

POLITICS OF THE NIGERIAN STATE; AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS.

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Abstract

Politics ordinarily is the promotion of interest and maintaining the collective will of the people through collective endeavours. So, that being the case, the Nigerian state ought to have witnessed an unprecedented magnitude of development and achievements. The reverse is the case as retrogression and stagnation in Nigeria created become the norms. The objective of this paper is as follows; to know why politics has increasingly caused stagnation in Nigeria, to establish the relationship between politics and development in Nigeria, to identify the nature and activities of politics in Nigeria, identify the consequences of politics on development and political stability of Nigeria. The study adopted the elite theory as theoretical framework and the qualitative research analysis method. This enabled the researcher to cite case studies as well as observations. The principal findings include the following; failure of governance has brought about absence of developments, killings, and use of thugs because of politics. The study concluded that politics in Nigeria has destroyed the Nigeria society and created an unending skirmishes and disorientation among the Nigerian people. Consequently, this disagreement has affected the living standard of the people. It was recommended that government should try and improve the nature of politics in Nigeria. There should be stiff penalty for those breaching the rules of the game.

Keywords: *Assessment, Development, Expectations, Outcome, and Politics,*

Introduction

The Nigerian state right from when she gained her independence from 1960 till date has been characterised by one problem or the other. So much that one begins to wonder what ordinarily should have been responsible for this oscillation. Politically, economically, socially and even culturally the country seems to be wobbling given the inevitable link between the state and politics. The state is a harbinger of protection and good governance through the arm of government. The state through the arm of government guarantees the expectations and desired objectives of the people. Therefore, some level of submission, respect, and obedience to rules and regulations governing the state are expected from the citizens, bearing in mind that the state is a sovereign independent entity that commands such power without

external influence. It behooves therefore to acknowledge that state politics involves the management of state resources, existing institutions, and all that have to do with behavioural conduct of the people. In all of these, the contestation for power serves as a harbinger for this purpose. Unfortunately, however, the exercise of this power on behalf of the state has retrogressively affected development and the attendant expectations of the Nigerian citizens.

The politics of the Nigerian state is the one that is tilted towards representative government with the president occupying the position of headship as head of government and state. In addition, the National Assembly helping to assist the government of the day through bicameralism. That is the house of Senate and House of Representative charged with the law-making business of the country. The fact is that the political arrangement of the country right from independence designed in such a way that there are elected representatives across the country that help to project the aspirations and yearnings of Nigerians. It therefore behooves on these agents of change and transformation to lead and lead well, because this is one of the objectives of politics. As Lock (1689), cited in Anifowose (1999), puts it, "the end of government is the good of the community".

As good as this development may seem, the situation right from independence till date has been one unfortunate incident or the other. Consequently, the anticipated development and achievements which is the priority of every existing government is in peril and jeopardy. Unfortunately, the politics of Nigeria has been the one of selfish interest and desperation for personal survival. Rather than promoting and juxtaposing the desired objectives of governance and politics, it has rather be the one of anguish, anxiety, desperation and worse of it, insecurity of lives and property. People are no longer sure of their daily livelihood, not to talk of guaranteeing their safety. Things are going from bad to worse at a rapid and unpredictable pace. According to Sachs (2016), there is need to outline how, why and where Nigeria's politics and governance began to replicate challenges of security, crime, violence and other contentious issues". Corroborating the above, critics contend that the Nigerian state's limited autonomy and entrenched political interests constrain its ability to function effectively as a

developmental state, thereby limiting prospects for structural transformation and poverty reduction (Basiru & Akinboye, 2018; Ezema & Ogujiuba, 2024). To further exasperate the situation is the alter neglect of some sections of our national polity arising from the fact that those set of persons may not have exercised their franchise during a particular election in favour of a particular candidate. (Efeuhobo, 2022). According to Ekekwe, (2015) "the situation especially in Nigeria speaks to us of disappointed hopes and squandered opportunities and of a state that has been fostering on the edge of a cliff". For Alapiki (2012) " This is the character of the state in Nigeria; it is the character of politics in our society. It is a state where governors act with impunity and remain above the law; a state where Senators and Assembly men do not represent any constituents but themselves; a place where police brutality is common place. A state where thug and gangsters have become attractive way of life".

These are some of the issues the paper intends to interrogate as to why Nigeria politics that should see development as its targets has been rather retrospective, stagnating and puerile.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the paper is to address why politics in Nigeria has not been able to arrest and address the much anticipated problem of development. However, the following are the specific objectives;

1. To know why politics has consistently caused stagnation in Nigeria
 2. To establish relationship between politics and development in Nigeria
 3. To identify the nature and activities of politics amongst members of the state
- 4 Identify the consequences of politics on development and political stability of Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, scholars of different intellectual pundits, opinion leaders amongst many have come up with different premonition and reasons for the poor development of Nigeria arising from politics. Some have mentioned personal/elitist interest has overriding the general interest of the society. Again, some even stressed that social political as well as economic factors have done more havoc in this direction than any other. Whatever reason advanced by these intellectuals as well as opinion leaders, is correct. The fact remains that Nigeria has not in any way attained any meaningful development despite the avalanche of resources, both human and material readily available. The obvious reason is because corruption seems to have taken grip of many leaders that have been privileged to find themselves in key positions of power/governance. Rather than painstakingly promoting and sustaining policies that ordinarily should affect the lives and development of the people, the average elite as well as the political class are strongly enmeshed in siphoning the resources meant for the development of the entire country. According to Ikelegbe, (2021, p.34) " the

few elites who have hijacked and captured state power have associated with deployment for self interest and extensive privatisation of state resources, corruption and money laundering".

In the Third World Country (TWC) for instance, the average leader has seen it as a norm to embezzle public fund while in office. As a matter of fact, it is an error of monumental proportion when he or she is seen leaving the office without embezzlement. In Nigeria for example, we have seen politicians with such criminal intent defecting from one party to the other for fear of being arrested and prosecuted by the Economic and financial crime commission (EFCC). And once this is done "your sins are forgiven". Consequently, development and other possible achievements which are the prime target of every existing government suffers. According to Ake (2001), " the impression was given that Africans, particularly rural people are by virtue of being themselves enemies of progress, including their own progress, for it is their own peculiar characteristics that sustain their underdevelopment"

It is against this background it becomes instructive to note that the paper is set out to interrogate some of these seemingly intractable causes of stagnation regarding the development and proffer solutions borne of altruistic motives on how the politics of the Nigerian state can pursue its expectations of development.

Conceptual Clarification

For purpose of clarity and better understanding of the paper, some under mentioned concepts are critically discussed.

Development; Development encompasses a people who lived in an area for a fairly long period of time with some changes in growth and well being, whose economic, political as well as cultural lives have been transformed within a relative period of time. Development means the transformation of people economically, politically, culturally and socially within a specified period of time (Mgboyenbi & Efeuhobo, 2023). According to Todaro (1977), " development is multidimensional process involving changes in attitude, structures and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. In the words of Rogers (1969), cited in Obi and Jaja ((2006) " development has been defined as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capital income and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organisation.

So, development entails changes in the life of a people within a considerable period of time. Okowa, (1996), viewed the concept of development to mean " hard work, discipline, commitments, skills, and the intelligent utilisation of the faculty of man in a sustained manner over a fairly long period of time. Development implies the socio-economic changes of a people within a period of time. It is a process of economic transformation geared

towards the improvement in the life of a people, (Efeurhobo, 2017).

Outcome: Outcome implies the result of something. It is the consequence of an action. Thus, it is an outcome when you talk about what it has been since Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 from the hands of her colonial masters. What has been the outcome since Nigeria disengaged from colonial rule? It is the effect of this disengagement that is referred to as the outcome.

Expectations: Expectations means the result of something. That is what you stand to get when you are engaged in something or relationship with another person. It is expectation on the part of Nigerians to achieve what she could not achieve during the period of colonial rule, particularly when we were subjected to some terrible situations when working in the same company with some of them. It is therefore expectations that some of those things we were denied are now being realized now that we are sovereign independent state. For instance, taking decisions on our own without any external influence is something that is expected of Nigeria.

Politics; Politics is the art of interacting, influencing and living together with a means to settle dispute should it arise, and to amicably share what belongs to all. According to Appadorai (2007) "Politics then deal with the state or political society, meaning by the term a people organised for law within a definite territory". Supporting the above, Chaturvedi (2006) opined that defining "politics" has been the object of much controversy. We define it here as the process by which groups of people of whatever kind or size make collective decisions".

Theoretical Framework

Although, many theories are suitable for this topic, but for the purpose of clarity and precision of academic theory, the elite theory has been singled out for this paper. This theory is centred on a group, usually few who takes governmental decision on behalf of the generality of the people. According to Anifowose *et al* (1999), "... Elites' theory points to the concentration of political powers in the hands of a minority which according to Mosca (1896) cited in Harm (1985) performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantage that power brings.". The basic tenet of the principle of elite is the decision taken by the privilege few on behalf of the state. Their decisions are binding to the extent that whatever that is decided upon has a total effect on the people generally.

The hallmark of distinction between them and others in the community is their class status and leadership resources rather than their attitudinal differences (Egonmwani, 2000). Supporting the above, Oronsaye (1996) has this to say "the population of the elite theory is that it is not the masses through their demands and support who determine or decide public policies but the governing elite reflecting their value and interests" So, this explain the narrow-mindedness or the limited interest of the public since a privilege few has been considered to speak or make a decision on behalf of the public.

The implication of this type of theory is that the interest of the selected few is majorly represented which is not fair at all. Majority of the people are cut off from the scheme of things by the few representatives. Although, some educated ones among them are rational in their views when it comes to issue that affects the public. Otherwise, the sad reality is that the politics of the Nigerian state is orchestrated by the struggle for power, elite dominance and strong dependence on federal might (resources, etc). Consequently, an expectation of development which requires responsible leadership, institutional reforms, and commitments to good governance among others is being undermined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Politics of the Nigerian State

The politics of the Nigerian state has always been tilted towards the post colonial political heritage. In other words, it has always been done along the tutelage of colonial rule. Here, leadership is an inherited one from the colonial masters, not indigenous. The whole essence of it was on the constitutional development, parliamentary as well as presidential system of government, which finally culminated in a democratic system of government, with an electoral system that is skewed to favour the few that has what it takes to control the majority. The fact is that there is a complete deviation from an indigenous political administration that the people of Nigeria were known for. The nature of governance being practiced now is such that the desire of the generality of the Nigerian people is often time being disregarded as a result of an electoral process that is being tilted to favour a group. Many watched from distance in aware and total disappointment over their votes and mandate that have been blatantly taken from them without apology by those the German philosopher Karl Marx will call the bourgeoisie that constitute the executive committee of the state (Marx, 1848).

More often than not, the variables of constitutional development, electoral processes, ethnicity, corruption, religious intolerance among many have fuelled the embers of disunity, disconnection, disorientation and disillusionment among the generality of the Nigeria masses. Many do not have public trust and confidence on the politics of the state because of its setback and retrogression. According to Oyeneye (ed), (2002)" the traditional political organisation of the people provided neither centralised nor semi centralised government for there were many institutions sharing political authority sometimes with non having absolute power over members of the community". But, given the present-day Nigeria politics, the people are being denied their freedom despite a system of government (democracy) that ordinarily should recognise this freedom.

An electoral system that should have enhanced the quality and style of voting, governance etc has been hijacked by desperate politicians who have since independence manipulated the system to suit personal aggrandizement. Consequently, this has led to the underdevelopment of the Nigerian state as elections most times were run along ethnic and religious coloration. In the words of Nna and

Pabon (2019) "most scholars attribute the underdevelopment of Nigeria in general and specifically to the lack of democratic consolidation to ethnicity". Corroborating the above, Kalejaiye and Aliyu (2013) observed that ethnic politics the cause of social conflicts in Nigeria. For Azeez (2014), sees ethnicity as the scourge which has hindered Nigeria from achieving democracy and political party development. This opinion was also noted by (Akundayo, 2013; Ade-Ibijiola, 2014; Ayatse & Akuva 2013).

So, ethnicity to a very large extent has consistently hindered Nigeria politics. And by implication, terribly caused havoc and retrogressive underpinning in many rural and urban sectors of Nigeria. If the interest of the people must be sustained politically and economically, a leadership system that is borne out of good electoral system should be put in place. Without any modicum of biased or prejudice, the much anticipated 2027 elections is already generating some tension and desperation with many politicians cross carpeting without very strong ideology but with the intent to hold on to power at the expense of the people who stand by and watch. For how long will feverish birds tremble in silence before their keepers? To say the least, the situation is awry and despicable.

The Politics of Nigeria State and their Expectations of Development

The politics of the Nigeria state right from when she gained her independence on 1st October, 1960 has been the one of power struggle, elite dominance and over dependence on federal might by the state and local governments for economic and political survival. The situation is such that those they are representing are left to suffer the consequences of bad governance. Ostensibly, one of the expectations of politics of the Nigerian state is good governance. Here, accountability, transparency as well as ethical leadership amongst many are expected of the Nigeria politics right from independence. In most developed countries of the world, it is these variables mentioned above that define their stability and good governance. Unfortunately, in Third World Countries (TWC), particularly in Africa (Nigeria, precisely), these attributes exist in name. Governments over the years do not give account of their stewardship, transparency, etc. All they do is to steal, accumulate public wealth for future use. According to Obulor and Amadi (2020) "the promise of good life made to the people before and during independence has not been realized by successive government in Nigeria.

Another expectation of politics of the Nigeria state is developmental governance. Here again, the Nigeria people are expected to see improvement on infrastructural development such as roads, hospitals, schools, water supply and above all, rural electrification. All these that are mentioned have not been adequately provided for since independence. Not even one has assumed better and sustainable attention from the government. All has been oscillating like a pendulum. In the words of Ekekwé, (2015), "in the mean time, the very thing that could help to galvanize the people for their development such as

education, agriculture for food sufficiency and food security as well as health services, are seriously undermined".

Economic development is another expectation of politics of the Nigeria state. Job creation, support for agriculture and establishment for small medium enterprises were necessary expectations of members of the public in order to satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the people. Quite regrettably, this has consistently been a failure on the part of the government. Citizens are even left to fend for themselves with personal effort to realize their economic potentials. Many of the people in an attempt to survive alone borrow money from banks and other loan schemes to establish small medium enterprises. Some use such loan to go into agriculture and other job creation. Ostensibly, this is supposed to be the responsibility of government that is purposeful.

Again, the judicial system is another fundamental of the politics of the Nigeria state. We were told from the cradle that the judiciary is the last hope of the common man. Consequently, the average Nigeria hope in this direction has been dashed. More often than not, the desire to pursue litigation in courts leaves much to be desired. This arises from the fact that the judiciary has been compromised. An action that has made many that are frustrated by the attitude of the court personnel to resort to jungle justice. Wanton destruction of lives and property has become the norm and practice among some members of the society who could not get justice from existing courts charged with the responsibility to do so.

The Effects of the Politics of the Nigeria State and their Expectations on Development

There are a lot of effects arising from the politics of the Nigerian state as regard its expectations concerning development. Below are some of them;

Policy inconsistency is one terrible effect of the politics of the Nigerian state. More often than not, because the man who has succeeded his predecessor is not in terms with him may disregard some of his beautiful and wonderful policies and programs that were in place before leaving office. This is not fair. It stagnates development and hinders a lot of socio-economic actions geared towards promoting and sustaining the hopes and aspirations of the people. In developed countries, policy consistency irrespective of party affiliation keeps the economy going.

Over centralisation of power at the federal level. This is one of the effects of the politics of the Nigeria state and its expectations as far as development is concerned. Many Nigerians from the inception of independence till date have lost hope regarding development. Obviously because the concept of federalism which ordinarily should enable the other tiers of government (state as well as local government) to have some levels of autonomy and resources to carry out development at their various levels of administration have repeatedly been denied the opportunity because of the high level of concentration of political power at the centre. Consequently, the two tiers of government look unto the centre before certain governmental responsibilities are carried out. This stifles

policies and programme that should enhance and sustain development at these levels.

Corruption and mismanagement are another adverse effect of politics of the Nigerian state as it affects development. The degree of corruption and mismanagement of our resources by the ruling elites as well as the political office holders leaves much to be desired. The Nigeria political independence since inception has been characterised by the mismanagement of resources and sharp corrupt practices by those entrusted with leadership responsibility and direction of the nation. It has always been the politics of self. Consequently, the nation is retrogressed and stagnated among enormous economic resources. This explains why the country has been embroiled with violent behaviour of different kinds across the country. People are disillusioned over failed promises by political leaders. This was what informed Gurr (1970) cited in Nwaoargu (2014, p.15) ‘‘.....individuals would stop at nothing in challenging anything that impedes the realisation of their expectations. Gurr (1970), Beikowitz (1962) largely agree on the fact that the main source of violent actions(rumbling) is basically frustration in a bottled-up anger and dissatisfaction with the authority- state or corporate’’.

Insecurity of lives and property. People lives have been cut short because of the desperation for power. The average politician will stop at nothing to pursue what would give him satisfaction as far as politics is concern. He does not care what happens to anybody in course of this reckless and bizarre action of his. On daily basis we all see the manifestations of their actions and in actions on television channels. The implication of the above is the terrible implications it has on our political culture. More regrettably is the fact that our children both in and outside the university are watching with dismay this unacceptable behaviour without the least power to challenge it. Rather to accept it as part of the enduring legacy and political culture.

Pictorial representation of poor politics of the Nigeria state

Fig 1



Source:
<https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/52443/nigerias-fight-to-endbadgovernance>

Fig 2



Source: <https://humanglemedia.com/why-theres-no-federal-character-in-nigerias-poverty-distribution/>



Fig 3

Source: <https://placng.org/Legist/poverty-inflation-deepen-as-nbs-issues-troubling-statistics-on-the-economy/>

Fig 4



Source: <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/good-governance-critical-to-curbing-poverty-in-nigeria/>

Fig 5



Source: <https://guardian.ng/news/133-million-nigerians-remain-poor-despite-sharing-700m-abacha-loot/>

Discussions of Findings

The above pictures are a total reflection of the poor politics of the Nigerian state. Beginning with figure one, it is a reflection of workers who are protesting about inadequacy of food arising from leadership problem where a fracture of a larger sum is given to members of the society by politicians as well as leaders. Consequently, protest such as seen in figure one above becomes the outcome. The end SARS (special anti robbery squad) protest by Nigerians about two years ago is a clear manifestation of what figure one (1) represents.

Again, figure two reveal a hopeless situation of a lad facing a hapless and hopeless situation in the dust bin. Naturally, dustbins are meant for where mad people and animals scavenge. Certainly, such dirty and unkempt places are not meant for normal people like the lad above. When people now resort to the dustbin as a means of livelihood, then the situation has gone out of hand. Therefore, the leaders must and should be held accountable and responsible. Funny enough, this is almost the situation everywhere

Again, figure three (3) as captured by the national bureau of statistics (NBS) on the Nigerian economy showing a woman with heavy loads on her head, trekking distance in search of means of livelihood. This is happening because the leaders (Elite as well as politicians) have consistently failed in their responsibility as leaders).

In a similar development, figure four (4) reveals a more unpleasant and bizarre situation where children who ordinarily should be in school were seen scavenging in the dustbin for economic survival. Such desperation to survive can only be as a result of bad and puerile leadership. Some of them even get injured in the process. The resultant effect again is criminality and gangsters. A good government must try as much as possible to provide the physiological needs of the citizens to prevent them from such risky and unprofitable ventures.

Conclusion

In the light of the above discussions, the politics of the Nigerian state has over the years mesmerised and undermined the yearnings and aspirations of the people. In terms of development in different spheres of life, the peoples hope has been dashed. So much that when another

successful government wants to come into power, the Nigerian people would resort to serious fasting and prayers to ensure that a better and God-fearing leader emerges. But, more often than not, right from independence till date, the Nigerian state has not been favoured by good and purposeful leadership. It has been from one bad leadership to the other. Particularly when one take into cognizance the godfather's factor that tend to annihilate the political process right from when the godson will assume power till the period of exit. The implication is that expectations of development is stunted and retrogressed as the godfather will not give the godson a breathing space to govern. According to Oyovbaire (1992)" leadership that is poor, uninspiring, corrupt, oppressive and sectional can only generate resentment, dissension and revolt". Little wonder why the whole nation is engulfed with one crisis or the other. Corroborating the above, Onwuka (2015) has this to say "ameliorating iniquities in Africa is not helped by fragile governance and credibility crisis in leadership, which culminate to civil disturbances and ethnic clashes" So, to be able to live up to the expectations of development, the politics of the state needs to be tilted towards the principle of egalitarianism. A policy that is people oriented, geared towards promoting and sustaining good and purposeful leadership. When this is done to promote to promote economic well being of the people, social disposition of Nigerians, self reliance economy that is devoid of discontent and disillusionment, then the politics of the Nigerian state would have been seen to have attained or achieve some levels of developmental expectations.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing discussions and analysis, the following recommendations will help to improve the politics of the Nigerian state, particularly, as it regards development.

1. People oriented program and policies should be sustained. In order words, policies and programs that attract the support of the people should be encouraged.
2. Grassroot development should be encouraged through policies and laws that should be in tandem with modern technology.
3. Again, encouragement towards the production of produce that will encourage exports. In order words, our leaders should play down on local production.
4. Play down on the politics of godfather. The government should as a matter of necessity put an end to this constitutionally
5. Nigerians should set goals and targets towards a broad reform program, that is based on best practice, which by implication can guarantee more flexibility for existing enterprises and security.
6. Encourage citizenship participation. Citizens must feel free to participate in the politics of the state. Not intimidating them and giving them cause to stay away from the electoral poll. This can lead to disenfranchisement.

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