
NIGERIA AND THE DILEMMA OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE.



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Abstract

Nigeria, often referred to as the "giant of Africa," boasts abundant natural resources, material wealth, and human capital. However, despite its immense potential, the country needs help to achieve socio-economic development due to a combination of factors. This paper utilizes descriptive and historical methods, relying on secondary data sources, to explore the governance trajectories that hinder Nigeria's progress. The concept of prebendalism serves as the theoretical framework for this work. The paper contends that ineffective governance and incompetent leadership are at the root of Nigeria's socio-economic struggles. These issues manifest in widespread corruption, lack of transparency, and a dearth of accountability. The country's governing elites view public office as an opportunity for personal enrichment, often at the expense of the greater good. This paper recommends a consensus-oriented approach to governance, where leaders maintain high trust with citizens and fulfil campaign promises. Additionally, political leadership must transcend personal interests and prioritize the nation's socio-economic development.

Keywords: *Development, Economic, Government, Governance, Social*

Introduction

Nigeria's origin can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution in England. The resulting surplus of goods and services that cannot be consumed domestically leads to the annexation and subsequent aggregation of areas into Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's abundant resources, socio-economic development has been hindered since its independence in 1960, leading to a crisis that forces rural-urban migration. Nigeria's development challenges and lack of good governance consistently place it at the bottom rung of the UN Human Development Report scale since the report's launch in 1990. Nigeria's performance could be better in all indices, including the Human Development Index and the Gender-related Development Index. Nigeria is home to about 10 million out-of-school children, and the numbers keep increasing due to crises such as the Boko Haram insurgency, incessant herders' attacks, banditry, and the IPOB crisis in South Eastern Nigeria. Nigeria has overtaken India with the highest number of poor citizens globally. Nigeria's socio-economic and socio-political issues stem from the need for better governance, security, industrial and technological development. The state's role in providing for the people what they cannot provide for themselves individually and collectively is a tall dream in Nigeria. This paper addresses the dilemma of development administration at Nigeria's federal, state, and local government levels.

Statement of Problem

Various problems, including faulty governance structures, ineffective leadership, and security challenges, hinder Nigeria's socio-economic development. The delegation of power to Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government (MDAs) to deliver services on behalf of the government has yet to be effective due to the structural incapacity of the local government system. Additionally, leadership needs to improve, with leaders failing to prioritize the interests of all citizens and failing to take responsibility for their decisions. Nigeria still imports refined petroleum products despite being a significant oil producer, and the country's economic management ideas need to be revised, resulting in inflation and food scarcity. Banditry and herders' attacks on farmlands

have disrupted the food supply chain, leading to food scarcity and inflation. Farmers are constantly threatened, killed, or kidnapped,

preventing them from accessing their farms. The government's failure to provide adequate security has led to non-state actors dictating the pace of governance. As a result, regions have formed their security networks, which could lead to further instability and conflict. Nigeria needs effective governance structures, visionary leadership, and adequate security measures to address these challenges. The government must prioritize the interests of all citizens and take responsibility for its decisions. It must also develop sound economic management ideas to drive sustainable development and ensure food security. Additionally, concerted efforts must be made to address security challenges and restore law and order in the country.

Nevertheless, the paper seeks to achieve three main objectives: It assesses why Nigeria, despite being blessed with abundant natural and human resources, has the world's highest number of poor citizens. The paper argues that the lack of leadership in the country is the most critical factor hindering Nigeria's race for socio-economic development. The paper aims to explain why, despite the Nigerian budget indicating trillions of naira yearly, there is still a need for more progress to be shown.

Conceptual and Analytical Perspective Socio-Economic Development

The concept of development, whether it pertains to animate or inanimate entities, is a gradual improvement, growth, and advancement process. However, the term development needs a more precise definition and varies across disciplines. Meier (1988) notes that it is challenging to advance a single meaning for the term "development" and that multiple interpretations and approaches exist for different strata of society. Therefore, development as a concept facilitates a multi-dimensional process that entails fundamental changes in social structures, population, attitudes, and institutions (Ejere, 2014, p. 70). Alumona (2009) posits that although various definitions of development exist,

they all focus on one central theme, "the promotion of the welfare of the people."

Yusuf (2015) views development as a people-centred social change where the essence of development is the welfare of the people. According to Yusuf, development is not solely measured in terms of growth statistics but rather in human welfare, measured in real terms. Socio-economic development is a product of development and can be defined as the social and economic transformation process within a society. It encompasses changes taking place in the social sphere, mainly of an economic nature. Therefore, socio-economic development comprises processes caused by exogenous and endogenous factors that determine the course and direction of development (Kambhampti, 2004).

Todaro and Smith (2007) conceptualized socio-economic development as a multi-dimensional process that encourages reorganizing and reorientating the entire economic and social system. Socio-economic development involves

- economic empowerment,
- upgrading the living standards of people,
- creating favourable conditions for the growth of people's self-actualization through appropriate social, political, and economic systems and
- Expanding the range of choices available for individuals, including consumer goods and services and other social and political variables.

Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and employment levels, poverty, education, basic infrastructure, healthcare services, personal safety, freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society.

Governance is a multifaceted concept that refers to how power is wielded in managing a country's social and economic resources for development. It encompasses all aspects of overseeing a group's

operations and involves the governing class and the governed. The World Bank and the International Community now use the term "good governance" to emphasize the importance of meaningful, credible, and acceptable performance

The term "governance" is more acceptable than "government" or "leadership" because it does not prejudge the attributes of accurate decision-making. A legitimate, practical, rule-based leadership from which authority or power is derived is the foundation of good governance. In Nigeria, the crisis plaguing socio-economic development has been identified as one of governance, and the identifiable indices of governance include the administration of public affairs based on rules, legitimacy, and laws.

"Good governance" is a normative concept that provides guidance and direction through standards and norms embedded in governance ideas. It is the conscious management of regime structures to enhance the public realm. The indices of good governance are normative, measured in terms of the capacity of the governance process to realize public or societal expectations from the governance process.

To contextualize the concept of good governance, one must consider a nation's specific political society, cultural and historical experiences, and state policy and then analyze it. In Nigeria, section 16(1) of the 1999 constitution mandates the state to harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity, a reliable, versatile, and self-reliant economy, and to control the national economy in a way that maximizes welfare and freedom, as well as promotes social justice and equality of status and opportunity.

Public officials have a responsibility to promote citizens' common welfare and society's development as their primary responsibility. To accomplish this goal, they should utilize state resources and employ state institutions in the most effective way possible.

Moreover, citizens play an active role in the election and governance process to ensure capable leaders are voted into leadership positions, making good governance a collective project.

Theoretical Framework; Prebendalism

To truly grasp the poverty, unemployment, sectionalism, and lack of socio-economic development in Nigeria, one must consider the concept of prebendalism. Richard Joseph popularized this theory in his work 'Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic 1987.' According to Joseph, prebendalism is a political ideology where elected or appointed officials believe they can allocate government revenues to benefit those who supported them, their close relatives, co-religionists, and fellow relatives.

In a prebendal state, offices are seen as prebends that officeholders can take to produce material benefits for themselves, their constituents, and their ethnic groups. This patron-client politics has led to Nigeria being consistently ranked as one of the lowest nations in political transparency. Ayobolo (2013) explains that prebendalism refers to public officials at all levels who assume that their rank in any political office gives them unlimited access to public resources. These officials not only satisfy their own needs but also service the needs of their cronies and political loyalists, resulting in a lack of funds for socio-economic growth, increased poverty, unequal opportunities, and intense competition for public positions.

Major Manifestations of Prebendalism in Nigeria

Prebendalism, an ingrained phenomenon in the Nigerian psyche, is a crucial factor responsible for the socio-economic instability and declining citizen trust in the government. This practice is expected at all levels of governance, and it is characterized by the idea of using one's position to benefit oneself and members of one's ethnic group.

In Nigeria, an office holder who fails to steal from the national treasury or state coffer and does not empower members of his region or tribe is considered a failure and disrespected in society. This practice has led to instability, characterized by centrifugal and centripetal forces pulling the country in opposite directions.

The current state of insecurity in Nigeria, perpetuated by bandits, insurgents, unknown gunmen, and herders against farmers, is a manifestation of prebendalism. The government's response to this security challenge has been lackadaisical and aloof, suggesting self-help as the only way forward.

Another manifestation of prebendalism in Nigeria is the current National Economic Strategy of Debt-Inspired Economic Growth, which has yet to inspire confidence in the populace. The country's economy is currently in debt peonage, with 95% of its revenue servicing debts. Corruption, which is not being tackled as promised, is yet another manifestation of prebendalism in the country. Corruption arrests funds meant for development, resulting in a decline in socio-economic development.

The government's elevation of nepotism to a standard operating procedure is a glaring fact. All crucial institutions are headed by a section of the country, further perpetuating prebendalism. These issues have led to a declining government-citizen trust level and a dwindling socio-economic hope for the people. Prebendalism, an ingrained phenomenon in the Nigerian psyche, is a crucial factor responsible for the socio-economic instability and declining citizen trust in the government. This practice is expected at all levels of governance, and it is characterized by the idea of using one's position to benefit oneself and members of one's ethnic group.

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Governance Framework for Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

Nigeria needs to embrace a specific paradigm to achieve sustainable socio-economic development. This paradigm includes two key elements: consensus orientation and participatory principle.

Consensus orientation is crucial for maintaining high trust between the government and citizens. In order to achieve this, the government must fulfil its promises made during elections. Unfortunately, the current government has failed to deliver on its promises, leading to a loss of trust and confidence among the population. The government must build consensus and maintain trust by implementing the programmes the citizens voted for.

Participatory principle is another critical component of sustainable development. It involves including every social group in the management and governance of the country. However, Nigeria's current governance structure is characterized by prebendalism, which results in extreme alienation of certain social groups. The government must retrace its steps and demonstrate a positive presence among every social group to achieve justice and equity in participation. This will ultimately lead to peace and stability in the country.

The Rule of Law

Men and women came from different cultures to form the state; this made the rule of law a categorical imperative to guarantee the freedom of the individual by setting out permissible behaviour and what is prohibited. A situation in which a set of people (Miyetti Allah) sit on the television to

own up to a crime, yet no state action is taken against them, is appalling. The rule of law is one of the definitional criteria of all civilized states. The principle is the foundation of governance, where no one is subjected to arbitrary rule, everyone is protected against the state's abuse of power, and persons and authorities within the state, public and private, are protected against the abuse of power of the state. At most, those who govern are subjected to the same law for the strong, powerful, the poor and the weak.

It is important to note that 'law is the strongest link between man and freedom'. Man cannot live together without rules which specify what is wrong, what is accepted, and what is prohibited. Through this process, we learn that if one man's right is denied, we are in trouble. This is the challenge we are in presently. The slaughtering of hundreds of people in Benue state, the killing in Nimbo in Enugu, the killing of Christian worshippers in Owo, Ondo state, the killing and kidnapping in Taraba, Zamfara, Katsina states, etc, has seen no one being punished. We are wary that the rule of law is being eroded and development cannot take place in an atmosphere of fear and violent decimation of lives and property.

Efficient provision of timely needs to the people is crucial for the effectiveness of any state. Nigerians' quality of life and orderly living depends on the strength of its institutions and not just the strength of its men. This requires recruiting qualified persons through classical public personnel management practices rather than on personal connections, which is currently the norm in Nigeria's administration at all levels.

The equitable socioeconomic development of all sections of the country can only be propelled by strong institutions. In contrast, strong men would be clouded by prebendal tendencies and channel every development effort to a specific section of the country, as is currently the case in Nigeria. The government at all levels must be accountable, as it is the agent of the people who have entrusted it with their resources to be used on their behalf. The government must show the result of the work it is sent to perform because the report card of governance is accountability. When citizens face increasing negative consequences of the government, such as increasing insecurity, inflation, poor state of roads, rising poverty, price hikes, and worsening hardship, socioeconomic development eludes society. Transparency and responsiveness are also critical functions of the

state. The outcome of the state's functions is positive value addition, and it must be able to rise to the occasion of the emerging socioeconomic needs of the people. The current emerging needs in Nigeria are affordable food prices, security, electricity, lower inflation, qualitative education, employment, and sustainable livelihood, among others.

Corruption is the enemy of development. When funds set aside for development are diverted for other purposes, the proposed benefits are arrested, and the citizens are denied the intended impact. No one should be shielded from punishment for corruption, and for socioeconomic development to take place in Nigeria, corruption must be reduced, if not halted. The federal Auditor General Reports and many others have shown unaccounted funds yet no investigation, which is a sad episode that needs to be addressed.

Conclusion and Policy Prescriptions

Nigeria's socio-economic development dilemma and travails can be traceable to governance failure and leadership incompetence. These crises have often manifested in large-scale corruption, lack of accountability and or absence of transparency. The inability of Africa's most populous nation to achieve its potential in socio-economic development in the 21st century can be linked to the prebendal nature of the state, crisis of corruption and absence of accountability. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the governing elites see government offices as prebends/farms where they would derive personal gains not just for themselves but also for their cronies, associates, families, faith and ethnic groups.

Indeed, most of them find it impossible to reproduce their wealth outside the confines of the state. They are often able to convert state institutions into channels of material accumulation. This is easily facilitated as a result of the fact that the country's institutions are not autonomous. These practices hamper socio-economic development because funds that were supposed to be used for development often end up in private bank accounts, thereby arresting that development effort and the benefits that would have been derived from it. We, therefore, conclude that the

socioeconomic development dilemma of the Nigerian state is being fueled by the nature of the state institutions, governance failure and the character of the nation's leaders, who, in much of the Fourth Republic, have failed to strategically deploy state resources for the socioeconomic betterment of the citizenry.

In order to defeat these challenges and convert the enormous resources which abound in the country into wealth for the benefit of the people, the nation's political leadership must rise above prebendal, pecuniary, personal and primordial interests and put the state in the forefront of socioeconomic development. This can be achieved by developing and encouraging the survival and growth of credible institutions that will transform the nation's socioeconomic landscape.

Also, it would greatly benefit Nigerian leaders to curtail the massive corruption which 'arrests large chunk of resources' meant for socioeconomic development in the country. This is because government corruption obstructs foreign direct investment. This requires attitudinal change and institutional reforms.

Furthermore, the governance framework for socioeconomic development outlined in this paper should be strictly followed and implemented in the government circle to boost good governance and propel the country's socioeconomic development. It is hoped that when this is done, Africa's most resourceful nation will be pulled out of the socioeconomic doldrums.

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