

Military-Civilian Regimes and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria: A Comparative Discourse and Evaluation

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Abstract

Nigeria, like other African countries, is faced with the problem of providing its citizens with the basic needs that make life worth living, whether under the military or civilian regime. This paper attempted a comparative evaluation of the military and civilian administrations' efforts at the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The paper relied heavily on data culled from existing records and analysed using descriptive techniques. The paper noted that both the military and civilian regimes in Nigeria have initiated and implemented several policies and programmes towards the socio-economic development of the country but with little and in most cases, no positive impact on the lives of the citizens. The paper observed conclusively that the civilians are believed to be the best administrators of government whereas the military are meant to be specialists in handling ammunition and war-related strategies, not governance. It was recommended that the Nigerian government should encourage professionalism as well as increase budgetary allocation to military formations to keep them from meddling in governance while the civilian administrators should endeavour to reduce unemployment and inflation rates in addition to improving the nation's GDP through sustainable economic policies.

Keywords: Civilian regime, development policies, economic misfortunes, economic recovery, military formation.

Introduction

One of the problems African countries, including Nigeria, are faced with is that of development. Every regime, whether military or civilian, is confronted with the problem of how to develop society by providing its citizens with those things that make life worth living. The military has had to cite a lack of development as one of the reasons for taking over power from civilians. Some of the after-cited reasons by the military for taking over power, as noted by Nwabueze (1977) include corruption, waste, the concentration of wealth in a few hands, increasing unemployment general maladministration, especially, of the economy. Thus, the question of development has always been one of the defining roles of governmental activities in Africa and, indeed, Nigeria.

The military formation is an outgrowth of colonial complexes in Africa. It belongs to the set of colonial heritage which, in concordance with the pervasive Western contradictions, crippled the continent's earliest efforts at nation-building and impregnated its politics with psychosis. As part of the social system with its widely acclaimed political neutrality, it initially showed itself averse to the erratic pattern of political gangsterism which was in vogue in the formative years of nationhood but later became more disposed to an immutable avalanche of political rebellion which turned most African countries to the military pavilion, Nigeria inclusive (Okibe, 2000).

In Nigeria, from 15 January 1966 to 1 October 1979 and from 31 December 1983 to 29 May 1999, the military was in absolute control of the country's affairs. The military had ruled for about 30 years, while the civilians have ruled for about 35 years out of the 63 years of Nigeria's existence as an independent nation. The implication is that the disequilibrium in leadership has implicated civil society

with a multiplicity of systemic, psychological, emotional and moral problems (Udokang & Awofeso, 2002; Ita, Ebong, & Inimo-Etele, 2019).

It is against the above backdrop that this paper sets out with the thrust to evaluate the role of the military regimes between 1983 and 1999, on the one hand, and the civilian government between 1999 and 2023, on the other hand, vis-à-vis socio-economic development in Nigeria. It will attempt to provide answers to the following questions: What are the imperatives of socio-economic development in Nigeria? How have the military and the civilian regimes in the country preoccupied themselves with the socioeconomic development in the country? The task of this paper, thus, is to identify major socio-economic programmes and policies initiated by military and civilian regimes and how they impacted Nigerians vis-à-vis tackling the socio-economic challenges in the country.

Socio-economic Development Conceptualized

Socio-economic development has been subjected to a plethora of conceptualizations. Mohammed & Abdullahi (2021) viewed it as the process of social and economic development in a society with the ultimate concern of bringing about sustained improvement in the well-being of individuals, groups, families, communities, and the society at large. For Udu et al., (2022), Udoms et al., (2017), socioeconomic development is pivotal to a nation's development programmes because of its focus on human capital that constitutes the most formidable asset and resources in striving towards sustainable development in all ramifications. It implies a process of growth in life-changing measures and improvement in the general standard of living measured with indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy, and employment levels, as well as changes in less-tangible factors like personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm.

Nwakpa (2021) conceived socio-economic development as a process of social and economic transformation which incorporates public concerns in formulating social policy and economic initiatives. It involves a conscious and sustained improvement in the living standard of a country's population through an increase in its stocks of institutional and technological advancement. In the opinion of Faruk & Abdullahi (2022), socio-economic development entails the long-term sustenance of human and material resources in addition to making sure that development programmes continue to exist long after their establishment. In effect, it confers the idea of sustainability of development programmes aimed at raising the social and economic welfare of the citizens.

Imperatives of Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

Nigeria, like many African countries, is potently not a developed but a developing nation. More than a decade ago, Ojo (2006) noted that its people are far worse off now than they were 30 years ago. The data on the economy are self-explanatory. Despite some \$280 billion in export revenues since the discovery of oil in the late 1950s, at least half of Nigerians live in abject poverty without access to clean water and lack quality education, and health facilities (Maier, 2000). Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person is lower now than it was before the beginning of the oil boom of the 1970s. With a population size of more than 200 million, the GDP is \$36 billion, while the real growth rate is 2.7% per capita GDP is \$300 with an inflationary rate of 6.6% (Young, 2001). Presently, the value of the Naira has fallen from N2.00 to pound sterling in the early 1970s to as much as N1600.00 to a pound and N1400.00 to a US dollar. The World Bank ranked Nigeria as the thirteenth poorest country in the world. The UN Human Development Index gave a slightly better, though still disheartening score of 146th out of 174 (Maier, 2000).

On the other hand, it is amazing to note that despite this (poverty in addition to brazen corruption) the country has enormous human and material resources. Her natural resources include petroleum, natural gas, tin, columbite, cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts and cotton; her industry includes textile, cement, food products and footwear. But it means nothing to people who cannot eat properly,

have no roof over their heads, find a job, send their children to school and have access to a minimum of decent healthcare.

Meanwhile, what the above data on the economy tells us is that there is pervasive level of poverty in Nigeria. This is the state of being extremely poor and lacking the means to exist adequately. Poverty is itself a crisis that is habitual and conveys the message of hardship, difficult to deny because it speaks publicly on grounds of visible misery, persisting destitution, endemic hunger or starvation and visible malnutrition. It has been argued that persistent military rule accompanied by brazen corruption and pillage of the public treasury is accountable for the present socio-economic predicament in the country. The question to ask is: What effort has been made to redress this situation by the military and civilian regimes in Nigeria?

The Military and Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

The intrusion of the military into the arena of politics has been seen partly as an expression of the cumulative frustration of the citizens arising from unfulfilled rising developmental expectations. Thus, Nnoli (1986) contended that administration in African countries is in general characterized by an attempt to use the apparatus of the government to hasten socio-economic development and overcome backwardness. For instance, in his coup speech in 1983, General Abacha (cited in Ikoku, 1985) remarked:

You are all living witnesses to the great economic predicament and uncertainty, which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years. I am referring to the harsh intolerable conditions under which we are now living. Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged; we have become a debtor and beggar nation. There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people who are now fed up with endless announcements of importation of foodstuff; health services are in shambles as our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics without drugs, water and equipment. Our educational system is deteriorating at alarming rate. Unemployment figures including the undergraduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions (p. 166).

Most of the issues raised in the statement above are mostly socio-economic-related ones - health, employment, education etc. The implication is that the military administration hoped to tackle these socio-economic development problems.

However, between 1966 and 1979, the military in Nigeria had taken steps to address the socio-economic problems in the country. Indisputably, it is to the credit of the military that the indigenization and import substitution development policies were adopted for implementation. These policies attempted to put the economy in the hands of Nigerians and encouraged indigenous entrepreneurship as well as the establishment of local industries to produce some of the manufactured goods that were hitherto, imported. This attempt at industrialization gave rise to Peugeot Automobile Nigeria at Kaduna, Anambra Motor Company (ANAMCO) at Enugu, Volkswagen at Lagos, Steyr Motors at Bauchi and the Ajaokuta Steel Complex. Other issues include the introduction of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), River Basin Authorities and the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure which were aimed at improving the rural economy (Ofuebe, 1997)

Between 1989 and 1999, efforts at socio-economic development in Nigeria took different dimensions in the hands of the military under Generals Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and Abdulsalami Abubakar. The Babangida administration adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) toward socio-economic engineering in the country. According to Ofuebe (1997), SAP was tantamount to the acceptance and recognition by the government that the proceeding development plans

had failed to catalyse and catapult Nigeria to economic self-reliance and prosperity. SAP was a mechanism designed to reverse the economic misfortunes that afflicted developing countries. In the Nigerian context, SAP yielded devastating consequences.

According to the World Bank & UNDP (1989), SAP brought little improvement to the Nigerian economy despite the worrisome self-serving claims to the contrary by the Babangida administration. SAP brought about a combination of economic stagnation and inflation in the country. As summed up by Odugbemi (1993, cited in Ofuebe, 1997):

The period has been characterized by high inflation, high unemployment, disinvestment on a significant scale, chronic capacity under-utilization by industries, degenerations of social services and the deepening pauperization of Nigerians. Above all, to quote Professor Dotun Phillips, ‘SAP is yet to significantly positively affect the crux of Nigeria’s current economic problems, namely shortage of foreign earnings and resources’ (p. 73).

In fact, the SAP relief packages introduced by the government did not offer the required extenuating elixir to the debilitating economic impact of SAP.

At the end of the Babangida’s regime, General Abacha who took over the reins of governance could not offer any solution to the socio-economic problems of the country. Rather, he combined his imbecility with inordinate ambition for indefinite leadership to institutionalize humiliation, intimidation, assassination, lawlessness and general disaster in the country (Okibe, 2000). It is a sad indictment that the period of military rule under General Sani Abacha was characterized by a culture of freewheel spending, rip-off of unparalleled proportions - an era of unprecedented recklessness and financial rascality. The economy under Abacha was severely mismanaged while no genuine effort was made at raising the socio-economic standard of the citizens. In the words of Ali (2001), General Abacha’s handling of money in the Central Bank of Nigeria was synonymous with what the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) described as ‘direct stealing’ as it pertains to the manner some Executive Governors treated their state treasuries. On the extent to which the national economy was plundered during the Abacha’s regime, Okibe (2000) observed that:

The national budget articulation and control are subject to all manner of variables within the egoistic desires of the military leader to dispense. The nation’s master banker, the Central Bank of Nigeria, is a puppet, dancing in the dark to the tunes of the almighty Head of State. He has unlimited access to ways and means, all officials at his finger-tips, no parliamentary or review committee to question his prudence in the management of national cash resources (p. 235).

Again, General Abdulsalami Abubakar’s regime did not help matters either. Concerning the regime, the Christopher Kolade Contract Review Panel inaugurated on 7 June 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo to scrutinize how approvals for contracts and licences made between January 1, 1999 and May 28, 1999 were handled, concluded that “though Nigeria was already neck-deep in corrupt practices, the General Abubakar administration made mockery of any sense of discipline and probity and at the scale that practically made saints of his predecessors in office (Eminue, 2006). Put simply, the Abubakar administration engaged in “wilful destruction of the Nigerian economy”. The Panel’s report (cited in Eminue, 2006) stated that:

General Abubakar spent the last five months of his tenure decapitating the country while maintaining an incredibly innocent mien. Quite unlike Emperor Nero who fiddled while Rome burnt, General Abubakar willingly play along in the game of executive lawlessness, and in some instances, was the mastermind of the process, for as the commission observed, the initiative for the contract awards came from the Presidency and the necessary contract documents were then prepared and submitted for anticipatory payment (p. 528).

More specifically, the Panel revealed that:

The regime frittered away Nigeria's \$2.3 billion in foreign exchange deals alone and despite a ceiling of ₦88 billion approved as capital vote for Government Ministries and parastatals in the 1999 budget, officials of Abubakar's Government approved and awarded contracts worth over ₦640 billion within that short period before Obasanjo assumed office (p. 528).

Thus, the administration that handed over to the new democratic government on May 29, 1999, left the economy in a very bad position. For instance, while the nation's GDP stood at 3.2 per cent during Abacha's regime, it fell to 2.4 per cent in 1998, and the industrial capacity fell from 34.3 per cent in the second half of 1997 to 31.3 per cent in the second half of 1998. The exchange rate slumped from about ₦85 to one dollar in June 1998 to ₦95 in May 1999. The rate of inflation rose from 8.3 per cent in 1997 to over 10 per cent in 1998 (Ndiomu, 2000; Abiola & Olaopa, 2006).

In effect, the evaluation has shown that the various military regimes had not fared better in the area of socio-economic development in the country. The military had instead promoted a complete 'prebendalism' of state power as well as entrenched the culture of public corruption to the detriment of the nation's economy and the citizens.

The Civilian Regimes and Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

The civilian administration which assumed state power and governance of Nigeria on May 29, 1999, inherited an economy "generally riddled with a myriad of problems and had virtually collapsed" (Obasanjo, 2000, p. vii). The analysis of the nation's economy saw an embarrassing and ridiculous result to the extent that it was opined and described that the high expectation of a strong economic performance was frustrated. A virtually collapsed social and economic infrastructure, climaxed by an unprecedented energy crisis, laid the economy prostrate (Fadahunsi, 2005; Abiola & Olaopa, 2006). The consequences of the state of the economy were mass retrenchment of the industrial labour force, underemployment and mass unemployment within the urban and rural informal sectors of the national economy. President Obasanjo, not oblivious to these problems, formulated some economic policies aimed at redressing the socio-economic situation in the country.

However, the period of Obasanjo's governance (1999-2003 and 2003-2007) failed to record significant success in achieving the lofty aims and objectives as well as the guiding principles of the administration as contained in the 'Obasanjo Economic Direction, 2000'. There were high records and widespread allegations of looting of government treasury, misappropriation, rent-seeking, outright embezzlement of public funds and unprecedented capital flights from the country. For example, between 1999 and 2002, there was a capital flight of \$4.66 billion annually (Democratic Socialist Movement) (DSM, 2003). In addition, the government policy of privatization and liberalization as well as its acclaimed reasons and benefits had not yielded any fruits. The policy, rather than being an effective antidote, has since its implementation, been an unmitigated disaster for the working masses and the economy in general. The policy was morbidly anti-poor and slavishly pro-rich.

According to the Nigeria Human Development Report (NHDR), as of 1998, Nigerians living in poverty was estimated at 48.5 per cent, while in 2000, NHDR ranked the country 151st position out of 174 countries and among the poorest in the world (Federal Office of Statistics, 1997). To redress the reality of poverty in Nigeria, the administration put in place a few programmes to this effect. Notable among them was/is the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) whose main preoccupation was to build economic bridges between the haves and the have-nots and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), targeted at consolidating the nascent democracy. Unfortunately, these programmes suffered tremendously from the wide gap between intent and actual practice even as the welfare principle of these programmes was and is still not reaching the poor (Akinmidu, 2004). Despite the introduction of these programmes, the desired results were not and have still not been achieved as poverty was/is still prevalent in Nigerian society.

In search of a solution, the Obasanjo administration formulated the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) between 2003 and 2007 as a medium-term strategy to rediscover Nigeria's economy through the creation of wealth, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation. Consequently, the government was able to reverse decadence in the country, thereby recording some considerable achievements such as the Communication/GSM revolution; a systematic boost in the agricultural sector; an increase in industrial capacity utilization and the provision of soft loans through poverty alleviation programmes. All these gave rise to employment opportunities and a rise to income and wages (Jibrin, 2004).

Despite these achievements, the country was/is still faced with the problem of unemployment which is as high as 10%, meaning that about 6.4 million Nigerians are still searching for jobs (Ita & Bassey, 2022). The country is also faced with difficult challenges of reforming the public sector for effective service delivery, the need to fight corruption and fraud which have been long-standing obstacles to the country's progress and empowerment of the private sector to lead and drive up the economy, re-orientated our values such that our dependence on government will be minimized, promotion of honesty, hard work, entrepreneurship, creativity and discipline will be enhanced.

In essence, the first four years of President Obasanjo was confronted with the twin problems of unemployment and poverty which were considered to be the greatest of Nigeria's headaches (Yusuf, 2007). The other challenge was the epileptic power supply which the regime sunk a whopping sum of 16 million dollars, but little or no remarkable progress was made on it. Yusuf thus described Obasanjo's economic agenda as messy. There was an epileptic power supply and scarcity of pipe-borne water persisted; death-trap roads, poor health services and a dislocated education system as many factories were closed down and hundreds of thousands of workers and families were thrown into poverty.

Ikeanyibe (2009) opined that policies in Obasanjo's regime were anti-masses because they never favoured employment as exemplified in the Central Bank's retirement of almost 1,000 bankers in the name of banking reforms in 2005. On the contrary, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (2011) spoke glowingly of the regime, specifically on the debt cancellation by the Paris Club, in a postulation that:

Here in a nutshell was the economic report card for 2003-2007: OPFR key, manifestation of break with the Paris Club debt negotiation: external debt down from \$38 billion in 2003 to \$3.5 billion in 2006. Reserves up from \$ 7 billion in 2003 to \$ 38 billion to seal the Paris Club debt deal; adoption of NEITI and general move towards budgetary transparency growth of non-oil economy more than doubled to 8-9 percent per year between 2004 and 2007 compared to 3-4 per cent over 1995-2000. Agriculture accounts for some 40 per cent of non-oil growth (p. 60).

However, whatever achievement was recorded during the Obasanjo's eight-year presidency, the positive impact was minimally felt by the Nigerian masses.

President Musa Yar'Adua, on resumption of office, recognized these problems and set out to tackle them in his 7-Point Agenda and undertook socio-political and economic re-alignment and relocations. The development agenda was fashioned after the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to battle the numerous problems of power and energy; food security and agriculture; wealth creation and empowerment; transport sector; land reforms; security; and education.

The 7-point agenda of the Yar'adua administration was somewhat of an uncoordinated plan and looked more like an administration's mantra with much talk than actions. It rather aligned itself on the MDGs which were much of 'goals from outside'. Though some of the objectives were achievable, the programme did not go beyond the usual policy formulation that lacked the necessary implementation mechanism which had been the major challenge of other plans in Nigeria. The abrupt demise of President Yar'adua terminated the 7-point agenda.

Occasioned by the death of his former boss, Dr Goodluck Jonathan stepped into the Presidency (2010-2015) to complete the administration's tenure. President Jonathan shelved the 7-point agenda and in its stead introduced the "Transformation Agenda" (2011-2015) as a policy and programme with the hope to transform Nigeria into an economic powerhouse in the world (Awojobi, 2017; Uche, 2019). The agenda focused on three core areas: first, refurbishing all ailing industries, encouraging agriculture and agro-related businesses, promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs); second, reducing poverty and creating massive employment; and third, fighting corruption at all levels of governance. As lofty as the agenda appeared in conception and objectives, it was bedevilled by lapses in implementation and inconsistencies, thus, rendering its realization a pipe dream.

As President Buhari took over the leadership of the country (2015-2023), his regime was bedevilled with a lot of economic challenges which became a threat to his key agenda of fight against corruption, security and economic recovery. In search for a workable development strategy, the administration launched "The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)" in 2016 as a medium-term economic framework meant to stimulate the recessive economy back to sustainability, accelerate development and restore the economy in the medium-term (Kyarem & Ogwuche, 2017).

The ERGP was designed with fantastic objectives, prominently, to restore growth, engender macro-economic stability and diversification, invest in Nigerians through continuous support for economically disadvantaged individuals, create jobs, improve accessibility and affordability to quality healthcare across the country, and improve human capital in the areas of improved education for all (Kyarem & Ogwuche, 2017). The overall expectation was that the cumulative effect of the ERGP's targets would translate to expansion and growth in GDP by 2.19% in 2017, averaging 4.62% between 2018 and 2019 and finally hitting 7% by 2020. It was likewise expected that the unemployment rate would reduce from 13% (as of 3rd Quarter of 2016) to 11.23% by 2020 (Uche, 2019). These expectations failed as the country's socio-economic indices and welfare continued to deteriorate, even as the plan became enmeshed in political disruption that negated its implementation as an impactful development plan.

Assessment of Regimes' Policies Performance on Socio-economic Development

Succeeding Nigerian governments (military and civilian) have initiated various policies aimed at tackling socio-economic challenges confronting their citizens. For instance, as a strategy to resolve socio-economic issues confronting Nigerians, in 2000, the Obasanjo administration initiated the Poverty Alleviation Programme (Kura et al., 2019). The intention was to curb youth restlessness; however, the policy was obstructed owing to deficient policy design, deficient coordination, insufficient financing coupled with a deficiency in monitoring and evaluation. Owing to its failure, the National Poverty Eradication Programme was launched to eliminate, rather than alleviate poverty in Nigeria. The policy was enmeshed in different issues that attracted the legislators to investigate the activities carried out under the policy. The project could not be accounted for or linked to specific evidence of achievement after spending almost 98 million USD (Kura et al., 2019).

According to Obamuyi & Oladapo (2016), the Nigerian government under President Obasanjo came up with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) in 2003 as an encompassing developmental policy going by its objective to stimulate growth and ascertain poverty curtailment, provide empowerment, job creation, wealth creation, and transformation of the Nigerian society (Uche, 2019). However, NEEDS was engulfed with insufficiency, ineffectiveness, unanalytical approach, without an appropriate economic target, and devoid of a right-based approach; consequently, NEEDS policy failed to actualize the needs of the Nigerian citizens. While the federal government was implementing NEEDS, the policy was introduced to state and local governments as the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) (Alumona & Odigbo, 2016). However, as of 2018, the Economic Recovery and Review Plan was lacking a legal framework supporting its foundation and implementation through the pathway to achieving its objective of reckoning with the evidence in the policy gap and implementations.

Observably, though there was a slight increase in the GDP in Nigeria, Ugoani (2019) stated that poverty and unemployment persisted mainly owing to a ravaging lack of governance and fraudulent acts. The diverse socio-economic policies that crumbled in the country occurred explicitly due to governance deficit and malpractices as policies formulated were driven by the self-interest of the politicians and military juntas. In agreement with Ugoani, Uche (2019) posited that diverse socio-economic development policies in Nigeria had not yielded expected objectives to the public; instead, enormous socio-economic development issues linger without strategic resolution owing to policy contradiction, policy reversal, lack of political will, and lack of dedication to implementation, and dependence on international directives which inhibits Nigeria's development.

Sequel to the failure of NEEDS, the Obasanjo administration opted for Vision 20:2020 with the broad goals of restoring economic, social, and achievable development; delivering sufficient infrastructure and social goods and services, and propelling Nigeria's economic development. Nevertheless, the policy was confronted with poor governance issues, misappropriation, flawed fiscal system among others (Chukwuma & Nwanbam, 2019). In 2009, when the government conceived Vision 20:2020 with its intended objective to direct the potentiality and energy of Nigeria citizens and appropriately or accountably harness natural resources to ensure a quality means of livelihood to the citizens, the population was 154,324, 933 with 53.5% in poverty while 19.7% were unemployed.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), Nigeria's population increased to 206,000,000, in the year 2000 with 40.1 % of Nigerians living below the poverty line while 33.3% were unemployed and 22.8% underemployed. In 2009 when Vision 20:2020 was formulated, 82,563,839 Nigerians were in poverty with a GDP of 291.88 billion US dollars, while as of December 2020, when the policy was implemented, 82, 606,000 Nigerians remained in abject poverty with a GDP of 448.12 US dollars. Moreover, World Bank (2020) report showed Nigeria's total public debt was USD25.8 million with an exchange of 1 USD to N150.85, which was far less than the total public debt of 86.4 billion USD with an exchange rate of 1 USD to N381 CBN rate, which culminated in a debt of N33.9 trillion spent on development in Nigeria.

Given this situation, at the Nigeria debt portfolio's presentation to the Nigerian Senate in 2020, the Senate Chairman on Foreign and Local Debts lamented that the big question in the minds of average Nigerians aware of this fact is: What did we do with the money? In other words, where did the money go? What do we have to show as a people for these huge debts accumulated over the last four decades? (Elumoye, 2020). The senate leader's lamentation proved that the aspirations of socio-economic development and improved standard of living in Nigeria have failed due to government's inability to channel the nation's resources to achieve the society's expected developmental needs as stipulated in the Constitution.

Socio-economic Development Policies in Nigeria: Empirical Evaluation

Numerous authors, among them, Ojo et al., (2014), and Igiebor (2019) have investigated the impact of government policies on the socioeconomic development issues like corruption, unemployment, insecurity, dysfunctional health system, collapsing and damaged infrastructure, huge debts, among others, in Nigeria since independence. Particularly, Igiebor (2019) examined the implications of political corruption for economic development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and came up with the conclusion that 'top to bottom corruption' has negatively affected Nigeria's economic development. He stressed that political corruption affects and impairs policy-making, government institutions, governance, the rule of law, regulations, and coherent processes.

Furthermore, Igiebor in corroboration with Ojo, Aworawo & Elizabeth (2014) inferred that social development is often conceived as progressive social change where economic development is always construed as an improvement in people's quality of life in a particular society. Thus, despite the huge wealth and resources in Nigeria, the challenges of honesty, transparency, competence, and accountability remain a significant issue. The citizens must be curious in demanding accountability and transparency in governance, resisting undue and vain gratifications, checking corruption and participating effectively in policy-making and its implementation in Nigeria.

Ita et al., (2018), Kura et al., (2019) and Ita & Bassey (2022) examined poverty and rising youth unemployment in Nigeria and government efforts towards its sustainable reduction. The scholars asserted concertedly that despite massive resources that have been expended on poverty reduction projects, there had not been any specific decrease, instead, it had increased tremendously. This increase in the poverty rate hinges on corruption, duplications of projects, competition among government agencies, and policy-making obstruction. In effect, despite several government efforts on poverty alleviation policies, inefficient macroeconomic management, political instability, and bad governance have been attributed to the failure of poverty reduction in Nigeria.

In a study by Obamuyi & Oladapo (2016) on the Nigerian economy and the propensity for development, the duo observed that despite human and material resources endowment, corruption, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, politics and governance amid several other issues in Nigeria are hindering factors to the attainment of development in the country. To ensure economic development and progress in policy development, the government must be accountable for managing the national resources to prevent recklessness, poverty, and unemployment with a strong emphasis on policy formulation with the intention of economic development.

Striking the same chord, Oyewunmi & Oyewunmi (2018) in consonant with Awofeso & Irabor (2020) pointed out that socio-economic issues in Nigeria are aggravated by poor governance resulting in high unemployment, insufficient social well-being, inadequate health facility, which has continued to expand, inequalities, and imbalanced among the wealthy and the poor, thereby crippling social integration and confidence in governance. Consequently, the authors stressed the need for transformation and policy direction considering diverse insecurities issues that have affected socio-economic contexts, a decline in public expenditure, and business implications in Nigeria.

Kubalu et al., (2017) provided a dynamic analysis of the relationship between human development and Nigeria's economic growth using quantitative econometrics techniques and found that despite the abundance of natural and human resources, Nigeria's development rate is prolonged and pathetic. In corroboration, Ita (2020) avowed that human development is pertinent to the development and indicated that one of the necessary means and approaches for improving human livelihood judging from the standard of living, hinges on access to good education and essential health services. In Nigeria, the health facilities are grossly inadequate, insecurity status is alarming, and education is constantly grumbling. World Bank's 2018 Human Capital Index placed Nigeria at 152 of 157 nations (World Bank, 2020). Kubalu et al. pointed out that the rate of the increase in human development is the aftermath of the revolving decline in the budget allocated to the social development sector of the Nigerian economy. Thus, human development is obligatory to determining the socio-economic development of a nation, given that development hinges on growth in GDP and good

governance, and evidence of purposeful economic development reflecting in the livelihood of the people.

In a study on democracy, governance, and socioeconomic rights on development in Nigeria, Waziri (2020) noted that lack of responsibility to enforce Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, especially socio-economic constitutional privileges policies, has contentiously stipulated the omission in ascertaining the connection between democracy, good governance, and economic development in Nigeria. The author further asserted that socio-economic privileges are privileges embedded in the Constitution of many nations that have encountered evidence of exploitation and mismanagement of their constitutional and economic privileges, resulting in a deficiency in human development in democracy considering the human as the focus of development in any country. Nigeria's Constitution is explicit on the security and well-being of the citizens which have remained the fundamental reason for government existence; consequently, governments, irrespective of their constituent and position, are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the policy implementation (Itumo & Nwefuru, 2016). This portends that Nigerian citizens must rise to protest weak governance policies and their inconsistencies.

In the World Bank's (2020) assessment, Nigeria has been confronted with immense developmental issues, including the required decrease in oil reliance and reformation of the economy, tackling inadequate infrastructures, a stable and efficient government, governance problems and poor public financial management structure. In effect, governance deficiency has become challenging to exterminate poverty, provide infrastructural facilities, and curb insecurity (Yagboyaju, 2019). Policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria is a decade issue in search of development to convert initiated or founded policies into practice and action. However, the space within expected outcomes and realities remained specifically expansive. The Nigerian government has structured diverse development policies, but the required socio-economic development has persistently evaded the citizens despite the solid initiatives.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The thrust of this paper has been to evaluate the efforts of the military and civilian administrations on the socio-economic development in Nigeria. Judging from the discussion in the preceding sections, it is obvious that between 1966 and 1979, the military had impacted positively on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. From 1983 to 1999, the Nigerian nation witnessed negative socio-economic impacts ranging from mass unemployment, high rate of inflation, collapse of the social service sector, low level of industrialization and high crime rate, among others, all of which are indicators of underdevelopment and backwardness. On the other hand, the civilian government between 1999 and 2009 has put in place programmes toward the socio-economic development of the country, though their impacts are yet to be felt positively. The preponderant majority are yet to reap and feel the dividends of democracy, as their lots have not been improved, and many people are still living below the poverty level, even as the unemployment rate is increasing at a geometric rate.

Policy implementation is a crucial phase in the policymaking exercise. As such, it should be devoid of inadequate strategic direction or principles, deficient coordination, poor financing, lack of dedication, implementers' competency, and top-down approach. These attributes have over the years rendered diverse policies by various governments in Nigeria as mere historical documents owing to monumental failures as their objectives were not and are yet to be achieved.

Worthy of note is the fact that poverty level, unemployment, and all indices of socio-economic factors have not evolved beyond the point of policy formulation while the situation keeps deteriorating in an uncontrollable proportion. In some cases, policy gets obstructed when changes occur in Nigeria's government, which has contributed to significant policy deficiency resulting in Nigeria's socio-economic woes. The obvious fact is that in Nigeria, socio-economic policies lack the legal backing and government willingness to enforce implementation, which is practically a bane in the Nigerian government system.

The above-painted scenario, therefore, calls for caution on the part of the government in implementing her socio-economic policies, particularly in ways and manners that could improve investment, and reduce poverty and unemployment. This is imperative in that a poverty-stricken/unemployment-ridden society is prone to socio-economic vices inimical to sustainable political and economic development. Without this in place, there is doubt that the Nigerian masses/country will benefit from the current democratic waves and its accompanying socio-economic dividends.

Moreover, the Nigerian government should encourage professionalism in the military formations as well as increase budgetary allocation to the Nigerian military. This would encourage them to concentrate on their primary constitutional role and dissuade them from intervening in politics, thereby allowing the governance of the country to civilians who are bestowed with the knowledge and capability to initiate and implement policies and programmes for the socio-economic development of the country.

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