

The Nigerian Elite and the Trajectories of National Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The paper examined the Nigerian elite and the trajectories of national development in Nigeria's fourth republic. The elite is often used to describe the group of persons who by their privileged position in different areas of life exercise direct or indirect influence in the management or control of public affairs. In several societies such as Nigeria, they constitute the governing and the ruling class. The cohesiveness of the power elite in particular, despite their occasional disagreement, places them in a pivotal position to influence or determine the pace of development for every state. National development which represents the overall development of every segment of society has remained the burning desire of every modern state. For Nigeria, the early years of her independence and thereafter witnessed the initiation of various development plans in order to bring about national development. Unfortunately, up until the fourth Republic, several factors have continued to cripple the nation's bid towards sustainable national development. Evidence abound in some extant literature of some impressive performance by the Nigeria power elite in certain quarters whereas in some others, the reverse has been the case. Methodologically, secondary sources of data derived from textbooks, journals, newspapers, and official publications were applied. Qualitative analysis was adopted for the study. The elite theoretical framework was found suitable in the analysis. The study reveals that some factors such as clandestine and ethno-religious politics spearheaded by the power elite, electoral malpractice, herdsmen-farmers clashes, Boko Haram attacks and cases of insecurity among others have remained cogs in the wheel of Nigeria's progress. The study recommends amongst others; proper brain washing of the various categories of the Nigerian elite for the inculcation of more progressive and positive values, nationalistic mindset and renewed spirit of patriotism.

Keywords: The Elite, National, Development, Democracy, Insecurity

Introduction

The pluralist nature of modern democratic states has led to the emergence of different class of individuals who occupy the various strata of the state either as leaders or the led. William Shakespeare aptly captured this when he stated that "some are born great, some achieve greatness, whereas some have greatness thrust upon them". These are the individuals who make things happen, whether good or bad. Thus, they constitute the decision makers, the society's think tank, the movers and shakers of power and the pilots of societal fortune (EKpu, 1989). This group that occupies the top echelon of society is generally described as the elite.

The elite are therefore those persons or groups whose ideas and input go a long way to influencing societal policy and implementation. According to Anyanwu (2015:4) "the elite occupy pivotal position in society in terms of respect, influence, power, wealth and talents". Both formally and informally, the elite of various strata in society exercise influence on various sectors covering the socio-economic, political, cultural and other notable sectors as far as policy decisions and implementation is concerned (Achebe, 1983).

From the time of political independence, the Nigerian elite have expanded in various forms and sources. They can be identified in various fields of life such as finance, business, the bureaucracy, the military, economy (captains of industry) educational, power, social, sports, intelligence, and religious. These groups by their right exercise enormous influence on societal policy matters and implementation which goes a long way to determining the pace

of societal or national development.

Nigeria's political history is replete with a galaxy of various forms of elite who in the early republics made formidable contributions to national development in Nigeria. These included, Herbert Macaulay, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, Sir Abubakar T. Balewa, among others who took the lead in the struggle for Nigeria's political independence.

Up until the fourth republic, the various dispensations have also produced both military and civilian elites. As far back as 1989, Nigeria's then military Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida during his address to the Oxford Cambridge Club of Nigeria at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos, on March 16, 1989 criticized the rapacious tendencies of the Nigerian elite. He noted that the Nigerian elite through their retrogressive activities had constituted themselves as cogs in the wheel of Nigeria's progress (Babangida, 1989). The former Nigeria's military leader described the Nigerian elite as "troublesome and parasitic group which include leaders of the various professions and the academia, the armed forces, the bureaucracy, industry, agriculture and commerce, the media organizations as well as the courts and council of traditional and political associations".

The then president further noted that members of the group only constitute a few thousands but have utilized the privileged circumstances of their birth and education to corner virtually every access to the opportunities offered by the country. According to the President:

The worst features in the attitude of the Nigerian elite over the decades have included fractionalism, disruptive competition, extreme greed and selfishness, indolence and abandonment of the pursuit of excellence. These serpentine tendencies of the elite have bred "a cult of mediocrity" with the attendant universal search for excuses to avoid taking difficult decisions and confronting hard work and a penchant for passing the bulk... the collective attitude and role of the elite have brought the country to its present unsavoury location, and will continue to foreclose its deserved march to greatness. I venture to suggest that it is the nature of the competition amongst us, the so-called elite, our foresight and breath of vision or the lack of it and our disparate definition of our genuine self interest- narrow or enlightened which have been at the root of our national problems (Babangida, 1989:12).

The constitution of every modern state has usually provided that the primary responsibility of the state should be the provision of security and overall welfare of the people. This responsibility squarely rests on the shoulders of the power elite or the political class.

National development has been conceived in different ways. In some quarters, it is seen as a multi-faceted approach aimed at a sustained growth and development of a nation and its populace from an undesirable level to a more desirable level through carefully mapped out strategies. National development is targeted at addressing the inadequacies occasioned by social amenities, quality education, portable water, insecurity, quality health care and infrastructural decay (Abimbola & Adesoye, 2012).

Nigeria's fourth republic has witnessed the emergence and resurgence of various classes of the elite across the various geo-political zones that individually and collectively have been making contributions to Nigeria's national development. Even though the average Nigerian is yet to have much to celebrate in terms of socio-economic provisioning due to persistent socio economic deprivations, one major area where Nigerian leadership has been given a pass mark has remained in the area of the country witnessing about twenty five years of unbroken democratic experience despite all odds. Some studies have narrowed Nigeria's crisis of development to the long years of military rule in Nigeria as well as her continued economic dependency on the advanced countries of the global North, these studies have not been focused on the activities of the Nigerian elite which certainly have marred national development in Nigeria. This lacuna is what this study is set out to investigate. Thus, some of the

nefarious activities spearheaded by the elite in the areas of economic mismanagement, electoral violence and malpractice, bribery and institutionalized corruption, insecurity of various dimensions, rising unemployment and poverty level among others have remained constraining factors militating against national development in Nigeria. It is in the light of this that this paper investigated the Nigerian elite and the trajectories of national development in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the elite theoretical framework. Parry (1969) defines the elite as the group that constitutes a small minority in society who appear to play dominant or influential role in societal or national affairs. Their privileged position, wealth, talent and sterling qualities clearly distinguish them from other members of society as these qualities and traits somehow constitute some forms of status measurement. These therefore give them ample opportunity to exercise enormous influence and control over public policy formulation and implementation over the less privileged members of society. In political science discourse, the theory follows a class centered approach to analyzing or explaining political issues (Eme, Anyadike & Ugwu, 2015).

The elite theory was popularized by scholars such as Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels. The theory explains the pluralist understanding on the distribution of political power in the society. The theory contends that political power rests on the hands of a minority group. In other words, that every society is composed of two major classes. That is, a class that rules, and a class that is ruled. According to Mosca (1939; p.50) "The first class performs virtually all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the privileges that power brings; whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first class. What is paramount in the contestation of the elite theory is that every state is composed of at least two major classes of people. That is, the influential, selected and more privileged few that have the capacity to influence, dominate and rule the majority who by accident of history are destined to be ruled (Varma, 1975). By this, the elite in every society or nation is looked upon to fashion out and implement those policies that would lead to over all societal or national development in areas such as political, socio-economic, cultural, environmental, among others.

The classical elite theorists contend that membership and composition of the elite group is hardly static in view of the inevitability of change as such definitely affects the circulation of the elite. A modern precursor of the elite theory, Williams (2006) concurs to the categories of the elite as advanced by the classical elite theorists either in the countries of the global South or in the global North. Thus, the political elites, the professional elites and the financial or business elites have in all societies tactfully worked to gain access to power, consolidate and use such to further their selfish interests.

The bid to use their privileged status to occupy key positions in the state through which they exercise control in virtually every sector of society has been a major characteristic of elite rule. Besides, the elite also manipulate the mass media and often attempt to deceive or convince the populace that there is no alternative to elite rule. According to Williams (2006; p.26):

Occupying positions at the apex of our society, they use the language of national interest, valour and endeavour in order to keep themselves in power. But by their very existence they have proved to be the destroyers of the democratic aspirations and the effective debate which should lie at the heart of an open society.

An American socialist, C. Wright Mills contends that the cohesiveness of the elite and unity of the power elite is often strengthened and enforced through the similarity of their social and educational background. In Mills analysis, the power elite exercise enormous influence, dominance and power and are often unaccountable. In America and elsewhere for instance, he claimed that the majority of the people who do not belong to the elite group are hardly carried along while making major decisions that affect their lives. A typical example was the entrance of America into the World War II and the bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in

the 1940s where the American power elite unilaterally took the decisions without seeking the consent of the people. The power elite among others uses its control of the mass media to control every structure and institutions of the state to the extent that the people are subjected to acting, thinking, feeling and behaving in a patterned way. In all, the pre-occupation of the power elite wherever they are found is power struggle, victory, exercise, consolidation and self aggrandizement. The attitudinal posture of the elite was captured by Haralambos, Martin & Robin (2008: 533) when they argued that “the elite tend to share similar values and sympathies which often provide the basis for their mutual trust, cooperation...”

Applying the elite theory to this study, the crux of the matter remains that the elite in Nigeria constitutes a minority segment of the populace which takes major political, economic and other decisions affecting the entire country. These elites may not necessarily be members of the political class or power elite as some of them are also found in some other professions from where they also exercise influence over government decisions and policies. The minority elite class derives their power from several means or sources.

In modern society, electoral victory has remained the major means of deriving power with which the elite exercise influence. The recycling of the membership and composition of the elite has remained from one generation to the other. Some decades ago, Bottmore (1964; p.95) observed that:

The elites are able to control the government because of their power, organization, their political skills or their personal qualities. The elites are always potentially capable of exploiting their positions so as to preserve the elite domination. The elite constitute a coherent, united and self conscious group.

The Nigeria power elite especially since the fourth republic have engaged themselves in undue competition either to gain access to political power or retain such through overt and covert means in order for them to use such to authoritatively allocate state resources. The struggle among the elite of the various classes has made Nigeria politics become more violent as it is commonly said that whosoever that controls the power machinery controls every other thing in society. Among the political parties in Nigeria, the minority elite have continued to control and dominate political party machineries. Following the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999; the People's Democratic Party flag bearer and former Military Head of State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was declared the winner of the presidential election. President Obasanjo, a former military elite piloted the affairs of the country between May, 1999 – May, 2007. The PDP won again at the end of the tenure of president Obasanjo. Late President Umaru Yar' Adua who took over power from President Obasanjo was in power up to 2010 when he died in office. His Vice, Dr Goodluck Jonathan completed his tenure, contested and won the 2011 presidential election.

In 2015, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) lost the presidential election to the All Progressives Congress whose candidate, General Mohammadu Buhari had contested the presidential election for three times. President Buhari under the All Progressives Congress secured a second tenure in office in 2019 against the People's Democratic Party's flag bearer, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, who had earlier defected from the All Progressives Congress (APC) to the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In the February, 2023 presidential election, the APC flag bearer, Alhaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu secured electoral victory with Alhaji K. Shetima (former Governor of Borno State) as the vice President, despite the much controversy generated by their Muslim – Muslim ticket. This can just be described as mere circulation of the elite. In Nigeria, whether the elite are in the opposition or ruling parties, their common goal or interest has remained gaining access to political power and enjoying the privileges accruing from it.

Across the various levels of government, the legislative and the executive arms which is constituted by the Nigerian elite has been initiating and implementing policies and programmes that their significant impact on the masses have remained doubtful. For instance, some national programmes intended to drive national development

such as the Sure-P, N-Power, NEEDS (NEPAD), cattle colony and withdrawal of oil subsidy were all ill conceived and elitist in focus and hardly achieved the purpose for which they were conceived.

In a way to achieve their selfish interest, the Nigerian elite have been known to often resort to sponsoring electoral and other forms of violence which end up heating up the polity and derailing national development. The elite theory is therefore relevant to the study on the Nigerian elite and the trajectories of national development in Nigeria's fourth Republic.

Classification of the Nigerian Elite

According to Ekpu (1989; p.10) "The Nigerian elite could be grouped into four". The first include the political elite who dominate the power and authority structure in the society. The second consist of the economic, military, diplomatic and scientific elites; the third are the elites who exercise moral authority. Such elites are found among the educators, religious leaders and philosophers. The fourth category of the elite is the film and sports stars, writers, and artists. Their wealth and fame is attributable to the ability they showcase in integrating the society psychologically and emotionally. The elites are noted as the prime movers of the environment where they find themselves. Recruitment into the elite group is often perfected through such means as noble birth, inheritance, talent, and personal achievements. Majority of the members of the elite are educated or literate but they demonstrate articulate ability. They formally or informally contribute not only in the initiation, formulation and execution of public policy but also in the galvanization and molding of public opinion. Some elites may not be educated formally but the special talents or wealth possessed by them is often transformed into an advantage and veritable instrument for enlistment into the elite class.

The power elite constitute the world's power house. One of the elite precursors, Pareto (1848-1923) groups them as either lions or foxes. The lions among them demonstrate some social ideals such as patriotism and progressiveness. They place society's needs below their personal interests. On the contrary, the foxes are scheming, skeptical, greedy and self-centred. Where they are found in large numbers, there is the possibility on the part of the elite to exhibit a rapacious exploitation of the people as well as mismanagement or misappropriation of public resources.

In Ekpu's (1989; p.10) contestation:

...You can discover among the elite both critics and apologists; eccentrics; and martyrs; deviants, neutrals as well as independents. They all shovel and jostle either to attract favour, secure higher recognition... the elites cannot easily be dispensed with, whether they are liked or not, they are not likely to go away.... a queer combination of saints and sinners. They are like roses and silver fountains.

Drawing from Marxism-Leninist philosophy on class analysis, some categories of the elite in Nigeria could also be drawn from Akpuru-Aja's (1998) categorization of the bourgeoisie as it affects the ownership and control of capital which serves as a leeway to wealth accumulation and recruitment into the elite group.

Generally, but not exclusively, the elite are grouped into; elite by privilege and elite by position. Elite by privilege are the captains of industry and private sector operators. By the virtue of their position, these group lobby and exercise strong influence in state policies as it affects economic growth and development. The second is elite by position. This category of the elite owe the source of their wealth to the role they play as middlemen in the production process or wealth creation, not necessarily by establishing firms where they function as managers. This second category is divided into: comprador elite, that is, the elite whose source of wealth could be traced to the commissions or rewards they receive as agents in the process of production. Similarly, political party members or officials who have been made rich by running around and playing one form of service or the other to their party (ies) belong to this category.

The next is military elite which is made up of top members of the armed forces or security agencies whose source of wealth could be traced to the influence they exercise in giving direction to government policies on security matters as it affects arms acquisition or procurement, military training and combat duties. The next on the line is the contractor elite whose source of wealth and affluence is derived from the contracts they execute for either the public or private sector. The intellectual elite include top members of the academia, renowned scholars, Professors, Vice Chancellors and others who enjoy intellectual property right. Their source of wealth could be traced to the role they play in government where they are appointed to Head some sensitive government institutions. Their intellectual skill and creative abilities distinguishes them from the rest of society.

Another category of the Nigerian elite is the technocratic – bureaucratic elite. This include public bureaucrats, Directors-General, permanent secretaries, ministers, and very senior members of the civil service who often times use their enviable or privileged positions to make enormous wealth by defrauding the government or organization through inflation of contracts, bribery, corruption and other forms of sharp practices. As Akpuru-Aja (1998; p.40) observes “in most third world societies, many technocrats and bureaucrats are too unproductive, unserviceable, unrepentantly corrupt and provocatively rich”. In addition, the religious elite include senior leaders of religious organizations, ministries and denominations. They are often addressed in such revered names as Archbishop, Superintendent, General Overseer (G.O) or Daddy General, Prelate, Apostle General, etcetera. Some of them started small or were materially poor as men of God but through God’s grace or some other means became very wealthy. For some of them, their ministries are run like large business organizations with Headquarters in the major cities, state or national capitals and branches spread throughout the nation and even overseas. Some have become stinking rich that they make use of convoy vehicles and private jets in the spread of the gospel. Their source of wealth is mainly through the support and sponsorship of their members and others that benefit from their ministration. The last among the Nigerian elite is the professional elites. These include top members of the various professions who have climbed the ladder of success to get to the peak of their career. The source of their wealth could therefore be traced to the benefits they derive given the influence they enjoy as well as the expertise knowledge they command over their career and profession. These include senior members of the legal profession, renowned Architects, Pilots, Medical Doctors, Engineers, among others.

Constitutional Role of the Nigerian Elite

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) aptly captures the role of the power elite in particular towards national development in Nigeria. For instance, chapter 11, section 13 of the above constitution spells out the fundamental objectives and Directive principles of state policy. The emphasis here is on good governance (Uzodinma, 2017).

Furthermore, the same constitution in section 14 (1b) provides inter alia “the primary purpose of government shall be the security and welfare of the people, and the people’s participation in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. From the constitutional provision, it thus follows that the focus of the Nigeria government shall be the well being and active participation of the citizens in the growth and development of the nation. To give effect to this, the constitution provides that:

...all corrupt practices and abuse of power shall be eliminated and rendered powerless... and that the state shall within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in the constitution harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic, and self reliant economy. It shall as well control the national economy in order to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen guided by social justice, equality of status and opportunity. It shall also manage and operate the major sectors of the economy in addition to protecting the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy (Articles 15:15 and 16:1 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, 2011).

The power elite in particular has a great role to play in the process of a national development. According to Uzodinma (2017; p.15):

...the political class should add value to the lives of the people of Nigeria. This they can do by creating employment opportunities for the people, improving on infrastructural facilities to make life better for the people, initiating policies that can grow the economy and enhance security of lives and property ... the only reason why the political class is in office is to translate these provisions of the constitution to reality and mid-wife the development of Nigeria by ensuring better health care delivery system, good roads, improved electricity supply, good security, diversified economic environment that ensures wealth generation... the political class in opposition should relentlessly offer constructive criticism by showing how the business of governance can be done better to achieve development.

National Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The precise meaning of national development has attracted divergent views among scholars. However, national development has been described as a situation where a nation's economy records impressive development and not just growth in the various sectors of the economy to the extent that the economic, cultural, political, and socio-economic well being of majority of the people is positively affected.

Different development plans had hitherto been put in place to drive national development in Nigeria by the various military and civilian regimes before the restoration of democratic rule in May 1999. However, various internal and external contradictions marred the realization of those plans as the expected results were hardly achieved.

The restoration of democratic rule in 1999 saw the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo introducing a medium-term development plan that was slated to last for four years. The plan was known as "National Economic Direction". It was aimed at strengthening, broadening and invigorating Nigeria's economy in order for it to be able to withstand external shocks (Uche, 2019). Unfortunately, the plan failed to meet its target just like some of the ones before it despite huge investments into it. In 2003, President Obasanjo's administration also came up with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The programme was domesticated at the state and local government levels through the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS). The programme was a medium term plan strategy which was aimed at articulating a development blue print to tackle poverty, facilitate economic growth and enhance national development (Ejimudo, 2013).

The emergence of late President Yar' Adua in May 29, 2007 led to the introduction of the seven (7) point Agenda. However, his untimely death in office partly affected the full realization of the programmes which were aimed at fast tracking national development in Nigeria. The Vice President and his successor, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) continued from where his boss stopped and also came up with the Transformation Agenda and subsidy Re-investment programme among others.

Former President Mohammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2023) despite its determination to the fight against corruption in Nigeria's body politics which he noted was seriously behind Nigeria's underdevelopment came up with reforms in the major sectors of the economy. Besides, the N-Power programme and Anchor Borrowers Scheme among others were introduced to drive national development in Nigeria.

The administration of Alhaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu on its inauguration announced a complete withdrawal of oil subsidy in Nigeria as part of the move to ensure the survival of the economy. The move however has been met with severe criticisms in view of the harsh economic conditions this has subjected the people to. The cost of transportation consequently rose higher as well as prices of goods and services. From the previous official pump price of N152.00 per litre before his take over, the official pump price of fuel was increased to over 100% which made the price of the product per litre to sale for about N680.00.

Despite Nigeria's huge potentials in human, mineral, material and natural resources, a greater percentage of the populace still wallow in abject poverty and are yet to experience meaningful turn around in their socio-economic lives. Major sectors of the Nigerian economy such as; education, energy, security, health and medical services, transportation among others have remained in sorry state up until the last quarter of 2023.

Some Activities Allegedly Spear Headed by the Nigerian Elite that have constituted some Cogs on Nigeria's March to National Development in the Fourth Republic

This paper examined the following:

i) Reinforcement and Imposition of Sharia Legal system in Twelve Northern States in the First Quarter of year, 2000

The anger, bitterness and disappointment expressed by some political bigwigs from the Northern extraction of Nigeria following the outcome of the 1999 presidential election that was won by the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) candidate, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southerner caused a lot of ripples among the Nigeria power elite from the Northern part of the country.

For various reasons, some of the influential political top knotchers of the Islamic sect worked with some Northern state governors for sharia legal system to be formally introduced and enforced across the states in the region. The sharia Islamic legal system is embedded in strict enforcement of Islamic law. It forbids legal representation and prescribes capital punishment even in lesser offences such as extra-marital affairs. Some of the penalties meted to non adherents to the sharia law are quite inhuman and gross abuse of human rights (Law, 2006). The year 2000 was really a religiously turbulent year that was marked by ethnic and religious tension and uprising in Northern Nigeria and its environs. National unity and integration were grossly affected as the implementation of sharia law ended up excising non adherents to Muslim or Islamic religion out of Northern Nigeria. Reprisal attacks against Islamic worshippers were also recorded in certain parts of the country especially in non Muslim states. Scores of lives were lost and property worth millions of naira destroyed. According to Ayo (2000; p.31) "Violent clashes between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna state in February 2000 turned bloody, an estimated 500 persons were killed with Churches, Mosques, businesses, residences and other forms or items of property destroyed. On February 27, a fresh outbreak of riots in Kaduna claimed over 65 lives".

The sharia legal system rapidly spread to twelve Northern states among which were; Kaduna, Kano, Niger, Kastina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Borno, Zamfara and Gombe (CLO Report, 2000). Although section 10 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended made Nigeria a secular state and prohibits the adoption of a state religion, the Federal government under the watch of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo virtually adopted "a wait and see attitude" even as the sharia crisis escalated. The sharia enforcement actually deepened the level of hatred, inter-ethnic tension and animosity as well as mutual suspicion between the Muslim North and their Southern Christian counterpart. All of these combined succeeded in heightened the already entrenched disaffection among people of the regions and resulted to serious threat to national unity, integration and development.

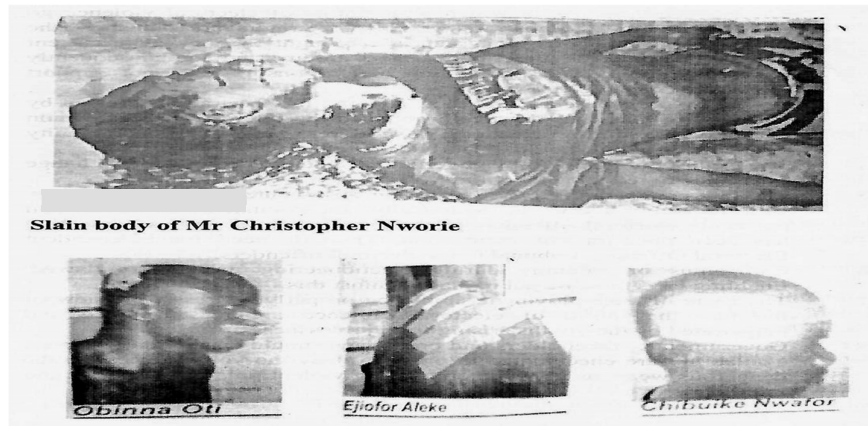
ii) Spearheading of Electoral Malpractices and Violence in order to Secure Electoral Victory

The entrenched insatiable quest to gain electoral victory and power by whatever means possible by some Nigeria elite has exacerbated the ugly incidence of electoral malpractice and violence. In Nigeria, and some other countries of the global south, politics has been seen as the major leeway to either acquisition of wealth or consolidation of same in line with David Easton's definition of politics as the authoritative allocation values for a society (Easton, 1979). Electoral Malpractice refers to the breach of laid down rules and regulations guiding the conduct of elections (Alozie & Enyiazu, 2021). Similarly, Smart & Jenny (1998; p.10) defined electoral malpractice as "any act(s) that are contrary to the procedures of credible elections as contained in the constitution or Electoral Act". Often times, electoral malpractice precipitate electoral violence as the tendency for one to cheat to win may lead to the tendency of the other to resist which may end up in violence.

Findings made possible by Fischer (2002) reveals that electoral violence is carried out by political parties, and their supporters, journalists, agents of the government, election monitoring bodies, etcetera. The consequences of election violence manifest in threats, assault, injury, murder, destruction of lives and property, and physical or psychological harm. All these in various dimensions have characterized the elections conducted in different parts of Nigeria before and since the fourth Republic.

The picture shown in table one is just a tip of the iceberg on election violence in Ebonyi State during the 2015 general elections.

Table 1: Victims of Election violence in Ebonyi State during the 2015 general elections



Source: Amandianeze & Uzodinma (2015)

The above victims were among the reported cases of death of the electorate that resulted in different parts of Ebonyi State during the 2015 general elections.

iii) Promotion of Ethno-Religious and Clannish Politics by the Nigerian Elite

Ethnicity has remained a major sub system in Nigeria (Ujo, 2008). Specifically, ethno-religious and clannish politics often spearheaded by the elite has characterized Nigeria's political history both in her pre and post independence experience. Ethnicity is simply used to describe one's membership of an ethnic group in a heterogeneous set up. Members of an ethnic group share certain things in common such as; language, tradition, custom, culture and perhaps religion. They therefore use their common values to protect or advance their interest to the exclusion of non members.

The politics of where one hails from whether he can perform or not has remained a national issue that has been affecting Nigeria's politics and administration negatively. In the build up to the 2015 general election, a Northern presidential candidate of the Islamic faith was noted to have openly urged Nigerian Muslims not to vote for a southern Christian presidential candidate. This call in no small measure heightened inter-ethnic politics, tension and antagonism. From the records, the immediate past Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari was severally criticized for the undue consideration and recognition he always gave to the people of Hausa/Fulani where he hails from. In the same vein, president Tinubu that took over from President Buhari has started receiving similar criticisms over the major executive appointments so far made by his administration as more recognition has been given to people of Yoruba/Hausa and Muslim origin.

The table below is a clear case of lopsidedness on the appointments made by president Buhari between, 2015 – 2018.

Table 2: Major Appointments and Recruitments in Nigeria between, 2015 – 2018

| S/N | Public offices | Regions |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1. | President | North |
| 2. | Senate President | North |
| 3. | Speaker, House of Representatives | North |
| 4. | Chief of Staff | North |
| 5. | SGF | North |
| 6. | INEC Chairman | North |
| 7. | Chief Justice of Federation | North |
| 8. | President Court of Appeal | North |
| 9. | EFCC Chairman | North |
| 10. | President Federal High Court | North |
| 11. | National Security Adviser | North |
| 12. | Chief of Army Staff | North |
| 13. | Chief of Air Staff | North |
| 14. | Controller, Customs Service | North |
| 15. | Defence Minister | North |
| 16. | MD, Port Authority | North |
| 17. | MD, NDIC | North |
| 18. | Controller Prison Services | North |
| 19. | Controller of Immigration | North |
| 20. | Controller of Fire Service | North |
| 21. | Inspector General of Police | North |
| 22. | Director General, SSS | North |
| 23. | EFCC | North |
| 24. | NIA | North |

Source: Udeuhele, Ofor & Nwankwo (2018)

The above table shows that within the years indicated above and even thereafter, president Buhari almost excised people from geo-political zones outside the North in his core or major appointments. This arrangement attracted severe criticisms and negative reactions from people outside the Hausa/Fulani region.

iv) Mismanagement of the Nigeria Economy

Section 16(19) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended) mandates the state “to harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity, efficient, dynamic and self reliant economy under which every citizen shall be treated to equality in social justice and opportunity. The primary responsibility to give proper and sound direction to a nation’s economy rests on the power elite with the economic elite in the informal sector playing complementary roles. It has remained worrisome that despite Nigeria’s abundant potentials in several respects, a greater number of the populace are yet to make a sigh of relief socio-economically due to gross mismanagement of the economy by those charged with that responsibility.

From the available records released by National Bureau of Statistics (2023) the nation’s economy has merely been witnessing economic growth without development. In the findings from a study made by Eugene & Elem (2017: 45) “despite the enormous revenue from oil since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the country, Nigerian leaders have failed to channel the enormous proceeds from oil appropriately, hence the over dependence on oil as the major source of national revenue”.

The Consequences of the Poor Management of the Nigeria Economy can be Summarized as follows:

a) Rising level of Unemployment

Unemployment has remained a major consequence of economic mismanagement in Nigeria. Unemployment is used to describe a situation where those that are ready and qualified to work under prevailing wage rate are unable to be engaged in a paid employment. The World Bank (1999) expanding this definition includes individuals who have either lost their jobs or may have voluntarily left their previous jobs.

There has been a steady rise on Nigeria's unemployment level due to a good number of factors such as; insecurity, climate change, herdsmen attacks, corruption, unfocused, cosmetic and half baked policies of the state to address economic challenges especially poverty alleviation (Alozie, 2019). Nigeria's rate of unemployment rose to 20% in 2020 and could not make a decline in 2023. Studies carried out by George & Oseni (2012) showed that unemployment has remained a constraining factor against Nigeria's economic progress.

b) Poverty and Socio-Economic Deprivations

Poverty is simply defined as the inability of an individual or household to meet up with the basic necessities of life. As a relative concept, poverty has to do with an involuntary deprivation which a person or individual households, community or nation faces in terms of not having access to basic needs of life (Eugene & Elem, 2017). Socio-economically, poverty manifests in a situation where an individual lacks access to the means of taking care of his basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, water, education, Medicare and other basic necessities of life. The negative consequence of this is social deprivation and the tendency to relegate the person to a lower status or level in the eyes of the society. The analysis and research carried out by the Nigeria Economic Report and the National Bureau of Statistics in the 2012/2013 survey revealed that poverty estimate in Nigeria stood at 33.1%. The number of poor people in Nigeria stood at 89.0 million in 2020 with a projection to rise to 95.1 million in 2022. Within the period, rural poverty stood at 44.9% (Emejo, 2014). Additional records by the United States Central Intelligence Agency's World face Book (2018) showed that over 70% of Nigerians live on less than \$1 USD a day whereas about 72% live on less than \$2 USD a day. Thus, the persistence of undernourishment of a majority of the populace has remained obvious in Nigeria. To worsen matters, the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant economic lock-down as well as the Russian-Ukraine War aggravated the poverty level in Nigeria in 2022. According to a study by the International Food Policy Research Institute, the pandemic led to about 14% increase in Nigeria's Poverty level which showed that over 27 million people additionally fell into the poverty trap during the lockdown.

c) Running a Mono Cultural Economy and Non Diversification of the Nigeria Economy

Before the discovery of oil in Nigeria at Oloibiri, Rivers State in 1956, the national economy depended so much on agricultural resources which sustained the nation's economy. It was through it that the first national development plan (1962-1968) was financed. Thereafter, oil was discovered and was used to finance subsequent development plans especially in the provision of critical infrastructural facilities (Eugene & Elem, 2017). The juicy package which oil provided led the Nigeria power elite then and even presently to abandon the agricultural sector in preference for oil for revenue generation. Presently, Nigeria imports rice and other consumables at very high cost with a greater number of the populace having no decent food on their table. Thus, the reluctance of Nigerian leaders to invest in non oil sectors, revive the industrial sector and develop relevant technology for the harnessing and tapping of the vast natural and mineral resources of the country has partly been responsible for the nation's economic woes.

d) Increased Borrowing and High Debt Burden

Incessant internal and external borrowings by the various Nigeria governments especially since 1999 have impacted negatively on the nation's debt profile and economy. What has remained problematic is that the purposes for these borrowings have often been unclear as the sincerity and transparency of the government in channeling

the borrowed funds into productive ventures have remained doubtful. From the records, local and external federal government debt profile between 1999 and 2021 rose from N3.55 trillion to N26.91 trillion which showed an increase of about 65.8%. Much of the increment took place under President Buhari's administration as the administration witnessed over 291.37% rise in foreign debt alone (NBS Report, 2022). With the debt relief from the global financial institutions, Chief Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007) managed to reduce Nigeria's eternal debt from \$28.04 to \$2.11. However, the debt profile later rose under Presidents Musa Yar' Adua and Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

The total public debt of Nigeria rose from N6.17 trillion to N9.8 trillion in 2015 which showed a 58.8% increase. In 2020, Nigeria's public debt profile stood at N41.6 trillion. Nigeria's former minister of finance, budget and national planning, Zainab Ahmed in 2020 revealed that at N1.94 trillion, the cost of debt servicing rose above government's retained revenue of N1.63 trillion which left a deficit of N300 billion (Thompson, Afolabi, Raheen & Onifade, 2020). On assumption of office, President Tinubu resorted to borrowing to kick start his administration. By the end of October 2023, he again sought and secured the approval of the National Assembly to borrow additional USD 7.8bn and 100 Euros to finance critical infrastructure (AIT news, November, 2023, 8.00pm). This further bid to borrow attracted negative reactions from the Nigerian masses.

v.) The Inability of the State to find a lasting solution to the incessant Violent Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen against Farmers and others

According to Anter (2011) the Fulani's who are predominantly Muslims constitute an ethnic group that has significant presence in many West African countries including Nigeria. They are nomadic pastoralist migrants whose traditional occupation is the rearing of cattle. Historically, what started as rudimentary communal skirmishes gradually degenerated into armed confrontation between the herdsmen and the local natives especially the farmers. In virtually every state in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the Fulani Herdsmen lead their flock and graze wherever they like, destroy crops, block traffic, rape women, beat up or kill hunters and occasionally unleash deadly attacks on villagers whenever they are resisted (Okeke, 2014).

In a study carried out by Bolarinwa (2012:10) Nigeria recorded several violent conflicts in many rural communities between 1999 and 2012. Conflicts and violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers resulted to well over 10,000 deaths whereas over 300,000 Nigerians across the states have faced problems of internal displacement. For farmers in these areas, the fear of Fulani Herdsmen has become the beginning of wisdom. It is disheartening to note that the Federal government has demonstrated an apparent lack lustre attitude in finding a lasting solution to the menace. The idea of constructing cattle colonies or ranches earlier proposed by the federal government as a solution to the crises has only ended up on paper. The table below is just a snap shot of the violent attacks by Fulani herdsmen in only two states of Benue and Enugu between 2013 and 2016 even though the attacks and other heinous crimes perpetrated by Fulani Herdsmen have remained unabated up until the last quarter of 2023.

Table 3: Record of Fulani Herdsmen attacks on Farmers in Benue and Enugu States between, 2013-2016

| S/N | Place of Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict | Date of Conflict | No. of Lives Lost | Property Lost/Destroyed |
|-----|---|-------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Mbasenge community, Guma LGA | April 23, 2013 | 10 | 15 Houses burnt and 5 cows killed |
| 2 | Okpanchenyi and Ekwo communities of Agatu LGA | May 12, 2013 | 83 | N.A |
| 3 | Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Asatu LGA | May 14, 2013 | 40 | N.A |
| 4 | Ichama Village, Okpokwu LGA | June 11, 2013 | 1 | 40 cattles belonging to the Catholic Church, Otukpo were rustled |
| 5 | Okpanchenyi village, Otukpo, Benue State | July 1, 2013 | 40 | Crops, houses destroyed |
| 6 | Nzorov, Guma, LGA., Benue State | July 5, 2013 | 60 | Houses, Churches destroyed |
| 7 | Agatu LGA, Benue State | July 28, 2013 | 8 | N.A |
| 8 | Oguche Village, Benue State | Sept., 29, 2013 | 15 | Churches, houses were destroyed |
| 9 | Ikpele & Okpopolo communities, Agatu LGA, Benue State | Nov., 7, 2013 | 7 | Over 6,000 persons displaced when Fulani herdsmen invaded the two villages |
| 10 | Adeke Village, Benue State | Jan., 20, 2014 | 3 | Many people were displaced |
| 11 | Gwer West LGA. | Feb., 20-21, 2014 | 35 | 80,000 persons displaced, and 6 villages sacked |
| 12 | Ogbadibo LGA. | Sept., 10, 2014 | No. of death not certain | Scores of persons were dead when herdsmen attacked 5 villages in Ogbadibo LGA. |
| 13 | Abugbe, Okoklo. Ogwule & Ocholoyan in Agatu LGA | Jan.. 27, 2015 | 17 | Thousands of people displaced and farmlands destroyed including houses and churches |
| 14 | Tor-Anyiin and Tor-Ataan in Buruku LGA. | Feb.. 8, 2016 | 10 | Over 300 persons displaced in clash between herdsmen and farmers |
| 15 | Onoli, Awgu, LGA, Enugu State | Feb.. 16, 2016 | 2 | Crops and farmlands destroyed |
| 16 | Ukpabi-Nimbo, Enugu State | April 26, 2016 | 40 | Houses and churches were destroyed |

Source: Aluko (2017)

Other notable areas where the activities of the Nigerian elite has led to the derailing of national development efforts in Nigeria include: the persistence of alleged politics of exclusionism and marginalization of some geopolitical zones in the country; institutionalized bribery and corruption; persistent problem of insecurity; high cost of governance and recycling of “same brand of politicians (Elem, 2018).

Conclusion

The elite, irrespective of their category occupy a pivotal position in setting the pace for societal or national development. By dint of hard work, position or some other privileges, the elite occupy positions whereby they cannot easily be sidelined in any effort made towards advancing the state or nation. The role of the elite in positive or negative senses can easily be identified anywhere and anytime. Some of the elite found in the formal or informal sectors of the Nigeria economy have been making some efforts towards national development through their participation in economic activities. Those in the other fields such as politics have also been making their mark. National development is one that touches positively the lives of every individual in society irrespective of class, religion, status or some other considerations. Concrete indices such as higher per capita income, improved security, improvement in a nation's gross domestic product (GDP) quality leadership among others must take place before development could be said to have occurred. The onerous responsibility of the state through the power elite is to drive development. The study has shown that the role of the power elite in Nigeria and the elite generally in driving national development especially since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999 has not been quite satisfactory. Evidence has shown that despite Nigeria's strategic position in Africa and even in world affairs as well as her enormous natural and mineral resources, these potentials are yet to be translated into meaningful reality to the joy and happiness of majority of the populace.

The fourth republic in Nigeria in particular has seen Nigeria leadership embarking on several poverty alleviation programmes and other strategies aimed at drawing national development in Nigeria. However, several factors have frustrated the realization of these programmes. From available indications, the fight against corruption in Nigeria has also been met with a litany of hitches marring the anti-corruption fight. Some of the activities of the Nigeria elite directly and indirectly have not helped matters as far as Nigeria's socio-economic, political and over all progress is concerned. Societal decay, institutional collapse, insecurity, unemployment, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, inflation, terrorism, armed banditry, among others have combined with defective or leadership ineptitude to cripple Nigeria's chances of attaining meaningful national development.

Recommendations

This study proposes the following recommendations:

- i) The various categories of the Nigeria elite should inculcate a renewed and progressive mindset towards patriotism and selfless service to their fatherland.
- ii) The Nigeria leadership at all levels should always endeavour to consider the impact state policies would make on the people before implementing such policies. Criticisms have continued to trail the decision of the present administration to completely withdraw the subsidy on oil without first working out necessary palliative measures to ameliorate the pains, agony, hardship and frustration the people have been passing through as a result.
- iii) The various levels of government should not relent in concretely addressing the triggers of insecurity across the country in view of the huge loss of lives and property that have continued to be recorded from incessant security breaches in the country.
- iv) The Nigerian state should not continue to undermine the empowerment and equipping of the Nigerian youth as it is commonly said that they are the leaders of tomorrow. Their meaningful engagement would go a long way to distancing them from youth restiveness, militancy, insurgency and other-anti-social vices associated with the youth.
- v) To make the fight against corruption in Nigeria more impactful and realistic, the fight should neither be bias nor based on partisan, religious, class, ethnic or other undue considerations.
- vi) For meaningful national development in Nigeria, her politics and administration should not continue to be high-jacked by visionless leaders, corrupt prone individuals and mediocres who are only out to occupy public offices to feather their own nest.

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