

NIGERIA'S BACKWARDNESS: WHICH IS TO BE BLAMED, THE ECONOMY OR THE POLITY?

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Abstract

The paradox of Nigeria's situation – a country rich in human and natural resources yet in poverty and generally underdeveloped – has left much to marvel. The situation seems to be getting worse even as more efforts are said to be channeled towards ameliorating it. Out of deep concern for the country and in attempt to proffering solutions to the problem, many arguments have ensued as to where actually the cause of the problem lies. Is it the state of the economy or the polity of the country that should be blamed? Many have wondered. It is in response to this wrangling debate that this work is done to elucidate what problems of a society are economic and those which are political and beyond this, identify which of these are responsible for Nigeria's predicament. A careful and in-depth review of theory was then done and juxtaposed with practical situation. This led to the conclusion of the paper that, Nigeria's conundrum is more of political origin than economic. Identified, among others, as the root cause of the problem is the misused and excessive level of government intervention in the economy. The work thus suggests minimal government intervention and the restructuring of the political process of the state as the way out.

Keywords: Economy, Polity, Politics, Nigeria, Backwardness

1. Introduction

One hardly say when and who started the description that eulogies Nigeria as “a country blessed with abundant human and natural resources”, but it is still been heard. Added to this, is that which placed Nigeria as the “Giant of Africa”. These are descriptions which, rather than being inspiring, now only remain as mere hopeful saying that can be liken to someone on a dying bed assuring himself/herself that ‘it is well’. Undisputedly, however, is that, Nigeria as a State is endowed richly with necessary natural and human resources to provide for the wellbeing of every Nigerian. If these resources are properly exploited, effectively distributed and utilized to the benefit of every Nigerian, Nigeria would be among the most developed States of the world. However, the reverse is still the case. With its peak in the colonial era, the country's development progress has been on a constant decline. The country is progressing negatively.

Though there have been much efforts to revive the country and restore it to a path of development, nothing meaningful can be said to have been achieved. Reforms upon reforms have taken place in almost all sectors of the country but with minimal or yet-to-come benefits.

To make things worse is that, the complexity of the situation has made the identification of its cause(s) problematic. As such, in the quest to identifying and proffering solutions to this worrisome situation of Nigeria, there has been a lot of blame casting. While some see the economy as the root cause of our backwardness and from which a solution must emerge, others hold the polity of the country liable for whatever Nigeria's problem is. While most of those who are engaged in this debate are largely uninformed about the so identified causative agents – economy and polity – even those who are or should

be, sometimes misconceive and misuse these with regard to Nigeria's backwardness, thereby leading to misdirection of efforts.

It is, thus, to create enlightenment about what these (economy and polity) are and the problems associated with each and by so doing redirect the thoughts of all in this debate or who are saddled with that direct responsibility of proffering solutions to Nigeria's problem that this work became necessary. It is hoped that this paper would have equipped all stakeholders with the basic knowledge to properly identify the country's problems, which is the first and necessary step towards moving our country forward (since a problem identified, they say, is a problem half solved). The work is, therefore, organized under the following sections: the introduction; clarification of concept; politicizing of the economy; economic and non-economic problems; a brief overview of Nigeria's backwardness; our backwardness – economic or political; the way forward; and conclusion.

2. Clarification of Thematic Concepts

The problem addressed starts with misconception, misinterpretation and misapplication of some basic terms or concepts. As such, the basic duty was to start with the clarification of these concepts both from the technical and operational stand points.

Economy

An **economy**, in the words of Lipsey (1983), as contained in Anyanwu, Oyefusi, Oaikhenan and Dimowo (1997), is "any specified collection of interrelated set of marketed and non-marketed productive activities." An economy thus consists of the economic systems, the resources – labour, capital, and land resources – and economic activities of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of goods and services of a country. It encompasses the large set of inter-related economic activities of production and consumption which aid in determining how scarce resources of the state are allocated.

Constitutionally, in Nigeria, economic activities include activities directly concerned with the production, distribution and exchange of wealth or of goods and services (Section 16(4)(b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). In this light, Yesufu (1996) sees economy of a nation as the conglomerate of different economic activities, within an identified geographical area; the characteristic of which is that, it is a supreme political entity under an overall national Government, and independent of all similar political entities. By this, he said, the Nigerian economy means the intricate web of all the economic activities that takes place within the nation known as Nigeria. He stated further that, the essence of a national economy is that the sovereign Government assumes the role of a holding company in respect of all the units of economic activity within the state. Economy in this wise is concern with the totality of the national wealth created through the various economic activities and how the wealth is distributed between social and economic classes (Yesufu, 1996).

From the forgoing, what makes an economy is then the aggregation of individual economic activities which stem out of their individuals' interests but end-up as social or collective benefits. With such activities, the economy is broadly divided into the producing unit (i.e., the supply side, made up of the business sector) and the consuming unit (the demand side, made up of the household) and it is regulated through the forces of demand and supply. However, sum it up, the economy is no different entity but an important larger component of the state which the state must control for its existence. As an important part (the base or sub-structure) of the state, the economy is said to perform certain vital functions. According to Joshi (1979), economists have identified five closely related functions performed by all economies, be they free-enterprise economies, or completely planned command economies or mixed economies. They must determine: (1) the amount and quality of goods and services to be produced; (2) the organization of production; (3) the distribution of the output among participants; (4) rationing of goods over time; and (5) provision for the maintenance and growth of the system. These are thus the

functions one should expect of the Nigerian economy, and along which the performance of the economy can be assessed.

A given economy of a state, however, is the result of a process that involves its technological evolution, history, political and social organization, legal, as well as its geography, natural resource endowment, and ecology, as main factors. These factors give context, content, and set the conditions and parameters in which an economy functions (Jato, 2012).

Polity

The term **Polity** (according to the Free Dictionary, 2012) involves the form of government of a nation, state, church, or organization. That is an organized society, such as a nation, with a specific form of government. It also means government or administrative regulation of a state or other organized community or body. Polity, thus, has to do with the form or process of governance of a society called the “political entity.” It is, however, formed and regulated by the politics of the society.

Politics, as the fulcrum on which revolves polity, on the other hand deals much with the interrelations between individuals in a society. It is variously defined to connote acts of an individual or group of individuals leading to dominance of others. A common definition given by Lasswell sees politics as involving “the decision of who gets what, when and how” (Vande, 2012). By this definition he had, though recognized the fundamental economic problem of scarcity of resources amidst man’s survival struggle, shown clearly that politics does not concern itself with how the goods of the state are created but how the created goods are shared by whatever means. Thereby pointing out that, man – as a political animal – scrambles to get the goods produced out of scarce resources with all it takes and at the same time try to decide for others what share they get and when they will get it. With the problem of scarcity getting worse even as man is exploring and exploiting more deep into nature, and the unlimited insatiable wants of human ever increasing and ultimately turning into greed, the political nature of man is equally intensifying.

To all these, politics, especially as played by the less developed countries (LDCs) of Africa, cannot but be best described as a “dirty game.” Where such dirty game is played the resultant effect is backwardness.

3. Politicization of the Economy

The economies of all societies have been evolving over time. From the traditional form through the classical (the free market, capitalist or the Laissez-faire) economy to the Marxist socialist economy and to the now mixed economy, the working of the economy has been tinkered with to take different forms. Up to the classical era, the independence of man as an economic agent was still recognized and adored, with the role of the state in economic activities greatly prohibited. In such an economy, the individual’s right to choice making, guided by full information and the price mechanism, was highly revered. People’s feelings were expressed through their demand and supply behaviours – what is known as the ‘invisible hand’. With this invisible hand in operation, the economy was regulated and hence the welfare of the whole society.

However, the workings of such economy were criticized by the socialists and other schools of thought. This led to the practice of socialism by some states like Russia, China and Cuba, while the Laissez-faire economy was still been practiced by states like United States of America (USA). It was the little malfunctioning of the free market economy which led to the Great Depression of 1929-1939 that gave room for Keynes to advocate for government intervention. Little did he know the political mind-set of the ‘governors’, but thought of them as angels that will always act to the best interest of the individuals

and the society at large. By this, the government was to actively participate not only in inducing effective demand and invariably production but also in controlling the pace and direction of the economy. Since the advent of this Keynesian government-led (or public sector) economy, various form of government interventions have been practiced by different states. No matter the level of intervention, the adoption of Keynes type of economy has introduced into the working of the economy the political features of man – where the economic activities of a state are determined via the decisions of the political actors.

World over, the level of government intervention has been equally evolving, and has been in phases which are characterized by the prevailing situations. Adelman (1999) identified two phases as: 1) The Government as Prime Mover Phase. In this first phase, which lasted from 1940 to 1979, government was assigned a primary, entrepreneurial role. 2) The Government as a Problem Phase. This second phase, which lasted from 1979 to about 1996, was a continuation of the neoclassical "getting prices right" line of thought that saw government intervention as constituting economic problem.

Nigeria also went through such phases right from her pre-independence period. The economic activities of the country at the pre-colonial era were individually determined with less or no government intervention. They then became State dominate during the colonial era (which truncated our level and pace of development only to replace it with the imported western style and system of development that was antithetical to our cultures and traditions and way of doing things). The colonial government established some public enterprises to provide essential services like railways, roads bridges, electricity, ports and harbors waterworks, and telecommunication. Social services like education and health were substantially left in the hands of the Christian Mission. The government equally took charge of some of the productive sectors of the economy. However, the post independent era marked a watershed in the growth and spread of public corporations. Between 1960s and early 1970s (the period after World War II), the country, like most countries of the World, particularly the developing ones, is said to have undertook massive government intervention in the economy by establishing Public Enterprises (PEs), State-Owned Companies (SOCs), etc. Public enterprises were seen as veritable tools for achieving national social-economic development. At this period, the state was the major actor in the economy, determining economic activities of production, distribution and consumption.

Ake (1981), as contained in Maduphilo (2001), however, offered four reasons for this growth of public enterprises in the immediate post colonial period. The first reason has to do with the desire of the national petit-bourgeoisie which inherited political power from the colonial masters to create an economic base for its political power. Being essentially capitalists without capital, the petit- bourgeoisie used the instrumentality of the state to empower themselves economically, public corporation served as a conduit through which public funds were channeled to private pockets. The second reason has to do with the struggle by Nigerians for the control of the economy as well as the struggle for economic independence. Nigerian politicians felt that they had to build up enterprises that can compete with the foreign ones. Thirdly, some public enterprises were established as a means of promoting exports and to realize import substitution. Finally, some of the state enterprises came into being as a result of nationalizations of foreign owned private enterprises.

By the mid 1980s, private sector participation was again given the turn to be the lead sector of the Nigerian economy. This was formerly done by the introduction of the Privatization and Commercialization Decree of 1988 as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) launched by the Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida administration (1985-93). This, in line with the main objectives of SAP, was to pursue deregulation and the divestment of government in economic activities. This then instituted in Nigeria a free market economy with reduced government control and intervention. Privatization then came to replace the country's overarching public sector and was largely aimed among other things at enhancing the efficiency of resource allocation and utilization in the economy. Though, currently, the private sector seems the leading sector in the economy, due to the fact that it had been weakened and is

still undergoing restructuring, the public sector still dominates, determining the pace of economic activities. Section 16(1) of the 1999 federal constitution of Nigeria reflects this stating that:

The State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this Constitution-

(a) harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, a dynamic and self-reliant economy every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity;

(b) without prejudice to its right to operate or participate in areas of the economy, other than major sectors of the economy, manage and operate the sectors of the economy;

(c) without prejudice to the right of any person to participate in areas of the economy within the major sectors of the economy, protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy.

The problem of continued government intervention and public sector dominance of the economy may not be peculiar to Nigeria. This is due to the growing complexity of polity and the economy of nation-states which have made it difficult to disaggregate the two, because they are ever getting intrinsically and extrinsically interwoven and mutually interactive. This increasing close interrelationship between these has been such that in any given state, the collapse of one tends to portend the destruction of the other as it was the case with the then Soviet Union. As such, Arthur Lewis (1955) (cited in Yesufu, 1996) concludes that “sensible people do not get involved in arguments about whether economic progress is due to government activity or the individual initiative; they know that it is due to both, and they concern themselves only with asking what is the proper contribution of each.” He then outlines the following nine categories of functions, worldwide, that governments perform which are relevant to economic growth:

1. Maintaining public services;
2. Influencing attitude;
3. Shaping economic institutions;
4. Influencing the use of resources;
5. Influencing the distribution of income;
6. Controlling the quantity of money;
7. Controlling fluctuations;
8. Ensuring full employment; and
9. Influencing the level of investment.

The sphere of state actions in the economy is, therefore, very vast and all pervading. This has made it hard to tell which problem of the state emanates from the working of the economy and which is as a result of political miscalculations.

4. Economic and Non-Economic problem

An Economic Problem

The much of the problem lies with determining what really an economic problem is. When we talk of *economic problem(s)* what comes to our mind? Does it mean the problems an economy (as defined above) faces as hindrance to its functioning? Or those problems to a society caused by the working of the economy? These have been a lot confusing to many thereby causing the contradiction.

Traditionally, the basic economic problem of a society is that of scarcity of the goods of life, by which decision-making about their allocation, management, and utilization becomes essential. By this, an economic individual of the above qualities seeks to make decision about what, how and for whom to produce and consume. Thus, it is the problem associated with the allocation, management and utilization of these scarce resources reflected in the various decisions which determine the economic activities of an economy that makes economic problem of a country. This problem then reflects in the imbalances between the supply and the demand sides of the economy. Emanating from this are problems like inflation and unemployment (i.e., of all resources).

In a pure economy, such economic problem can be better resolved by the economic individuals, where the “invisible hand” of demand and supply working through the price (market) mechanism regulates their economic activities. And by this, it is believed the economy though working independently will always be in a state of equilibrium. According to Ogiji (2004):

Because market forces, according to the proponents of the market mechanism, operate freely, i.e., they are not influenced by some other forces or agencies, the outcomes of their interactions are said to be the best for the society: the resulting pattern of demand reflects the preference of consumers, the productive activities that are undertaken reflect the wishes and desires of the people and the prices that consumers pay for goods and services they wish to consume reflect the true cost to the society of the factors that have been employed in the production of the relevant goods and services. In this way, the market mechanism is said to operate impersonally to meet the need of the society.

Afolabi (1998) adds that:

The price system operates in an impersonal manner and therefore eliminates corruption, nepotism and favouritism that are always common in planned economies. The individual gets his reward in the society not because of his personality, sex, tribe, social or religious connection but solely on the basis of the economic resources he owns, i.e., his productivity in the economy.

These self-regulating forces are seen even to be able to correct other economic imbalances like unemployment, inflation, etc, and bring about efficiency in resource allocation and usage and general economic progress.

Poverty, which has been erroneously ascribed as an economic problem, is not wholly an economic problem but of a multivariate origin. It is based on these multi-causative factors that Meghani (2003) maintained that, deciding what poverty is unsurprisingly opens up a complicated debate. He asserts further that, normative values inevitably distort the process that decides what economic and social factors should describe the “poor.” Human deprivation can take myriad forms, including, but not limited to, lack of income, shelter, clothing, and food. To some, being free from poverty also includes possessing a set of rights such as the freedom of religion, movement, and speech (Meghani, 2003).

It then means that, most of the other problems (not belonging to this category) usually perceived and taken as economic problems are likely those affecting the performance of the economy rather than those emanating from the working of the economy. They are likely problems to the economy from other aspect of the society arisen out of the non-economic behaviour – basically political – of man, and not problems from the economy to the society as a result of man’s economic behaviour.

Non-Economic/Political Problems

Far from the economic problem(s) of the society lie the non-economic problems, which are most time erroneously woven into economic problems to the society rather than from other constituents of the society. These are problems of non-quantitative variables in development, which are most times neglected. Todaro (1977) noting the existence and importance of these stated that, “just as economists sometimes make the mistake of confusing their ‘science’ with universal practices, so they do also often mistakenly dismiss these non-economic variables as non-quantifiable and, therefore of dubious importance.”

Problems like poor leadership, corruption, non-provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure, etc, are non-economical but are political accompanies of government regulated economy. These are not regulated by the forces of demand and supply, but by government authorities external to the decisions of the economic agents – consumers and the producers. But they, as equally or more than the economic problems, determine the pace of development of a state.

5. A Brief Overview of Nigeria’s Backwardness

Our backwardness and the pains associated with it need no much effort to elaborate. The story of this can only but be told to a foreigner on first visit to the country who has probably not heard of it before. It is a common story told by all no matter the level education, location, status, age, etc., and in all forms – scholarly write-ups, public lectures, music, poems, sermons, etc. No matter who tells this story or how it is told, it is hard to believe that, hopes upon hopes, Nigerians, since independence, have been waiting for dividends from their naturally endowed country to the point that these hopes seemed dashed to the extent that most people are fast regretting been nationals of this ‘great country.’ According to Ajayi (2003), “the beautiful dream that many had and pursued in the interest of their country had turned into a nightmare. Nigeria, a country with rich human and natural resources, is still poor and termed underdeveloped.” He notes further that:

At independence, the economic and political prospects of Nigeria were very bright; it was thus a very welcome member of the comity of nations. The country started modestly, parading mainly agricultural products on which its reputation and revenue depended. Still in the 1960s, a deluge of Nigerians went abroad on one scholarship or the other with the hop of coming home to build a new nation. At that time, people went to bed literally and dreamt big dreams of a better tomorrow for themselves and their nation. This contrast sharply with the reality of today. (Ajayi, 2003).

Obasanjo, the then President, in a press report (the Guardian, 2003 in Ajayi, 2003) stated that: “the problem with Nigeria is that since independence, when we move a step forward, moved sideways in another step, we then move backward three steps, as such we move further backward than we move forward.” In the same way, Akinkugbe (2003) as cited in Ajayi (2003), asserts that, “the four decades of Nigeria’s political independence have witnessed a steady decline in values, quality of governance, commitment and the integrity of our environment. Arguing further that our society has become negatively permissive and much passes for norm today that would have caused a rising of eyebrows in yonder years.”

Nigeria is ranked 14th and in the Alert category of the Failed States Index¹ of the United States think-tank Fund for Peace (Foreign policy, 2012). There is poor business environment. According to the Doing Business Index, Nigeria is ranked, on aggregate, 125 out of the 183 economies assessed (Oteh, 2009). There is high poverty level, low human development index (HDI), high unemployment,

¹ Common indicators of a failed state include a state whose central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory; non-provision of public services; widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations; sharp economic decline.

corruption, etc. According to the figure by the Statistician-General of the Federation, about 20.3 million Nigerians are currently jobless and not employed in any form of job (Mohammed, 2012). On the 2010 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), Nigeria is ranked 159 of 178 countries - lower than Togo, Ghana, Senegal and Gambia (Mohammed, 2011). The United Nations' 2011 World Development Report shows that Nigeria has low human development with a HDI of 0.46.

The provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure, which is the responsibility of the state, have been lacking or grossly inadequate thereby affecting economic performance particularly that of the industrial sectors.

These negative indices, among others more daunting, all point to the fact that the country is still backward and far from meeting the aspirations of the people by providing a level playing ground for their economic activities. As such, economic progress of the country has been low and undiversified with the oil sector providing the dominant economic activities and about which much of the politics revolves. While the growth of the oil sector has afforded the government much needed revenue, with oil revenue represented about 90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings and about 85 per cent of total exports, it also created serious structural problems in the economy, especially where the revenue from the oil sector is not channeled into the development of other sectors of the economy. The dominance of oil has affected the agricultural sector adversely.

6. Our Backwardness: Of Economic or Political Origin?

Nigeria, as we know, operates a mixed economy with government control and participation making a greater share of the mixture. By this, much depends on government policies and actions. From the provision of an enabling environment – provision and maintenance of infrastructure, maintenance of law and order, etc – to the direct control of and participation in the economy, the government determines greatly the pace of the economy. Therefore, the private sector (including the shadow economy) is just but a small and weak sector depending so much on the public sector, and made so by the polity of the state. Thus, with an active public sector which is within the dictates of political actors and a weak private sector ruled by the economic laws, much of the quagmire Nigeria finds herself in now can only but be politically explained. The economy is only but an indicator of the performance of the political system. We can buttress this further as follow, keeping in mind what problem is really of economic origin and that which is political.

Recall that Nigeria is said to be a country richly endowed with both human and natural resources. This means that, relatively, Nigeria has, above other countries, what it takes to develop; by which one can be right to say that Nigeria is facing less, comparatively, of the economic problem of scarcity than other states. This partially eliminates the principal economic problem of scarcity.

With a population of over 150 million people at an estimated growth rate of 4%, with an active business sector, and the government sector, the problem of low aggregate demand also barely exist. Even at the heat of the global economic melt-down when there was a decrease in demand, Nigeria was said to be insulated. This equally eliminates any economic problem due to low demand for good/services. In terms of the supply, aggregate supply (expressed in terms of gross domestic product – GDP) has been on the increase with little downward fluctuations. Production at the various sectors has shown such increase. A look at the output of the agricultural, manufacturing sectors, and other productive sectors clearly shows this.

The problem of unemployment, which is more pronounced with reference to that of human resource, is due to the inability of the productive sector to expand, which in turn is due to the failure of the state to provide the needed business environment for its expansion. As such, unemployment is much of an economic consequence of other non-economic variables than a cause from the economy. This can

be better understood with a review of the types and causes of unemployment in Nigeria. Dike (2011) commented on this issue saying:

The political leaders have always raised the people's hope by painting glowing picture of their development plans and how to take the nation to the 'Promised Land' of true democracy and economic prosperity. They swore that citizens' empowerment would become their top priority yet they refuse to fix the infrastructure and institutions that would propel the economy and create employment for the millions of graduates churn out by the educational institutions yearly.

In Nigerian, the causes of poverty are rather much associated with polity than the economy. The Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) (2003) contends that, two critical issues have remained outstanding in the understanding of poverty in Nigeria. The first is the impact of good governance on socio-economic and political development. Stressing that, it is noteworthy that of all the diseases that are fatal to the poor, none is lethal than poor governance as political and economic dictatorship frequently leads to poverty more than any other thing. The second is noted as the lack of consultation and citizens' involvement in programmes for which they remain the target and beneficiaries. The foregoing thus invalidates poverty as wholly an economic problem hindering the development of Nigeria.

Exonerating the economic factors, Thisday Live (2011) has it that, "Nigeria cannot be said to lack resources. No. It is one of the richly endowed countries in the world. It cannot be said to be poor at development planning. Certainly not! There are enough of that, old and new, in files of various ages in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). And for economists, there is no need to ask because it has some of the best and the brightest." Whatever is the problem can then be said to lie outside the purview of the economy.

On the political front, much can be said to be wrong. First and foremost, the size and extent of government in our form of mixed economy is in itself problematic. Immense participation of government in the economy and making economic decisions of what, how and for whom to produce has greatly replaced economic spirit of doing things with political spirit of nepotism, favoritism, sectionalism, influentialism, etc. With these as guiding principles, public policies are formulated and the economic regulated. Ayida (1987), observing in this line, identify five categories of advisers and pressure groups associated with the determination of public policies and which benefit from such policies in Nigeria since 15 January 1966. These he mentioned as:

1. Public officers, university dons;
2. Political appointees, notably civil commissioners;
3. Other members of the Armed Forces;
4. The private establishment such as church leaders, trade unionists, and captains of industry and employers; and
5. Personal friends and confidant(s).

No longer is it by the needs and demands of the people that societal benefits (in form of goods and services) are supplied. Getting the benefit of any regime of governance in Nigeria so much depends on how closely related or influential one or a group is to the government. This, no doubts, portrays a picture of an economy not working through the forces of demand and supply.

Still as a problem of the over dominance of the public sector in Nigeria's economic system, the polity, through policies, programmes and projects, determines the spread and pace of development in the state. By this, the rural areas with a greater percent of the land mass and inhabiting equally greater proportion of the population are still in poverty and backward, whereas few locations are urbanized and accommodating the few privileged elites or ruling class. This, in Nigeria, is much of a political problem

than economic. Development of areas outside the seats of power depends so much on who has the political connection or influence to woo and win government projects to his/her area. The siting of even economically productive projects is not based on economic factors like availability of resources, demand, etc, but as the powers that-will-be so decide. Akor (2001) had earlier on pointed this out when he argued that:

Since independence, Nigeria's socio-economic changes, goals and other social responsibilities have been channeled through the colonial administrative structures. The result have been either a total lack of progress in the key sectors of the economy in spite of huge annual capital outlays or at best, a disjointed and checkered developmental patterns abundantly evidenced by uncoordinated and unevenly spread projects and programmes.

The over reliant of the government on the oil sector for its revenue is another political blunder that has not just negatively affected the performance of other sectors of the economy but has brought with it a legion of political, economic and social problems that are serious huddles to the country's development path. From the neglect of agriculture to the regulation of production and pricing of petroleum products down to the social crisis of the Niger-Delta region, the choice of oil as the plank on which Nigeria will cross to the world of developed countries has rather brought her miseries of food insecurity, unemployment, urban population explosion, oil theft, oil subsidy problems, resource control struggles, corruption, poverty, illnesses, death, and general underdevelopment. Crude oil mixed with crude political minds has thus not just produced a crude economy but the crudest state – Nigeria.

Ineffective leadership (otherwise known as bad governance) is equally a political factor militating against our effort to develop and thus setting the state backward. Manifesting in all aspects of the state – political, economic and social – bad leadership has accounted for the failure of most institutions and the root cause of social, economic and political problems of Nigeria. According to Dike (2011), the state of Nigeria is defined by the ineffectiveness of the political leaders and poor social institutions that have crippled the economy and pauperized the people. He decried that, the leadership problem that has confronted Nigeria since independence appears to be worsening because the state of the polity is rapidly deteriorating. Adding that, very few of the leaders, if any, work for 'common good.' Over the years a wave reform programs have been undertaken but the society lacks political leadership committed to implement them to address the problems facing the economy (Dike, 2011).

Another notable political problem is also that of the dislocation of the country into sub political units which has negatively affected the development of the country than the intended positive benefits. This has rather instituted disunity and unhealthy competition among the sub-units and between the sub-units and the center. Worst of sub-division is the division into north and south as reflected in the creation of the six geo-political zones. This factor has caused serious setback in our development agenda. The north-south issue in Nigeria has transcends beyond who will be the president to basic economic problem of resource allocation. Each region wants to control the exploitation and utilization of its resources and the federal government as it has been. This has brought with it unhealthy agitations (resulting to formation of all forms of social groups) that are detrimental not just to our development programme but to our national unity.

Corruption and greed (the Nigerian factor) have equally made way to the top of the causative problem of the country. Obasanjo, in the same media stated above, had also contended that "corruption, lack vision and waste are responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment," adding that "our problem is like a water tap that has a closet. While some people are turning the tap for water to run, others are busy leaving the base of the closet open, thus making the filling of the closet an impossible task" (Guardian, 2003 in Ajayi, 2003). Corruption and greed are manifestations of the political nature of man which does not take

cognizance of the wellbeing of others as blindfolded by selfishness. It is due to this corruption that most institutions of the state are near collapsing.

Another issue to be considered as a political problem is the failure of policies, plans, programmes and projects. Agreeing with Ayida (1987), what has gone wrong in Nigeria's state affairs is not so much the formulation of development plans and policies, but the way and the manner in which those plans and policies have been executed. Lofty policies and action plans are put in place with the picture of national development but the implementation has always been the case. For instance, from the 1970-74 national plan's five objectives of fostering a: United, strong and self-reliant nation; Great and dynamic economy; Just and egalitarian society; Land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and Free and democratic society to the 7-Point Agenda of the Yar'adua administration down to the transformation agenda of the present administration, nothing can be pointed to as the outcome of such plans, policies or programmes. Even where government policies are implemented without flip-flops, according to Thisday Live (2012), leakages through large vents of corruption make the projects not to be completed or they are not completed on time and budget. This failure in the implementation process, due basically to lack of the common will, has retard our development process in no small measure.

The collaboration that permits the meddling of the international bodies into Nigeria's state of affairs, including economic affairs, is also another political problem that is keeping us backward. From the colonial era to date, Nigeria has been greatly influenced externally. Due to weakness and selfish interest of the political actors and ruling class, the economy and other aspects of the state are unprotected from the dictates of external beneficiaries. In Nigeria, according to Akor (2001), both the economy and the state are being run by the indigenous bourgeoisie with the active collaboration and manipulation of international capital, particularly the multinational corporations who are the primary beneficiary of the exploitation of Nigeria's neo-economy. To Anger (2002), the colonial rulers in Nigeria socialized the Nigerian political leadership in an authoritarian form of governance by monopolizing economic and political powers in their own hands for their interest and of the foreigners. Akor (2001) likewise noted that, "the post-colonial administrative structures were basically designed as instruments to facilitate the political control and effective exploitation of the economic resources of Nigeria in the interest of the imperialist countries. This posture differs substantially from those of their counterparts elsewhere in the advanced countries." He lamented that "the primary contradiction between the Nigerian bureaucrats and the Nigerian masses is that the Nigerian bureaucrats are a willing and active collaborators with the foreign imperialist forces to deprive the overwhelming majority of Nigerians the fruits of their labour" (Akor, 2001) With this kind of a state of affairs, one doubts if Nigeria can progress, where such is not the intention of the international dictators.

7. The Way Forward

As Rodney (1972) pointed out, "a society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment." Onucheyo (1998) argued in a similar way when he asserted that:

The tragedy of underdevelopment is not that the ordinary people have remained poor or are becoming poor, but that they have been inhibited from developing as human. The elites have taken over the right to develop society and by this very act and claim distorted the natural and profound notion of development. For no one can develop others — one can only stretch or diminish others by trying to develop them.

These statements all points to the simple fact that, for a people to development, much depends on the individual participation of all in the society. That is, the freedom of the individual to make choices and determine their needs must be respected. As Sen (1999) has noted in Dike (2011), is reported to have noted: 'unfreedoms' leave the people with little choice to exercise 'their reasoned agency.'" He posits that

“freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its primary means.” Therefore, development (social, political and economic) “requires the removal of major sources of unfreedoms.” By implication, for Nigeria to move forward, the individuals via the forces of demand and supply must determine their development. Less of government interference in the basic economic activities will be of much help.

The above does not invalidate government interference in the economic affairs of the state to the point of total elimination of political process in the development of state, but rather, a reformation and restructuring of the political process. This is because, the polity of the state remains vital in the development of the state. The words of Wharton (1976), as cited in Onucheyo (1998), clearly explain this, saying:

When I look at the key world development issues – food-policy, distributive justice, resource ‘wars’ – over the next 25 years, I have concluded that most solutions will be rooted in the ability of the political processes, both national and international, to deal with them effectively. And remember that if political process fails to deal with these basic human issues of hunger, and survival, the inevitable alternatives will be grown interpersonal violence, domestic upheaval and wars.

Still to emphasize the importance of role of the polity, Ayida (1987) had claimed that:

Our recent experience has demonstrated that there will continue to be need in this country for a vigorous and substantial private sector for some time to come. But the efficiency of the private sector depends on the existence of an efficient public service; not only in terms of the provision of infrastructural services and utilities but also because of the ability of the High Civil Service to respond to complex needs of industrial and commerce in the private sector.

Arthur Lewis (1955) in Ayida (1987) equally points out that: “if a community is fortunate to have a good leader born at a crucial time in its history, who catches the imagination of his people and guides them through a formative experience, he will create traditions and legends and standards which weave themselves into the thinking of his people and govern their behaviour through many countries...” What is required, as such, is the restructuring of the polity of the Nigerian state, its political process, reformation of the political actors, prioritization of the citizenry above the interest of the few ruling class, etc. By this, the state will be better repositioned to perform effectively its role in the development of the country.

8. Concluding Remarks

The politicizing of the economy through government intervention has not been much of a blessing to Nigeria. The mixed economy of Nigerian type with much government interference in the economy has not worked in favour of the country. The country still lags behind its counterparts in terms of development. This backwardness of the country, though glaring and generally accepted, the identification of the root cause of the conundrum is still problematic. Whereas the economy has often been at the forefront of the factors responsible for this state of backwardness, the polity of the state is equally highly blamed. A careful look at the situation has thus led us to the conclusion that, much of the problems that have kept Nigeria backward stem from the polity of the state rather than from the working of the economy. The perceptions of many that the economy is the root cause of Nigeria’s underdevelopment are thus erroneous and are due to lack or insufficient knowledge to differentiate properly what constitute an economic problem.

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