

A POLITICAL APPRAISAL OF ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

<https://doi.org/10.47743/jopaf1-2021-19-06>

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Abstract: *This paper examines a political appraisal of the effort of various governments in Nigeria fourth republic toward economic self-reliance as a critical element to the overall Sustainable development of the country. However, due to the internal contradiction inherent in most developing Societies like Nigeria, achieving economic Self-reliance has continued to elude these States. Nigeria's public sector driven economic system has been replaced by government in Nigeria with difference privatization model aimed at strengthening the institutional mechanisms of the state and creating inefficient and effective economic system to drive its development agenda. The paper argues that there is need for an alternative model for development in the country which avoids creating overdevelopment on foreign aid and -allows for the empowering of people to trust in their own capabilities and spirit. Economic Self-reliance as an alternative to the western model if properly understood and applied can bring hope for a bright and more sustainable future. The paper identified the factor militating ageist economic Self-reliance and mad recommendations to address these factors with the goal of engendering economic Self-reliance in Nigeria.*

Keyword: *Economic self-reliance, Development, Social Policy, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The new democratic dispensation in Nigeria was lunched again in 1999 leading to the emergence the forth republic .Meanwhile, it is not an overstatement to contend that since the return of democracy in 1999, the country has witnessed the emergence of political entrepreneurs and predators who have acquired political influence to direct and control economic policy. In the process, they became predators, destroying the incipient industrial sector. They are not pro-industry and have succeeded in destroying major industrial sub-sectors, particularly the textiles, tyres, paper and vegetable oil. Their tactics are to influence government policy to allow unrestricted imports through waivers. Alternatively, they create strong cartels for smuggling under the watchful eyes of government agencies. Several administrations in Nigeria, whether military or civilian, have tried to create policies and programmes that promote economic self-reliance and national development (Adamu, 2006). Over the years however, these policies have failed to deliver the anticipate dividends due to systematic contradictions and the Nigerian factor (Imhonopi & Urim, 2010). In spite of the efforts of successive administrations' efforts to pursue the objectives of economic diversification and self-reliance, the Nigerian economy still remains a mono-product.

Crude oil exports account for 95% of foreign exchange earnings and 80% of budgetary revenue. Also, more than 50% of industrial raw materials and significant amount of consumer goods are imported into the country annually (Aluko, 2008).

However, the upsurge of economic turndown racing through sub-Saharan African countries generally and Nigeria in particular has overwhelming impact on the vest rural population, subjecting it to unprecedented economic and social dislocation (Kin & Isma'il, 2013). The worsening problem of resource scarcity in sub-Saharan African dictates that governments can no longer rely on conventional means to successfully address the basic needs of their populations. The question of economic self-reliance for Nigeria remains a pipe dream. Patriotic citizens wonder at the gross inadequacies in the country's social and economic life, in spite of the abundant resources the country is endowed with. This paper seeks to examine the concept of economic self-reliance, the policies, programmes and efforts of government to achieve economic self-reliance for and in Nigeria, factors militating against economic self-reliance in Nigeria and finally presents some suggestions and recommendations with respect to correcting the present challenges strustrating efforts aimed at revitalizing self-reliance economic development.

Conceptual Discourse

Self-reliance is defined by independence. It is the ability to think and act without the help or influence of others, the ability to decide what you should be or do. It is one of the bases of effective community development in Nigeria as it is in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, Ojameruaye (2004) defines self-reliant economic development as that type of development that relies on the human and material resources of the economic unit whose development is the subject of discussion. In other words, it is development that relies on "internal" resources as opposed to development that relies heavily on "external" resources.

Economic self-reliance in the context of this paper is defined as an individual being able to supply his/her own needs without external assistance. It refers to the amount of income needed to satisfy basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, without receiving public assistance like food stamps, child care, public housing or aid from family or friends. As an economic measure, self-reliance is a measure of one's operating income versus operating expenses. Anyanwu (1992) posits that the widespread acceptance of this concept in the development planning of most African countries has the tendency to give greater stimulus and cohesiveness to community development in these countries. Self-reliance encourages the need for people to improve their living conditions using home initiatives and resources at their disposal. It is pertinent to note that self-reliant development is not autarky; it should allow for "external" support, however, it is propelled and sustained by "internal" resources (Kim & Isma'il, 2013). Consequently, one general objective discovered in economic plans or blueprints of continental, regional, national and state organizations or governments is "to promote self-reliant development". This means that in as much as rural and urban economies are encouraged to pursue policies of self-reliance and strive to ensure "autonomy", they should allow for substantial external support.

However, Ojameruaye (2004) contends that in many cases external resources do make a difference and can challenge the independence of the economic unit. Hence, self-reliance ought to be viewed as a continuum that is bounded on the left-hand side by parasitism and on the right-hand side by autarky but which does not include both

boundaries. Thus we can talk of different degrees or levels of self-reliance; the farther an economic unities to the right-hand side of the continuum, the more self-reliant it is. In the similar vein, Ikoku (1980); Mansour (1979) and Bloom (1988) submits that economic self-reliance should be seen as a development strategy based on indigenous socio-economic engineering. Its philosophy is improvement from within. This does not imply a return to the past, nor does self-reliance equate to autarky or dismiss some advantages of international relations (Kim & Ismai'il, 2013). It means, rather, the search for and the application of scientific and rational knowledge to the resolution of local problems, within the context of maximum autonomy in decision-making. Ghari (1980) aptly noted that the concept of economic self-reliance is closely allied to the principles of self-help and mutual help. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines self-help as "the use of one's own efforts, resources, etc to achieve things, without depending on others". It is "do-it-yourself" (DIY). Today, there are very many self-help or DIY books, tools and other resources to assist individuals in doing a wide variety of things. In practice some form of "external" assistance is usually required for an individual to improve himself. For example, you may need to read a self-help book (written by somebody else) to be able to fix a problem (e.g. electrical or plumbing) by yourself. This is why economists take a more robust view of self-help as "helping poor and disadvantaged people to help themselves". In other words, it is "assisted self-help" or "autonomy-respecting help" (Eade, 1997). It is recognized that poor and disadvantaged people find it extremely difficult to improve their condition of living without outside help. Sometimes they even become "complacent with poverty" (Kim & Isma'il, 2013). In such a situation, external help or support can serve as a catalyst or provide the push for action against poverty or to improve condition of living, and even to sustain improvement actions.

Economic self-reliance is a key factor in national development which demands that people apply their knowledge and skills to the resources at their disposal. This is in perfect accord with Anyanwu's (1992) observations that the development of related skills and attitude of a people can enable them to satisfy their basic needs, to grow self-reliant and to minimize precarious dependence on agencies external to their communities. There is no doubt that the current situation in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries calls for the read option of a self-reliant approach to development if we are to overcome some of the current maladies in Nigeria and the other sub-Saharan African countries.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this paper, achieving economic self-reliance in Nigeria will be placed against the backdrop of the World System Theory, the State Theory and Functionalist Theory. The world system theory is more or less a version of the modernisation theory, which is self-contained within a set of boundaries held together by a variety of forces (Ritzer, 1996; Offiong, 2001). In specific terms, Wallerstein (1974) recognizes two major separate world forces: the metropolis (developed countries) and the periphery (developing countries). According to him, the countries of the world belong to either of the two. The dominant countries (metropolis) are capable of dynamic development responsive to their internal needs. Whereas the dependent ones (periphery) have a reflexive type of development, that is, one constrained by its incorporation into the global economic system and which results from its mere adaptation to the requirement of the expansion of the metropolis. The core or the metropolis according to the world system theorists is technologically advanced, pays higher wages, has relatively powerful states and a relatively

free market. The periphery, on the other hand, is characterized by relatively backward and simpler technology, very low wages, weak and fragile states and cheap labour (Wallerstain, 1974; Bosewell, 1989; Shannon, 1989). According to the World System Theorists, the above situation explains the reasons for the weakness and inefficiency of institutions in developing countries like Nigeria, such as state-owned enterprises and why they malfunction; thus necessitating the development of different privatisation models, Xeroxed from developing countries and introduced into weak and developing economies to strengthen their institutions and grow their economy (Imhoponi & Urim, 2010).

The state theory differs strongly from the view point and central postulations of the world system theory. State theory is based upon the view that the economy is intertwined with politics and therefore the take-off period in development is unique to each country. State theory emphasises the effects of class relation and the strength and autonomy of the state on historical outcomes. Thus, development involves interactions between the state and social relations because class relations and the nature of the state impact the ability of the state to function. Development is dependent upon state stability and influence externally as well as internally. State theorists believe that a developmentalist state is required for development by taking control of the development process within one state (Preston, 1988; 1996). From the standpoint of the state theorists, looking at development from the interaction between the metropolis and periphery does not arise, while the state is given a key role to play in the development of the institutions within developing countries. Besides, state theorists believe that the development is not a unilineal process but is dependent on the internal make-up or composition of each state. Thus, they argue that developing economies have hope of turning around the fortunes of their institutions and the polity by pursuing internal growth through strengthening the institutions and agencies of government putting in place a value system to which all stakeholders must subscribe to and committing to the development agenda of government. This position agrees with the arguments of functionalists like Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Gabriel Almond, that society would function better based on four functional imperatives which are embedded in all system of action such as: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance (Ritzer, 2007). Adaptation here refers to the fact that a system must adjust or cope with its external environment, particularly when this environment is deemed threatening. In order for a system to function effectively, it must also first define the goal it hopes to achieve.

Parsons called this functional imperative goal attainment. Integration is also important to a system because it needs to regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. Finally, a system needs to furnish, maintain and renew motivation for individual participation, including the cultural patterns that create and sustain this motivation. Parsons referred to these functions as latency and pattern maintenance. Hence, to achieve economic self-reliance, political and economic managers of the Nigerian state must understand and define the goals it wants to achieve, develop the requisite value system needed to furnish, maintain and renew motivation for the individual participation of all Nigerians to make this goal a reality (Imhonopi & Urim, 2010).

In line with these thoughts, this paper argues that for institutions in developing economies to function effectively and for the development of the polity, leadership in developing economies should embrace holistic adaptation of the way and manner development administration is being carried out by developed economies.

Furthermore, there is need for policy makers and political leaders in developing countries to strengthen the internal composition of their various institutions and imbibe the right values to drive these institutions towards economic self-reliance as the functionalist theory advocates. The state theory principally believes that economic self-reliance can be internally achieved and sustained when states are committed to their development process. It also advocates for collaboration between the political and economic managers of the state in the pursuit and realization of economic self-reliance for the polity.

Government's Efforts to Achieve Economic Self Reliance for and in Nigeria

The concept of economic self-reliance as a development strategy however escaped mention in budgets speeches since independence. Our leaders have always appreciated the need for Nigeria to be economically self-reliant (Osazua, 2012). Consequently, over the years, Nigerian governments have evolved well-articulated policies and programmes aimed at achieving economic self-reliance in Nigeria. This is succinctly captured by Imhonopi and Urim (2010); Kim and Isma'il (2013) as follows:

First, the Operation Feed the Nation and the Green Revolution Programs of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the late seventies and President Shehu Shagari in the early eighties respectively. Prior to the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in the mid-fifties, agriculture was the basis of the national economy. Thus, the programs were intended specifically to revitalize agriculture in the country so that the country could have stability and self-sufficiency in food production.

Second, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the Babangida administration in 1986. This was in reaction to the paradigm shift from a public sector dependent economy to a private sector-led enterprise and to a certain extent forced on the country by the steady drop in its revenue profile (Adamu, 2006). The objective of the program was to:

reform and diversify the productive base of the economy, with the aim of lessening dependence on the oil sector and imports;

achieve a fiscal and balance of payment feasibility over the medium term.

and lay the basis for a sustainable non-inflationary growth over the medium and the long-term. To actualize the aforementioned, government had to embark on partial or full privatization of its companies and parastatals. Therefore, seventy-three of the 95 government enterprises put on the block were privatized.

Third, the Obasanjo civilian administration on May 29, 2004, launched the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy, NEEDS. According to Chief Obasanjo, the NEEDS was to address the development challenges of Nigeria. He said that the program would lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value reorientation. The same program at the state and local government levels were known as State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) respectively. NEEDS rested on the following pillars, which were, forming the way government and its institutions worked, boosting the private sector, implementing a social charter for the people and reorienting people's values. NEEDS was strongly supported by the federal government with comprehensive reforms in the public sector. Most especially, the banking consolidation, where twenty-five mega banks emerged each with a minimum capital base of 25 billion naira. The banks were burly enough to support

private initiatives and entrepreneurship. Subsequent to the NEEDS were also Millennium Development Goals to be actualized by the year 2015. These goals in a nutshell were to see to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability among others (Adamu, 2006).

Fourth, others were the 7-point Agenda, the Eight-point United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the American AGOA, the African New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the sudden Food Crisis Policies of the late president Umar Musa Yar'Adua (Imhonopi, 2010).

The 7-Point Agenda

What then constitutes Yar'Adua's seven point agenda? The major policy thrust of this administration, otherwise referred to as the 7-point agenda are:

- Critical infrastructure: This would involve paying attention to adequate power supply to facilitate industrialization, development of rail, road, air and water transportation to facilitate movement of persons, goods and services.
- Niger Delta: This would involve complete overhaul of the region to ensure provision of physical infrastructure and empowerment of the people.
- Food security: Through this vision, the administration has declared interest in enhancing agricultural and water resources to ensure adequate food supply for local consumption and export.
- Human capital development: This would involve reform of education sector to improve skills and enhance standards.
- Land tenure and home ownership: Review of the land use laws to facilitate proper use of the Nation's land assets for socio-economic development; and citizens' access to mortgage facilities.
- National security and intelligence: Through this strategy, the administration intends to give adequate attention to the provision of security to lives and properties.
- Wealth creation: This aspect would be used to initiate the process of diversification of the nation's revenue base and increased production to provide jobs (FMIC, 2007).

The Eight-Point United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs thus refer to the eight major goals identified by international leaders, which if pursued with vigor, is likely to lead to better lives for the people of the world. These eight goals have been identified as:

- reducing extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieving universal primary education;
- promoting gender equality and women empowerment;
- reducing child mortality rates;
- improving maternal health;
- fighting disease epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and others;
- ensuring environmental sustainability and
- developing a global partnership for development

As at the year 2000, these international goals had received the consent of 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations. The leaders set 2015 as the target year for the maximum realization of these goals (Robert, 2010).

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)

AGOA was signed into law by President Clinton in May 2000 with the objective of expanding U.S. trade and investment with sub-Saharan Africa, to stimulate economic growth, to encourage economic integration, and to facilitate sub-Saharan Africa's integration into the global economy. The Act establishes the annual U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Economic Cooperation Forum (known as the AGOA Forum) to promote a high-level dialogue on trade and investment-related issues. At the centre of AGOA are substantial trade preferences that, along with those under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), allow virtually all marketable goods produced in AGOA-eligible countries to enter the U.S. market duty-free.

The U.S. Government provides assistance most notably through four regional trade hubs to African governments and business that are seeking to make the most of AGOA and to diversify their exports to the United States (AGOA Fact Sheet, 2008).

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

NEPAD which is a program of the African Union (AU) was adopted in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001. It is fundamentally new intervention, organized by African leaders with the intent to track new priorities and methods to achieve the political and socio-economic transformation agenda of Africa. NEPAD specifically is aimed at enhancing Africa's growth, development and participation in the global economy (Rawia, 2008).

Lastly we have the Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan. The Transformation Agenda is based and draws its inspiration from vision 20:2020 and the 1st National Implementation Plan (NIP). The objective is to deepen the effects and provide a sense of direction for the current Administration's all-inclusive development of Nigeria during its term. The agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which will transform the Nigerian economy to meet the future needs of our people. The cardinal elements of the Transformation Agenda of the current Administration include constitutional and electoral reforms and transformation of the budgeting process. Others will include overcoming the current security challenges through ensuring peaceful co-existence, tolerance, employment generation, poverty alleviation and job creation for our youths aside from determined focus on developing critical infrastructure and human capital development. There is an overriding push for effective planning, coordination and continuity of policies and programmes with creation of an enabling environment for private sector participation through Public Private Partnership (PPP). The Administration is also poised to deliver good governance through tackling corruption, value re-orientation, accountability and transparency as well as monitoring and evaluation for all priority policies, programmes and projects.

Challenges/Factors Militating against Economic Self-Reliance in Nigeria

There are factors working against the genuine efforts of government to achieve economic self-reliance in and for the country. These factors are as follows:

Corruption: The genuine efforts of government over the years have suffered incessant drawbacks as a result of the entrenched corruptive tendencies and sharp practices engaged in by public officials and political office holders. This frustrates the efforts of government to achieve economic self-reliance either through the development of state-owned enterprises or through the creation of social and economic programmes in the country.

Although, government has put in place the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to checkmate the incidence of corruption among political office holders and public officials, Nigerians are yet to see the tangible benefits of the anti-corruption war engaged in by the agency.

The Nigerian factor: The efforts of government to pursue economic independence for Nigeria has resulted in failed policies and programmes because of factors like nepotism, tribalism, lack of meritocracy, federal character, bribery, practicism of benefits and privileges and other corruptive tendencies that have continued to weaken our resolve as a nation to lead the rest of the continent and even the world.

Frequent change of policies: Each new government comes into power with its own virginal economic blueprint which it promotes in the place of existing policies. This frequent change in policies does not help us to stabilize existing programmes, so they can deliver their dividends to Nigerians. Therefore, before a policy implementation process matures, a new policy is introduced, terminating the existing process and denying Nigerians the benefits that could have accrued from such programmes. Many healthy and pragmatic programmes initiated in the time past by successive administrations in the country have suffered this fate.

Multiplicity of economic advisers: One of the strong drawbacks of achieving our economic self-reliance is the engagement of many economic advisers in the life of one single administration. These advisers come on board with different ideologies, programmes and initiatives which collapse on one another and entrench the culture of frequent policy somersault and back-flips (Imhonopi, 2010). As Aluko (2008) observed, during the eight years rule as the President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo had six different Economic Advisers/Ministers of National Planning who were supposed to have been responsible for the midwife of the NEEDS. They were Chief Philip Asiodu, Dr. Magnus Kpapol (now Director of NAPEP), Professor Charles Soludo, Professor Ode Ojogwu, Dr. Osita Ogu and Senator (Dr.) Wali. This situation creates setbacks to the policy formulation and implementation process towards economic self-reliance.

Lack of continuity of policies: As a corollary to the above points, genuine efforts of government at achieving economic self-reliance for the nation cannot be realized within a climate of inconsistent policy formulation and implementation. This is one area that the country has almost become accumulated to as a nation. Lack of continuity has led to the existence of many policies but fewer results in practical terms for Nigerians.

Low-level of technology: No nation develops its economic constituents without having an enabling technology backbone. The absence of a home-grown or customisable technology platform has denied the country of access to an industrialized and vibrant economic system. The history of the Asian Tigers is an instructive lesson on the need for developing nations like Nigeria to invest in technology tools and the manpower to run these technology in order for the country to achieve the much anticipated economic self-reliance.

Lack of infrastructure: This is another deep-seated crisis facing the nation. The absence of an effective road network, power supply and other social amenities further limits government's efforts to achieve self-reliance. In fact, today, many multinational companies like Dunlop Nigeria and a few others are leaving Nigeria for countries like Ghana where the infrastructural facilities are in place and where the economic climate is supportive of and mild to their business operations.

Political instability: Before now, the frequent change of government in Nigeria, which created political instability, resulted in the frequent change in policies. Since independence, Nigeria has experienced repeated change of governments and political leadership. This situation engendered the abandonment of existing policies and the repeated introduction of new policies, creating waste of resources, waste of government's time and denying Nigerians from being positively impacted by these policies.

Suggested Ways to Achieve Economic Self-Reliance in Nigeria

Having looked at the challenges militating against government's genuine efforts to achieve economic self-reliance for Nigeria, the following are suggested ways by which the present challenges can be addressed:

First, accountability: One of government's greatest challenges is lack of accountability of its resources. The political leadership and public office holders have taken advantage of the loopholes in government accounting system, poor financial monitoring and the absence of the digitalization of government financial records to steal from government coffers. However, the present massive digitalization and computerization of government business, that is e-government, will help to reduce government's exposure to the activities of political fraudsters and thieves.

Second, the empowerment and independence of anti-corruption agencies: The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), are two agencies of government created to stem the growing tide of political and other forms of corruption in the country. For these agencies to effectively discharge their functions, the government needs to empower them and let them have total independence from government interference and encroachment so as to dispense justice as they carry out their duties.

Third, renewal of ethical standards: The government of the day must evolve programmes aimed at reviving the fallen ethical standards and morals such as sincerity, credibility, transparency, truth and honesty. It should have a zero tolerance for those who engage in sharp and questionable practices whether in and outside government, while individuals who are found to support this paradigm shift are to be encouraged through a reward system to be put in place. Also, along this line, government business needs to integrate global best practices like professionalism, creativity, innovation, meritocracy, performance-based reward systems and planning.

Fourth, consistency in policy formulation and implementation: To achieve economic self-reliance, government needs to be consistent in its policy formulation and implementation.

Fifth, development of home-grown technology: Today's global economy is governed and controlled by those who own the technologies in place. Nigeria for many years, has remained a consumer nation and this will continue to frustrate the genuine efforts to transform our economy. As long as Nigeria remains at the receiving end of the technology trade, the desire to achieve economic self-reliance will be far-fetched.

Sixth, the need for entrepreneurship development: Globally, countries are beginning to look inwards towards developing and empowering their small businesses, creating a climate that supports small business growth and encouraging citizens and young

graduates to create businesses rather than seek employment. By investing in the growth and development of small businesses in the country, the massive result to be realized from this effort can facilitate economic self-reliance for Nigeria.

Seventh, the political will and commitment of government to economic self-reliance is key to achieving economic development. Government, at whatever level, must refuse to pay lip service to the question of economic growth, development and independence for the country. Government needs to put its money where its mouth is by making a genuine commitment to efforts aimed at achieving economic self-reliance in Nigeria and for Nigerians.

Conclusions

Conclusively, self-reliance is defined by independence. The whole idea is the ability to think and act without the support or influence of others, the ability to take decisions as to what should be done. Whereas dependency is a reference to the act of relying on others to make decisions for you. Hence, people with power and privilege often take responsibility for the lives of those that are less fortunate. Dependent people often fail to find the motivation to solve problems on their own. Hence, economic self-reliance is vital for residents in developing countries to successfully govern their own lives and economies.

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