflicted Nigeria with apathy and lackadaisical attitudes towards political institution and consequently eroded their confidence on this institution of governance. The reality nowadays is this docility, apathy, and inaction by the Nigerians is certainly creating on an enabling environment or terrain for more bad leaders in Nigerian political arena, which now is a major avenue for them to get rich instantly.

Corruption antithetical to Development

Corruption is the major factor militating African development. Ehuasani writes that:

Nigeria has been stripped naked by corrupt, greedy and callous elites. They have been humiliated, pauperized and reduced to a state of destitute by the combined forces of military dictatorship, political subterfuge, economic profligacy and moral degeneracy.²¹

The Nigerian state is corrupt and has been managed and even presently been manage by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it for the interest or for the development of the citizenry. Africans may have a good plan for development, but as is supervised by corrupt leaders, they can hardly do a thorough job as corruption and development are antithetical. As we proceed with migration and development, we have to see that migration reduces poverty in Africa and contributes to African developmental goals.

Nigerian Political Hegemony: a Threat to Good Leadership

By hegemony, we mean leadership or dominance, dominion, supremacy, ascendancy, predominance, primacy, authority, mastery, control, power, sway, rule, or sovereignty, especially by one state or social group over others. It is a geo-political and cultural pre-dominance of one part of the country over others. A social or cultural predominance by one group within a society or milieu, a group or regime which exerts undue influence within a society.²²

At this point in time, therefore, among the objectives of this paper is to establish the grounds that hegemony stands as a threat to Nigerian development. In a clear elucidation of Nigerian political realism, one sees that Nigerian political leadership is dominated by both political and geo-political and ethnic hegemony and this makes it always impossible to select or vote for the right political candidate for good governance or leadership that will assure enormous development that will move the Nigeria forward.

The political and cultural hegemony that has come to assume structural status in Nigerian's socio-political climate has been the bane to attaining good governance in Nigeria down the years. The "assumption" that power and the position of presidency remains the exclusive reserved of a few has seriously but negatively affected any reasonable and constitutional efforts to enshrine good governance in Nigeria. Beginning from the political upheavals that enabled the commencement of the Nigerian-Biafran war, the military chiefs mostly from northern part of the country is a story too obvious to refute. The power politics has continued to rear its head in other discomfoting dimension even after the ushering in the Obasanjo-led fourth Republic to the present dispensation. As a matter of fact, Erunké argues that,

To carry through a successful project of demonstration and sustainable democratic transition in the interest of good governance ... we need to go beyond the prevalent myths about immediate and remote causes of poor governance to projected solutions to arrest prospective socio-economic and political decays in Nigeria...²³

Hegemony in its various dimensions, has been posing serious threat to enshrining good governance in the country, but is currently creating unrest and distrust among citizens and fear of the continued existence of the Nigerian state. Hegemony whether political or cultural has affected Nigeria in various ways that have made the situation look alarming. Strategically poverty and hunger has been enhanced by the politician's greed and has made the needy and poor forget their rights. Votes are bought by paltry sums and by parcels of food items. Political Apathy is now the trend. The masses believe that their most sincere desires are to attain their basic needs and not to bother themselves with political games. The media has been used to brain wash the masses and make them see the politicians as gods. The power

contention among the major political parties has assumed hegemonic dimension. The leading Party in the country (APC) believes they own the process in INEC, legislative activities and the fate of the country in elections nowadays. Examples can be seen in this concluded 25th February 2023 presidential election, when the INEC Chairman (Prof. Mamood Yakubu) rubbished the reformed electoral process prepared for years and signed into law, not only that the results of the presidential election was not displayed in the INEC sever as promised and written down, but he went back to old and manual collection of results and went ahead and declared Bola Tinubu to be the winner whereas the authentic results from the places with discordant voices have not been clarified or ratified. The worst is the swearing in of the new president (Tinubu) who has not gotten all the requirements needed to be the president (by the Nigerian constitution). Indeed, this is political hegemony to the fullest. And in reaction to this daylight robbery as it was described, the judiciary is experiencing the type of litigation that has never been had before, certainly, through the resilience of Mr Peter Obi, 25th February 2023 presidential aspirant (Labour party) in a bid to reclaim his stolen presidential mandate as his party and many Nigerians hold that he won.

The political hegemony exhibited by All Progressive Congress party since it took over power in 2015 cannot be described. APC hegemony was not only experienced in presidential elections, it's also witnessed in primary and gubernatorial elections in some states like Ogun, Lagos and Imo and Ekiti and Osun states, in 2019, and even in 2023, to mention but a few. The APC election hegemony has reached to such extent that people nowadays doubts if INEC is truly independent as the name suggests. Certainly, one must acknowledge that there was serious improvement in Nigerian electoral process, especially by the introduction of bimodal voters accreditation system (BVAS) machine and again by introduction of electronic transfer of election result to INEC portal server from the polling units, of course this gives no room for doctoring of results by anybody at the coalition centre. The only problem remaining is the problem of man, who can manipulates the machine, like switching off the INEC server, as INEC chairman was accused of in 25th Feb, 2323 presidential election. Indeed, there are no fair playing grounds for healthy politics in Nigeria today. Now, one sees the need for human intellectual and moral development, not only for the electoral umpires, but for the whole Nigerian citizen, and this is the first aspect of development.

Leadership without service and value

In Nigerians 4th republic, democracy, two parties have ruled Nigerian nation. Peoples Democratic Party((PDP) started and ruled for sixteen years and their regime of course has hegemonic elements or character but on a lower pedestal for that was not felt as such owing to good and better economy. But, with the Buhari-APC regime as from 2015-2023, political hegemony came to its highest point. The government was a draconian type, a terrorist government with every type of impunity owing to poor governance and economic recession was in play throughout the eight years of Buhari's regime,

unspeakable electoral mal practice and all kinds of evil reigned, not minding the party's slogan of change. Not minding there was creation of many public and private universities by pronouncements, but Buhari's government have really no interest in (western) education as the regime devalued education in Nigeria. With highest strike periods (by the university lecturers) ever witnessed in the country, yet, the government still suppressed the university professors. Buhari's regime seems to be corrupt more than the military era as corruption was at its zenith, thus the aftermath is little or no development for the country. Finally as APC government has continued in office through hegemony and electoral mal practice, the story has not changed.

In resume, the Nigerian democratic government since 4th republic are self-centered and corrupt, lacked self-discipline both as individuals and as a society, declined in moral or ethical values, thereby getting into moral anarchy, modernization of values, much recognition and esteem to riches and intellects and with conceptual debasement of leadership itself and no respect for life. Since Buhari's APC regime and the presence of Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani herdsmen, Kidnappers, Gunmen, and Armed Bandits, Nigerians witnessed little or no development as destruction of lives and properties, infrastructures, farm lands /products are the order of the day, and as APC government continues to reign, the critics are yearning to see the real change or transformation promised.

The Way Forward:

Development through Intellectual and Moral Education

Education is a veritable means of change or transformation, for human person and his society and environment as well. Education plays an important role as far as holistic development of man is concerned. First, premium is placed on the development of human mind or cultivation of mind and this is seen to be fundamental of all development. And it's from here that development starts and then reaches other sectors. Man is to be advanced holistically or integrally in both social, religion, political and in other perspective. When we talk of advancement or development, we mean advancement of the whole man, whole facets, institution, segments, practices and values (moral and ethical inclusive). All these are under the roles education plays in formation of human person. And when it is done, change or progress has been made.

Justice and Social Justice

In ancient Greek, especially Athens, Plato helped much in building Athenian political leadership by bringing out their concept of justice in his Republic (the ideal state) and ideal leadership, where we learnt that justice is found in the state. Plato says that justice is summed by the organization or system in which each class performs its role according to his ability for the good of the whole without arrogating to oneself the role belonging to others. Plato's conception of justice we knew sprang from his socialism,

where the citizens are divided into three classes : the guardians((rulers) the soldiers or auxiliaries and the artisans(workers) where one notes that his division is not only in line with his Psychology but also follows from Hesiod's theogony of royal lie, where we learnt that God in creating the universe, created the rulers with priceless gold and to the auxiliaries with silver and finally to the artisans with bronze and other metals. In application to Nigerian case, we see not every person has the ability and the intellectual capacity and skills needed to rule Nigeria.

Again, Nigerian society is faced with the problems of injustice and inequality in resources control and distribution. And as social justice is a greater way to much envisaged national unity, Rawls practical idea or theory of distributive justice comes to mind for a greater purpose as the retributive form of justice system can only be effective if and only if punishment for crimes are across the board. No immunity clause of any kind. For example, if a wealthy man commits murder, let the law takes its cause, regardless of his wealth. The punishment should match the crime committed, No bribery along the way as this leads to corruption which is antithetical to nations development.

A society that sincerely wants to thrive, grow and develop must a matter of necessity embrace a just means of distribution and retribution. These are essential in forging national unity, a feeling of solidarity and sense of belonging which engenders growth and development. Without social justice, there is no incentive to produce. Creativity and productivity is highly undermined by unjust treatment of the members of the society. in a nutshell, the application of John Rawls theory of social justice and Plato's theory of justice to the Nigerians society is quite pivotal to allaying fears of domination and subjugation (hegemony) they encourages patriotism and enhances national cohesion. Without these, Nigeria will continue to dwindle and takes steps backward both socially, politically and economically as it is rocked by crimes and secessionist agitations. Furthermore, Nigerian socio political philosophers, politicians, religious leaders, traditional rulers, elites, the Aristocrats and the likes are called to employ philosophers thought, to the present and peculiar socio political outlook or situation in Nigeria, for better attainment of long envisaged national unity, progress, growth and development.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The quest for development in Nigeria needs to be viewed as a duty or perfect obligation by all, both the leaders in various spheres or levels of government, and the citizens as well. The truth is that development requires a new set of human and humane values that will include civility, a more rational and scientific outlook to life and a more enlightened perspective to issues that involve the use of non violence, logical arguments, the role of education and public awareness as standard for creating social opportunities and prospects for human progress within a stable and viable social and political arrangement.

Furthermore, the need to reform electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political development in a country. Electoral fraud is one of the banes of Nigerian development. The role of leadership in development cannot be overemphasized, all efforts towards development must be coordinated and directed by the leader, and therefore, the leaders must be development conscious and have genuine interest for development. The leaders must also have the cooperation of the people, because, it is the people that develop a nation. However, the aforementioned ingredients cannot be possible without a legitimized mandate for the leaders by the people. When a leader assumes office illegally or through electoral fraud, such leader is bound to fail in his effort to generate meaningful development. This is due to the fact that such illegitimate leaders tend to display characters that repress development such as selfishness, corruption, pride, thuggery and inefficiency. And there is apathy and natural detachment to development plans by the people as they did not see such emerging leaders as the product of their consent through voting. This is indeed the problem with Nigerian presidential leadership in recent years thus reaching its Zenith with the (29th May, 2023) present head of state whose mandate is being debated, as he was sworn in amidst of irregularities surrounding his declaration as the winner of 25th February 2023, presidential election.

Based on the foregoing, electoral process should be reformed in such a way that nobody assumes power (political) through crook or fraudulent means. The process should be made open, free, fair and competitive. All legal battle preceding the election must be concluded before any swearing in, this is believed, will create genuine environment conducive for development. Development plan should not be exclusively regarded as economic issue; it should be seen as holistic and encompassing national issue that cuts across economic, social, political and psychological aspects of human endeavors. Finally, in order to achieve greater development in Nigeria, the duty lies on everyone not only the government. Thus, every Nigerian has a role to play in moving the nation forward. No blame game, we must all have a rethink about the future of the nation. If some are building and others are pulling down, the building must definitely collapse. Unity is surely needed.

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