

Beyond Institutions: A Philosophical Reflection on the Voyage to Development in Nigeria

Paul T. Haaga, PhD

Abstract

The core discourse in this paper rests on the acute weak nature of institutions which have resulted to underdevelopment in the Nigerian state. It is a given that the reformation of public institutions strengthens the structure of governance that is the spur for development. This paper argued that beyond firming institution, there is need for strong men who are prepared and positioned to respond to the challenges and opportunities created by the change process within the institution. The paper argued that, strong men understand the critical importance of effective leadership, good governance, accountability and transparency in both democratic and development processes that is with honesty and integrity. The idea of 'strong men' in this paper is referred to vitreous leaders who are guided by the rule of law and are conscious of the plight of the people; they are altruistic, dedicated, prolific and have a high sense of certitude in the institutional structures rather than themselves. In doing this, the following questions would guide this paper: what exactly is responsible for the failure of our institutions? What can we do to strengthen our weak institutions? In the quest for development, how do we delineate the proper philosophical framework needed for holistic development? What is the philosophical premise upon which 'strong men' can make institutions in Nigeria more viable? The conclusion that is reached in this paper is, since institutions are abstract concepts invented by human beings, introducing strong (superior) men will strengthen these institutions and as a result, enhance development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Institution, Strong men, Voyage, Development, Agent sensitive

Introduction

Prima facie, it seems that the proper restructuring of the public institutions does not just bring about the strengthening of the

structure of governance but it also serves as the template and the springboard for the attainment of sustainable and holistic development in any setting. In this contemporary era, nations all over the world both the developed and the developing ones engage in various forms of reforms with the intention of ushering in an accelerated mode of the socio-economic and political development. Nonetheless, one of the major submissions of contemporary research about most nations is that weak institutions remain a major constrain in their quest for integral development; as a country, Nigeria is not totally immune to this state of affairs. It is apparent to say that inclusive development however, cannot take place amidst shaky institutions as evidenced in Nigeria, reasons been that our porosity, the policies we have adopted have from inception seemingly failed largely because of not just the absence of strong institutions (as suggested) to implement these policies but also the sensitive agents of change. Today, our democratic institutions are still almost a replica of what the colonial masters left us with. Scholars have argued that Nigeria has not yet adopted for itself a system of government that reflects its general worldview and values, as its institutions are still subject to undue influences from the Western world. These are just the resultant effect of the absence of not just strong institutions but most importantly a good number of responsible agents of change in Nigeria.

It is against this backdrop that it has become quite necessary to rethink the Nigerian institutional system. This endeavour of rethinking the Nigeria system will inform following questions: do we really have responsible institutions? If yes, then how do they operate and facilitate the goal of integral development? Have the institutions failed? If yes, what really is the cause of their failure? Is the failure of the institutions solely to be blamed for the abysmal mode and level of development in Nigeria? Do we have change agents? What role do/can these agents play in this whole process? Can they help in strengthening the institutions? Have these change agents helped in strengthening these institutions? What is the general disposition of these

change agents towards this indispensable integral change in Nigeria? What about the imperative of a proper philosophical framework for this desired holistic development? What is the philosophical foundation on which the Nigerian system should be built upon? The painstaking and scholarly attempt to reflect on these questions will probably and hopefully lead us to suggest the best framework for this desired change in the Nigerian state.

Towards Delineating the Concept of Institution and Development

The concept of institution and development are common place concepts. Be that as it may, this paper considers it necessary to clarify and operationalized these concepts and to situate them within the context that they will be deployed in this paper.

Institution

Institutions are the kinds of structures that matter most in the social realm; they make up the stuff of social life. The increasing acknowledgement of the role of institutions in social life involves the recognition that much of human interaction and activity is structured in terms of overt or implicit rules. Institutions could be defined as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions. Institutions, according to North, are a set of rules compliance procedures; they are also moral and ethical behavioral norms designed to constrain the social behaviour of individuals in the interest of maximizing the wealth or utility of principals or nations.¹ In his contribution to the discourse on what institutions are, Yildirim defines institutions as habits that brings limitation to human actions to quote him, "institutions are habits that brings limitations to our actions through rules and organisations settled in social life, direct us on how we should behave, and lead social life".² On the utility of institutions Abubakar avers, while quoting North and Rodrik that institutions should promote and incentivize

1 See North as quoted in Abubakar, S. "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria" *African Journal of Economic Review*. Vol VIII, Issue 1, January 2020, Pg. 50.
2 Abubakar, S. "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria", Pg. 50-51.

productive and wealth increasing actions such as innovation, capital and education acquisition, ensure property rights and prevent predatory, wealth-destructive behaviour (e.g. corruption, theft and rent seeking). Institutions, not only exert direct influence on economic growth but also affect other determinants of growth such as the physical and human capital, investment, technical changes, which in turn lead to an increase in the growth of an economy. Economic growth is the growth in both social and economic activities.³

According to Masahiko, language, money, law, systems of weights and measures, table manners, and firms (and other organizations) are thus all institutions.⁴ Following Hodgson's remarks that Robert Sugden and John Searle usefully define a convention as a particular instance of an institutional rule. As Searle has argued, the mental representations of an institution or its rules are partly constitutive of that institution, since an institution can exist only if people have particular and related beliefs and mental attitudes. Hence, an institution is a special type of social structure that involves potentially codifiable and (evidently or immanently) normative rules of interpretation and behaviour. Some of these rules concern commonly accepted tokens or meanings, as is obviously the case with money or language. However, as Max Weber (1978) pointed out in 1907, some rules are followed "without any subjective formulation in thought of the 'rule'". For example, few of us could specify fully the grammatical rules of the language that we use regularly or completely. Nevertheless, institutional rules are in principle codifiable, so that breaches of these rules can become subjects of discourse. Nevertheless, in this contexts example of institutions includes; educational/academic institutions, religious institutions, political institutions, economic institutions, social institutions, judicial institutions, traditional institutions, relational institutions, etc.

3 Abubakar, S. "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria", Pg. 51.

4 Masahiko A. *Toward A Comparative Institutional Analysis*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), Pg. 5. See Hodgson, G. M." What Are Institutions", *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol.40, No. 1, 2006, Pg. 15-16.

Development

In every aspect of human endeavour, the concept of development recurs because it is a mark of progress and excellence. Development connotes improvement and progress. The idea of development became popularized immediately after the Second World War in 1949 when US President Harry Truman, in his speech introduced the term, 'underdeveloped areas' and marks the launch of the global effort to develop the World and eradicate poverty.⁵ For Oladipo & Olorunyomi, the word development is borrowed from biology. It describes a process through which the potentials of an object or organism are realized, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form.⁶ It is from this sense that Development refers to the progressive changes that take place in the growing organism as he/she advances towards maturity.⁷

According to Hundley, development is usually perceived as a state or condition or as a process or course of dynamic change. For him, development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. Development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are: (i). Raising peoples' living levels, i.e. incomes and consumption, levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes. (ii). Creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions, which promote human dignity and respect and (iii). Increasing peoples' freedom to

5 Abrahamsen, R., *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance*, (London: Zed Books, 2000), Pg. 15.

6 Oladipo, Olusegun & Olorunyomi Sola (Ed.) *View Point: A Critical Review of Culture and Society*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1999), Pg. 13.

7 Amao, K., *A Course Text on Human Development and Learning*, (Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka, 2000), Pg. 17.

choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables, e.g. varieties of goods and services.⁸

It has also been delineated as growth plus change. Change; in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative. The key concept must be improved quality of people's life.⁹ It connotes a change or a transformation from a bad or good state into a better state. Understood properly, development implies not only a change in time but also change which has direction; development frequently implies advancement or improvement over some more primitive status.¹⁰

In the same vein, development is "a sequence of continuous changes eventuating in some outcome".¹¹ Contributing to discourse on the meaning of development, Seer avers that the questions to ask about a country's development are "What has been happening to poverty? what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all these three have become less severe, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country's concerned".¹² He further argued that "if one or two of these central problems have been getting worse, especially if three have, it will be strange to call the result "development", even if per capita income has soared".¹³ Drawing from the above definitions, it feels safe to argue that development connotes growth, maturity, progressive change with a specific direction. It is also a given, drawing from the above that developmental change does not occur in isolation neither is it an isolated incident; It is a process arising from the past and gradually building up through the present and the future.

8 See Hundley, G. *Social Reconstruction Towards Economic Development*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), Pg.

9 Oladipo, Olusegun & Olorunyomi Sola (Ed.) *View Point: A Critical Review of Culture and Society*, Pg. 13.

10 McGurk, Henry, *Growing and Changing*. (London: Methuen & Co., 1975), Pg. 28.

11 Harris, D. (Ed.), *The Concept of Development*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), Pg. 15.

12 Seer, D. "The Meaning of Development" *International Development Review*. Vol. 11. No. 4, 1969, Pg. 3-4.

13 Seer, D. "The Meaning of Development", Pg. 3-4.

This paper favours and hence, conceives development to be about the people. After arguing that development can only be driven by social will within the context of democracy, Claude Ake postulated that “the people can be a means and the end of development”.¹⁴ Since it is the people that benefits from development, it makes sense to argue that development should and can be driven by the people. Hence, any development that does not recognize and uphold the place of the people is no development. To quote Okeke and Oginyi, “... development is a probe of the growth or otherwise of individual in the society. And any idea of development ignorant of this is not worth its name. Development has to do with the individuals... the individual becomes the indices of measuring development...”¹⁵

For the purpose of this study, development means an event that causes change; it is an incident that causes a situation to change progress or move forward positively. Development is a process of change; the process of changing and becoming larger, stronger, or more impressive, successful, or advanced, or of causing somebody or something to change in this way.

Exploring the Philosophical Basis for Building the Nigerian State

For Aristotle and his contemporaries, man is a political animal *Homo Politicus* so man must not cease to participate in political activities. However, the brand of political activity that most Nigerian politicians are disposed to is definitely not in their ultimate interest of the people, as it is christened with a lot of negative and destructive disposition and colouration. The point is, for any political activity to be responsibly carried out in Nigeria, and by the Nigerian politicians, there must be need for some very sound and strong philosophic tutorship and instruction. This seems to flow with the submission of some political philosophers that in the political sphere, a dose of philosophy, especially, is necessary to enable us to appreciate

14 Ake, Claude (2001), *Democracy and Development in Africa*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2001), Pg. 32.

15 Okeke, V. C and Oginyi, G.I “Inclusive Institutions in Daron Acemoglu and J.A Robinson: A Paradigm for African Development” *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, Vol, 3, No, 1. 2018, Pg. 102.

our political heritage. The import of ideas ruling the world must have to come to play in Nigerian politics. This is because, it is glaring that it is only through taking a good dose of the noble ideals of and ideas in philosophy that one can understand the basic needs of the people. This will facilitate the form of sane policies and disposition that will enable the people appreciate life and live decent and responsible lives. It is an obligation for philosophers to help the politicians to fashion out policies and schemes that should affect the people and their existence. This brings to mind the submission of Plato about the *Philosopher King*. In fact, with their concern for values, goals, ends of human society, human activity and the means of achieving these, philosophers indeed are better qualified and also equipped to play the role of helping to determine and sharpen societal values, towards bringing about integral growth, development and progress.

To quote Plato, “unless . . . philosophers become kings in the cities or those whom we now call kings and rulers philosophize truly and adequately and there is a conjunction of political power and philosophy . . . there can be no cessation of evils . . . for cities nor, I think, for the human race.”¹⁶ It is in this quotation that Plato announced the imperativeness of a personnel who is specially trained for leadership. Three reasons can be read to the imperative of philosophical understanding of leadership in Plato. First, there is a motivational claim. If those who are to govern are “lovers of ruling”,¹⁷ they will not seek the good of the whole city, but will pursue political office simply for their own benefit, and will thus engender civic strife. Only philosophers have a life that they prefer so strongly to the political life that they “look down on” that life.¹⁸ Thus only philosophers, Plato thinks, will seek the good of the whole city when they rule. Second, the question of who should rule notoriously leads to bitter, intractable, and destabilizing conflicts between social and economic elites and the masses. Rule by

¹⁶ Plato, *Complete Works* John Cooper, Ed., (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), *Rep.* V.473c11-d6

¹⁷ Plato, *Complete Works*, *Rep.* VII.521b4-5.

¹⁸ Plato, *Complete Works*, *Rep.* VII.521b1-2, 520e- 521b.

philosophers, Plato at least sometimes suggests, can forestall such controversy. All citizens can be brought to accept that the rule of philosophers is in their own interest.¹⁹ Neither of these claims is unproblematic, but I shall turn to Plato's best known justification for the rule of philosophers, and this is epistemic. Philosophers alone have knowledge (*epistêmê*) of what really is, e.g., just, good, and fine and this makes them better at ruling.

If he (the philosopher) should come to be compelled to put what he sees there (in the realm of the Platonic Forms) into people's characters, whether into a single person or into a populace, instead of shaping only his own, do you think he will be a poor craftsman of moderation and justice and all forms of ordinary popular virtue . . . no city will ever find happiness until its outline is sketched by painters who use the divine model . . . (after they wiped clean the city and the characters of men) they would sketch the outline of the constitution . . . And I suppose that, as they work, they would look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice, the fine, moderation, and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they are trying to put into human beings, on the other. And in this way, they would mix and blend the various ways of life in the city until they produced a human image based on what Homer too called 'the divine form and image' . . . And they would erase one thing, I suppose, and draw in another until they had made characters for human beings that the gods would love as much as possible.²⁰

As plausible as the position of Plato may be, Karl Raimund Popper, in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*²¹ took to a swipe on Plato and argued that the central question of political theory is not the question of who should rule. Plato saw and holds

¹⁹ Plato, *Complete Works*, *Rep.* VI.499d-501e.

²⁰ Plato, *Complete Works*, *Rep.* VI.500d5-501c3.

²¹ *The Open Society and its Enemies* a book Popper originally intended to call the *False Prophets: Plato, Hegel, Marx*, because he regarded these three philosophers as the peaks of historicist thought representing the main variations on the unrealizable claim to political prophecy) See Popper's *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (La Salle and London: Open Court, 1982), Pg. 129.

that it required creation of a rigid and hierarchical class society governed by philosopher kings, whose knowledge of the Forms would stave off decay as well as ensure the rulers' incorruptibility. Tumultuous democratic Athens would be replaced with a stable and unchanging society. Plato saw this as justice, but Popper argued that it had all the hallmarks of totalitarianism, including rigid hierarchy, censorship, collectivism, central planning all of which would be reinforced through propaganda and deception.

Rejecting the question who should rule? as the fundamental question of political theory, Popper proposed a new question: "How can we so organize political institutions that bad or incompetent rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage?"²² This is fundamentally a question of institutional design, Popper said. Democracy happens to be the best type of political system because it goes a long way toward solving this problem by providing a nonviolent, institutionalized and regular way to get rid of bad rulers, namely by voting them out of office. This is how Popper announced and elevated the place of institution over and against Plato's Philosopher King.

The above notwithstanding, one of the cardinal concerns of philosophy is to protect and appreciate the human person and also highlight its dignity and it is in this way that philosophy could be of help to politicians in Nigeria by helping them to discontinue with the irresponsible politics of acrimony, revenge, bitterness and war. Bertrand Russell seems to highlight this critical disposition of philosophy in the realm of politics when he remarked that (Philosophy) makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest. In this citizenship of the universe consists man's true freedom and his liberation from the thralldom of narrow hopes and fears.

²² *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1, *The Spell of Plato*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1945), Pg. 121.

It is interesting to note that philosophy is not averse to economics or economic development. Indeed, as a reflective activity, philosophy has what it takes to develop an economy but only when it is properly harnessed and utilized. And if economic growth and development is predicated on detailed and reasoned reflection then, philosophy can bring about economic advancement. It is not an understatement to say that Nigeria needs economic rebirth and a major reason for that economic quagmire is the dearth of reflective activity based on philosophic training. This is based on the premise that it is only when the mind is developed, that other facets of life will enjoy that level of development and growth. It is instructive to note that philosophy may not be a practical study or of immediate practical utility, but it contains what is finest and noblest in human life, because it is primarily or necessarily concerned not with the production of material wealth, but with the advancement of the wealth of the mind. One thing that is clear is that a developed mind translates to developed economy.

The Value of Agents²³ in Cooperate Entities: A Philosophical Overview

The value of agents in cooperate institutions has been traditionally framed within social and political philosophy as a discourse which attempts to identify certain moral and legal responsibilities of citizens in order to be part of good governance. Bix envisage that, Hart is of the opinion that²⁴ this theory has often been normatively grounded in the idea that a corporation is (or ought to be treated as) a responsibility of all. It is natural to think that institutions makes individuals responsible and strong willed, yes, that could be true to an extent. But this paper supposes that the functionality of any institution, depend on strong men, here referred to as agents or agents of change. Institutions are merely abstract concepts that require strong men with good sense of values to show its efficacy.

23 By agents, I mean the personnel or individuals that work or oversee the running of an organization or in this context, the state.

24 Brian H. Bix, "Kelsen, Hart, and legal Normativity" *Revis Journal for Constitutional Theory and Philosophy of Law*, Vol. 43, 2018, Pg. 5. Cf. also H. L. A. Hart and the relationship of law and morality for more detailed discourse.

The question is why is our case so different in Nigeria? This question is hinged on the fact that we seem to have lost it all. This is also sequel to the fact that we have unfortunately produced a college of highly irresponsibly and very insensitive leaders of questionable characters. This group of people has unashamedly weakened all policies and even the already existing institutions for their egoistic interest. And because this worrisome situation and tradition has lingered for a rather long time, people now wrongly think that governance is reserved for a special class or group of persons, and sometimes this unfortunate frame of mind stems from some erroneous belief systems, world-views or prejudices. And this accounts for why after voting in person into political positions or offices, the people seems to relax and draw back in the participation and quest for good governance and sustainable development.²⁵

Nevertheless, in trying to further bolster the position of this paper that the agents are the *game-changers* not just the institution as suggested in some quarters or as it seems, it is pertinent to states the fact that the dialectics of agent and institution could be properly gleaned and situated in context from the seeming but very apt dichotomy between what this paper called *agent-sensitive institutions* and the *agent-insensitive institutions*.²⁶

The *Agent-Sensitive Institution* presents us with a scenario where the agents who are the real game-changers are in the proper position, are in charge of any of the state institutions and as the real change changers, they act accordingly not just to work according to the dictates of the institutions but to also bring in their personality into their mode of operation. This is predicated on the premise that they appreciate the fact that the only difference that can be made has to come from this

25 Haaga, P. T "Resolving African Leadership Failure Using the 'Agent Sensitive' Archetypal: A Jurisprudential Approach", in *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, Vol, 3, No, 1. 2018, Pg. 89.

26 See Haaga, P. T "Resolving African Leadership Failure Using the 'Agent Sensitive' Archetypal: A Jurisprudential Approach", in *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, Vol, 3, No, 1. 2018, Pg. 83-95 for a more lucid discourse on the *agent-sensitive* and the *agent-insensitive* dimension to leadership and governance.

novel introduction; that is, their personality, diligence, knowledge, enviable level of responsibility, decency, noble disposition, passion for excellence and hard work coupled with a goal-driven spirit. With all these, the agent is able to manage his or herself together with the laws and principles of the institution and the best of results come into play in the form of good governance and by extension, growth, progress and sustainable development which is the major challenge of the Nigerian state. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not been able to get a good number of these sensitive agents and of course, it accounts for its very shambolic state of affairs. Albeit, she can still boast of a very selected few who are typical examples of this position.

On the flip side, we have the very abysmal and appalling situation that the *Agent-Insensitive Institution* presents to us in Nigeria. It depicts a situation whereby very weak, questionable, and highly irresponsible characters are made to drive the engine of these very vital institutions of government and the result has always been very blatant. The scenario of the Agent-Insensitive Institution is just the direct opposite of the Agent-Sensitive Institutions. The Agent-Insensitive Institution as a result of their weak and lousy personality and horrid identity credentials are not able even to drive the institutions that they are to manage even ordinarily and as a result the system is not just wanting and lagging in its roles but also dissipating and collapsing. This then makes the purpose of governance and the quest for sustainable development to become a charade and a mirage. Indeed, this interesting mark has marred a large portion of the experience of the modern Nigerian state as it has presented Nigerians with an unfortunate situation of having confused, notoriously irresponsible, roguish, highly fraudulent, inexperience and illiterate/uneducated personalities everywhere manning the affairs of government even the most critical of the sectors/institutions.

The effect of these is the reality of the failing Nigerian state today. A so-called giant of African whose citizens wallow in abject poverty and has now been delineated as the epicenter of

poverty in the world cannot be said to be a giant indeed, a giant of Africa that does not have a responsible health system, and cannot boast of a decent health care scheme for its people cannot be said to be a giant. This situation also accounts for why highly placed citizen steals the nations commonwealth, loot the nation dry and bury the money (sometimes in foreign currencies) in overhead water tanks, septic tanks, burial grounds, farms lands, air-conditioned rooms and even houses with very imposing religious signs and symbols to distract the imagination and impression of people around. The above is the spectre of the reality of the Nigerian state and it is doubtful if any nation that is grappling with this type of reality can leave the tarmac and fly towards economic growth and development.

Beyond Institutions: Advancing the Imperativeness of Strongmen and Visionary Leaders for Nigeria's Development

Several attempts have been made to argue for the fact that the presence of institution is all that is needed for the get Nigeria into the part of development and to sustain it. These arguments are hinged on the fact that a reliable police force, a free and independent press, a strong and viable legislature and perhaps, a strong civil society will lead the Nigerian state to that point. Abubakar corroborated the above while quoting Stiglitz when he opined that good governance and quality institutions are what makes for growth and development.²⁷ The above notwithstanding, it must be stated that the workability or not of institutions is dependent on strong men and visionary leaders. Again, only strong men and visionary leaders elects to build and sustain institutions. While this paper does recognize the complementary nature of both institution and personnel, it holds also recognizes the fact that strong men have also worked towards the weakening of institutions for their personal benefits in times past and even to the present.

²⁷ Abubakar, S "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria" Pg. 49.

In fact, the basic impediments to Africa and Latin America economic progress and development is in the uncertainty and manipulation whitespaces in the judicial system, corruption, bribery, tax evasion, ill-defined property rights and the existence of inefficient institutions as ill-conceived arrangements cause those countries to be risky and unattractive.²⁸ While other nations of the world have witnessed progress and development largely through the instrumentality of quality institutions, the reverse is the case in Nigeria and the most part of the third world. Furthermore, institutions in developing countries are mainly of a nature developing redistribution activities instead of production activities, creating monopolies instead of competitive conditions, restricting opportunities instead of developing them, these institutions rarely lead to investments that will increase productivity.²⁹ In addition, accumulation in Africa is likely to be affected by institutional characteristics such as the distribution of political and civil rights, the quality of the legal system and government effectiveness. Owasanoye as quoted in Abubakar alluded the fact that African countries lose \$90billion annually through illicit financial flow to overseas with bulk of it coming from Nigeria and institutional weakness is one of the major reasons for this setback.³⁰

That such institution as the legislature and the judiciary in Nigeria have become weakened is a statement of fact that coheres to the actual state of affairs. In Nigeria, one finds these institutions working against the statutory responsibility and the reason for setting up the same institution. One finds an apparent aberration of what strong institutions stands for. A cursory look at the institutions, form political to religious, from religious to economic and from economic to social institutions amongst other reveals an apparent failure of these institutions to deliver on their mandates. This is chiefly because; the political class has succeeded in weakening them and rendering them

28 Abubakar, S "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria", Pg. 49.

29 Yildirim & Gokalp, quoted in Abubakar, S "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria", Pg. 49.

30 Abubakar, S "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria", Pg. 49.

ineffective with the intent of achieving their selfish ambitions without objections. This situation has constituted a clog in the wheel of the nation's development and progress and have largely accounted for why we are where we are today.

Drawing from the above, one can argue that beyond institutions is the imperativeness of strong men and visionary leadership. By strong men, this paper does not wish to portray or argue for the dictatorial and tyrannical temper that have characterized some of the rulers in African and the third world, neither does the paper seek to celebrate those "strong men" who have used their positions of authority and influences to weaken almost every institution in their countries for their selfish gain. Rather, by strong men, I mean men that are selfless, men of character, courage and men who have both the capacity and the will to drive the programme of development for the various countries whose reins of power they now hold.

The strong man that is needed beyond institutions is synonymous with the Confucian *Junzi*³¹ which is translated to connote the 'superior man', 'noble man' or the 'gentleman'. The *Junzi* is the moral man whose nobility is that of character. He is wise, humane and courageous. He learns the truth and loves men. He is bold and has a brave heart, hence, he fight without fear in situations. In his *Analects*, Confucius presented a discourse on the *Junzi* (superior man) in contradistinction to the *Xiaoren*³² (the small, mean and petty man). The superior

31 *Junzi* comprises the two Chinese characters 'Jun' and 'Zi'. Literally 'Jun' means lord, or the person who governs a country, 'Zi' is the term for addressing male figures respectfully in ancient Chinese texts, and also refers to offspring (See Woods, P. R *Junzi and Rashang: A Confucian Approach to Business Ethics in a Contemporary Chinese Context*. Melbourne: Victoria University, Pg. 4). Confucius is responsible for altering the meaning of this term from denoting political status to indicating moral status. Before Confucius, *Junzi* meant the son of a ruler. However, *Junzi* for Confucius is the moral man whose nobility is that of character and not the kind of nobility that is inherited by blood. Importantly, however, the influence of the *Junzi* is related more to the person 'being' good, rather than 'doing' good.

32 In the *Analects of Confucius*, the words *Xiaoren* (small person) appears 24 times. *Xiaoren* is the identity contrasted with *Junzi*. In the contemporary context, normally *Xiaoren* refers to an ignorant, small-minded person or a person who has low moral standards. It also refers to a person who benefits himself at others' expense or a person without virtue (Woods, P. R *Junzi and Rashang: A Confucian Approach to Business Ethic sin a Contemporary Chinese Context*, Pg. 5).

man is familiar with what is right just as the small man is familiar with profit.³³ He has sympathy and is not partisan while the small man is partisan and does not have universal sympathies. The junzi is a man of humanity and humaneness; he is a man that is guided by *ren*.³⁴ The superior man, "in his conduct of himself is courteous ... in his employment of the people, he is righteous".³⁵ The things which characterize the superior man are basically three; in transforming his demeanor, he banishes violence and rudeness, in composing his expressions, he keeps close to sincerity and in the style of his utterances, he banishes coarseness and impropriety".³⁶ The superior man is "a public servant who on confronting danger is prepared to lay his life,... on confronting gain, concentrate on what is right, when sacrificing, concentrates on reverence...".³⁷

The *junzi* cherishes virtue, the small man cherishes land. The *junzi* cherishes the examples men set, the small man cherishes the bounty they bestow.³⁸ The superior man does not pursue wealth and honour through wrong mean; neither does he seek to get out of poverty and meanness by cutting corners. Rather, he cleaves to virtue. To quote Confucius:

Wealth and high rank are what people desire; if they are attained by not following the *dao*,³⁹ do not dwell in them. Poverty and mean rank are what people hate; if

33 The *Analects* of Confucius, Book 4:16.

34 *Ren* refers a comprehensive ethical virtue: benevolence, humaneness, goodness; the term is so problematic that many *Analects* passages show disciples trying to pin Confucius down on its meaning. However in book 12: 22 of the *Analects*, Confucius refers to it when asked as to "cherish people". That means to love others or the love for others.

35 The *Analects* of Confucius, Book 8.

36 The *Analects* of Confucius, Book 19:1

37 See Book 19:1 of the *Analects* of Confucius, and Hans I "A Study on Confucian View of the Superior Man" Pg. 20.

38 The *Analects* of Confucius, 4:11.

39 *dao* is used sometimes to refer to the right or proper way or the right path. However, in the introduction to the *Analects* of Confucius which covers the translation of the key terms, *dao* refers to and denotes a teaching or skill formula that is a key to some arena of action: an art, self-perfection and world transformation- see pg. vi.

they are attained by not following the *dao*, do not depart from them. If one takes *ren* away from a *junzi*, wherein is he worthy of the name? There is no interval so short that the *junzi* deviates from *ren*. Though rushing full tilt, it is there; though head over heels, it is there.⁴⁰

Drawing from the above, it feels safe to argue that despite the dearth of superior men in country, beyond institutions in the voyage to progress and development in Nigeria is the superior man. This is the man that can conscientiously build and sustain institutions as well as stand against any attempt to weaken them. His ability to do that is based on the fact that he is a virtuous and that he is not driven by avarices and personal gains. This type of leader will work on strengthening democratic institutions like the independent electoral umpire body to allow it deliver on its mandate of superintending over free and fair elections that helps the people to get rid of bad leaders at all levels before they do much damage. He will also obey and be guided by the dictate of the rule of law in all his dealings in the business of governance while at the same time ensuring that he delivers on the promises upon which his social contract with the people is built.

Following from the aforementioned position, it is on point to remark here that whenever, the discussion of sustainable development is at stake, it is expedient to mention the imperative of not just the usual institutions and but most importantly, the change-Agents (the superior man) as their existence remain the conditions for establishing a system that will drive key developmental strides which will translate into good governance in Nigeria. Though political philosophers have not given already-made answers and solutions to sustainable development but their continuous interrogation which this paper typifies is a veritable and good template for key players in the business of sustainable development. This is sequel to the fact that it is this template that sets a norm, standards and principle for this discourse.

40 The *Analects* of Confucius, Book 4:5.

Ibrahim Gambari,⁴¹ in a Lecture of the first year anniversary of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation agrees that there are norms, standards and principles and common citizenship that should guide every individual so as to build strong institutions like the Judiciary, the economy, the bureaucracy, civil service etc. The question is why is the task of sustainable development so difficult in Nigeria? This is very simple, the Agents who are supposed to build the institutions to make them viable and strong Institutions have lost touch with the norms, standard, principles and common citizenship. It is not possible for strong institutions to exist if the Agents do not set the norms, standards, principle and common citizenship. The Agents who are the strong men and women who create the road map for others to follow while the institution as laid down becomes the template that brings about a genuine commitment on the part of the Agent. If the agent is not committed of what use is the institution that now becomes isolated from the agent? The institution does not create itself but people do and as such strong men (agents) create strong institutions and vice versa.

It is important to note that the people are the real agent who must follow what the institution holds in high esteem. As such it is very much imperative that agents possess a very high moral competence to maintain a strong Institution. In his book, *The Singapore Story: From Third to First Class World*, Lee⁴² talks about the Asian values that he believed were specific to Asian societies and distinct from values of other countries and these values are what has made Singapore to be what it is today. The question now is who created these values? These values were created by men and women of Asian root who committed themselves to the norms, principles, standards and common citizenship they hold in high esteem. As such for us to really meet up to the ideals of our democratic values which we have embraced, then we must begin to look at the fundamental,

41 See Gambari I. (2008). *The Challenges of Nation Building: The Case of Nigeria*. First Year Anniversary Lecture of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation 7th February, 2008.

42 Lee K. Y. *The Singapore Story: From Third to First Class World*, (New York: HarperCollins Publisher Inc. 2000), Pg. 360.

essentials and objectives of our democratic institutions as theorized by Kukah in a public Lecture on “Democracy, Legitimacy and the Struggle for Justice in Nigeria”.⁴³ These values of a democratic process will be the only platform that can curtail our differences for us to harness our diversity. Institutions are built on values and these values were created by men and women who have the interest of the common good and as such people like John Rawls have designed a value system that will be to the interest of every one when he emphasized the least disadvantage in the society to be regarded as he developed his veil of ignorance and the original position as a yardstick for a value oriented society that can facilitate a sustainable development. On the other hand, it is quite unfortunate that the very reason we have a very weak democratic process in Nigeria and a defective constitution is a hangover of a system that has been under military rule in Nigeria. The military left us with misconception of leadership and of course as they metamorphosize into a civilian garb giving us a constitution that protects only their personal and selfish interest.

This has led to the high level of corruption and unprecedented moral decadence from the political elite that have diminished the institutionalized democratic values through a defective constitution that have lost touch with the ideals of democracy. A person aspiring to become a leader prepares for it in many ways through hard work, imbibing certain values and avoiding certain vices, spends time and energy studying and coming to grips with the nature of the society and only then can we continuously build an institution that is vibrant and strong. Nelson Mandela stands out today as the epitome of the struggle against the apartheid regime. His story is the story of the African spirit and values against an institution that is predominantly unjust. Today he has come to be a symbol of a valuable resource statesman who was

43 Kukah, H.M. Nigeria as an Emerging Democracy: The Dilemma and the Promise. *Daily Trust Newspaper*. 2012.

committed to values that are worth emulating and has influenced a turning point in South African history and Africa in general, thereby creating a strong institution for future generation. The basic ingredient for an institution to be strong is based on values and values do not walk on two legs but people have to make institutions work by inculcating values that will maintain a road map that future generations will thread base on a history that has a rich cultural heritage which will promote the dignity of the human person. The breakdown of moral values is what has led us to what we have as economic recession today and the difficulty in resolving our economic crisis is the lack of strong institution that is very much unguarded and this is a product of historical default on our perception of governance.

Conclusion

From the expressions in this paper, it is obvious that integral development that is sustained by nations seems to be inevitable if human existence is to be responsible and decent. This means that those at the helm of affairs should strive to make sure that this developmental state of affairs is enthroned. However, it was also made explicit that this mode of development does not happen by chance or in a vacuum but some variables and structure need to come to play to enthrone that sane state of being. These variable and structure includes not just the critical institutions as people are wont to believe but also the strong men, the change agents or the game-changes. These are men and women of virtue who are really agents that are very sensitive to the institutions as it is only through their endeavour that this required and desired level and mode of development can be achieved. Indeed, this paper argued that it is valorization of these change-agents that can grant the institutions the full power they need to engender the development they crave for. This is premised on the fact that agents are the drivers of institutions and when agents are not properly formed, the institutions that follow are bound to function poorly.

Bibliography

- Abrahamsen, R., *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance*, London: Zed Books, 2000.
- Abubakar, S. "Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Nigeria" *African Journal of Economic Review*. Vol VIII, Issue 1, January 2020.
- Ake, Claude, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2001.
- Amao, K., *A Course Text on Human Development and Learning*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka, 2000.
- Brian H. Bix, "Kelsen, Hart, and legal Normativity" *Revus Journal for Constitutional Theory and Philosophy of Law*, Vol. 43, 2018.
- Confucius, "Analects." In Richard Viladesau and Mark Massa, *World Religions: A Sourcebook for Students of Christian Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994.
- Gambari I. The Challenges of Nation Building: The Case of Nigeria. First Year Anniversary Lecture of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation 7th February, 2008.
- Haaga, P. T "Resolving African Leadership Failure Using the 'Agent Sensitive' Archetypal: A Jurisprudential Approach", in *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, Vol, 3, No, 1. 2018.
- Harris, D. (Ed.), *The Concept of Development*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Hodgson, G. M." What Are Institutions", *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol.40, No. 1, 2006.
- Hundley, G. *Social Reconstruction Towards Economic Development*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Kukah. H. M. Nigeria as an Emerging Democracy: The Dilemma and the Promise. *Daily Trust Newspaper*. 2012.
- Lee K. Y. *The Singapore Story: From Third to First Class World*, New York: Harper Collins Publisher Inc. 2000.
- Masahiko A. *Toward A Comparative Institutional Analysis*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.
- McGurk, Henry, *Growing and Changing*. London: Methuen & Co., 1975.
- Okeke, V. C and Oginyi, G.I "Inclusive Institutions in Daron

Acemoglu and J.A Robinson: A Paradigm for African Development" *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, Vol, 3, No, 1. 2018.

Oladipo, Olusegun & Olorunyomi Sola (Ed.) *View Point: A Critical Review of Culture and Society*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1999.

Plato, *Complete Works* John Cooper, Ed., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Popper, K. R. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1, *The Spell of Plato*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1945.

_____ *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*. London: Open Court, 1982.

Seer, D. "The Meaning of Development" *International Development Review*. Vol. 11. No. 4, 1969.

Woods, P. R *Junzi and Rashang: A Confucian Approach to Business Ethics in a Contemporary Chinese Context*. Melbourne: Victoria University, 2000.