PATRIOTISM DEFICIT AND NIGERIA'S GROWTH-DEVELOPMENT PARADOX

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ABSTRACT

Growth and development are two distinct concepts that are often used interchangeably. While Nigeria has witnessed growth over the years, it has lagged behind on major key development indicators. The size of its economy has neither improved the socioeconomic condition of most of its citizens nor improved the country's development ranking. The steady growth of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an evidence that it has the potential for development. Yet, its paradoxical low Human Development Index (HDI) is a strong indication of underdevelopment. Existing literature attributes this growth-development paradox to corruption and weak institutions, but under theorizes the attitudinal dimension of those elected to manage Nigeria's economy. This paper addresses this gap. Adopting Civic Nationalism Theory as analytical lens, the study uses content analysis of secondary data from the 2023 supplementary budget, 2024 Appropriation Act, and HDI/GDP reports. Findings reveal two key obstacles to national development: budget padding/misallocation and lavish spending by elected officials. Evidence shows that Nigerian rulers prioritize personal/constituency benefits over constitutional responsibility for collective welfare, violating civic nationalism's principle of shared responsibility. The paper concludes that attitudinal change, patriotism, and self-sacrifice, which must be exemplified by the ruling class, are the catalysts for national development. This paper strongly recommends that only patriotic and selfless Nigerians with verifiable track records of public/community services and absence of corruption should be elected to manage the country's economy in order to harness its resources for sustainable development. To enable this, citizens' enlightenment and education geared towards qualitative political participation are essential keys.

Keywords: Annual Budget, Civic Nationalism, Corruption, Economy, Underdevelopment.

Introduction

A nation's development is not entirely determined by its richness in human and material resources. Many factors come into play, as resources alone do not automatically translate to or guarantee development. Nigeria is undoubtedly richly endowed, but that has not translated to development. The country is nowhere close to being a developed nation. Though findings have

shown that abundance of natural resources in a region or territory might ironically stunt its development, this is what some researchers describe as resource curse (Auty, 1993; Karl, 1997; Ross, 1999). Yet, resource curse is not a justifiable reason why an abundantly endowed country like Nigeria should continue to get entangled in the morass of underdevelopment. Mazrui could not hide his incredulity about Nigeria's underdevelopment. Writing in the 1990s, Mazrui, the Kenyan born renowned political scientist, acknowledged that Nigeria has immense concentration of talent. "I have never known any country which has so many talented people and where nothing goes right. It really is very frustrating—highly qualified, very talented people—but somehow something has not yet clicked to utilize this immense talent effectively" (Mazrui, 1995, p. 38). With Nigeria's abundant resources, conscientious efforts must be exerted by Nigerians to develop their fatherland. These efforts should be geared towards effective resource management to enable sustainable development.

However, efforts are being made with no tangible result. Several policies have been formulated and different political parties have piloted the affairs of the country, yet with disappointing outcomes. Qualified Nigerians from all walks of life, from the six geopolitical regions, and from different religious adherents have managed the country and its resources, all to no avail. This paper argues that the challenges of Nigerian development are not primarily due to a dearth of qualified managers and administrators, but to the combined consequences of corruption, nepotism, and selfishness—all manifestations of lack of patriotism. The analytical pathway adopted in this paper is as follows: Nigeria possesses abundant human and material resources and has functional institutional structures that create potential for national development. However, this potential is mediated by the disposition of the ruling class. Where patriotism is absent, resources are mismanaged through budget distortions and lavish spending, institutions are captured for personal gain, and growth fails to translate into improved human development indices. Where patriotism exists, even resource-rich states build responsive institutions and translate growth into development, as demonstrated by Norway and Botswana (Sarraf & Jiwanji, 2001; Angela, 2013; Holden, 2013).

Therefore, this paper asks why the growth of Nigeria's economy does not impact on its development despite the country's huge human and natural resources. It further asks why Nigeria is poorly rated in its Human Development Indices (HDI) despite being one of the largest economies in Africa. Providing answers to these questions is the objective of this paper.While this paper acknowledges the explanatory power of resource curse, colonial legacies, institutional deficits, and geopolitical dynamics, patriotism is singled out as the primary variable for three reasons. One, resource curse and institutional deficits are outcomes of leadership choices; lack of patriotism is the attitudinal foundation that makes institutions weak and sustains rent-seeking behavior. In this sense, patriotism subsumes the resource curse thesis because it determines whether resource abundance becomes a blessing or a curse. Two, colonial legacies and geopolitical dynamics are structural constraints that Nigeria shares with many postcolonial states, but they cannot be reversed or dictated by Nigeria alone in the short term. Patriotism, by

contrast, is a proximate and actionable variable within the control of Nigerian actors. Three, Civic Nationalism Theory, which frames this study, posits that shared commitment to the polity can override structural deficits by fostering solidarity and prioritizing collective welfare over personal gain. Hence, while structural factors set the context, leadership disposition operationalized as patriotism determines policy choices and resource allocation decisions that ultimately explain Nigeria's growth-without-development paradox.

Conceptual Clarification

Development

Growth theorists (Rostow, 1952; Solow, 1956; Harrod&Domar, 1957; Ranis, 1961) argued that development is an outcome of economic growth. Solow (1956) developed the Solow growth model wherein he explained that economic growth leads to increased output and income. Ranis (1961) also argued that economic growth is a key driver of development which in turns leads to increased income and improved living standards. Growth theorists generally hold that investment in the economy enhances growth which leads to development. These theorists are economic growth centered and their theories are true of economic growth but not so of development. It should be noted that even when economic growth leads to economic development, it (economic development) is not equal to national development which is the focus of this paper. It was observed that the failure of economic growth in most developing countries of Latin America and Africa, in the late 1970s, to deliver corresponding social goods and solve problems of unemployment, poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and ever-increasing crimes and wars, necessitated a redefinition and rethinking of development from economic growth perspective to human centered approach (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013).

Therefore, development is a multi-dimensional concept and contextually varied. When used in the social sciences, it has to be human centered. Hence, it is the process of empowering people to exploit their potentials to the maximum and develop their knowledge capacity to exploit nature to meet their daily human needs (Rodney, 1972; Nnoli, 1981; Ake, 2001). Gboyega (2003) sees it as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence not only in material sense but in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful or rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future.

National Development

Balogun (1972) makes the concept of national development more vivid when he wrote that, national development entails producing more and better food to eat, healthier and happier individuals, better living accommodation, improved transportation and communications system, sound education and enlightenment among the populace, and generally, more money floating around. The above definitions of national development centers on people and their quality of

lives in the society. This means that whatever kind of changes being witnessed in the various sectors of the society should have positive influence on the people.

Raji (1999) conceptualized national development in terms of progress in three major dimensions in the life of a nation. These dimensions are economic, political and social or moral. We can therefore say that national development encompasses all aspects of the life of a nation and that of individuals. It is a holistic, comprehensive, and balanced development of all facets of national life viz. socio-cultural, political-economy, scientific and material. To Elugbe, (1994), national development refers to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being, and mass participation in government.

In summary national development is a necessary condition for overall high level of human well-being. National development should be human-centered and not institution-centered. This is because national development is a means of solving national problems and if one has greater income, a capable state, and a responsive government, it would be surprising if national problems did not improve. National Development is essentially a four-fold transformation of countries towards what Pritchett (2021) identified as: (a) more productive economy (b) more responsive state (c) more capable administration, and (d) a shared identity and equal treatment of citizens.

These, Pritchett argues, would lead to higher levels of human wellbeing. Nigeria has apparently missed the point on all the four-fold essentials that support a country's drive towards national development. Nigeria is not yet on the trajectory. It should be noted that national development is not synonymous to national growth. In terms of growth, Nigeria is growing but the growth has not translated to development. This is a problem itself. Ban Ki-moon (2014, p. 6) rightly observes that:

Experience shows that economic growth, on its own, is not sufficient. We must do more to empower individuals through decent work, support people through social protection, and ensure the voices of the poor and marginalized are heard...let us make social justice central to achieving equitable and sustainable growth for all.

Reading the above quote of Ki-moon painstakingly, it becomes obvious that economic growth without social protection and social justice amounts to nothing. To grow the economy could be the starting point and the means, but the end itself is to achieve overall development. This is not an easy task. It needs patriotic leaders, administrators, and policy makers who are committed to national cause. This necessitates the conceptualization of patriotism and its relationship to national development. For the purpose of this study, national development is operationally defined as the progressive improvement in the quality of life of citizens, measured by the extent to which a nation produces and distributes public goods and services equitably, ensure social justice, and fosters citizen well-being through effective governance and economic productivity.

Patriotism

Patriotism is the love for one's country. It is the devotion to one's country. Viroli (1995) distinguishes patriotism as love for a country's political institutions and constitutional ideals from nationalism which is attachment to ethnic culture. While patriotism is truly manifested through love for one's country, Nathanson (1993) cautions that it has to be moderate. He argues that what is needed is moderate patriotism which, to him, requires critical loyalty rather than blind allegiance. Osaghae (1998) explains patriotism within Nigerian context and appeals that Nigerian patriotism must transcend ethnic loyalty to embrace and focus on the Nigerian project. In the words of Achebe (1983, p. 15), "Patriotism is an emotion of love directed by a critical intelligence." Used in the modern sense, it means devotion to a nation-state. It is to be positively selfish in one's love for one's state. In this case, patriotism could be seen as being "primitive" especially in the present world which is now a global village and where people are becoming global citizens. In other words, patriotism as used in this paper is different from cosmopolitanism which Sable & Torres (2018) refer to as "a commitment to universal norms which transcend national allegiance and entail a willingness to subordinate devotion to one's own to those norms." Here, patriotism is allegiance to Nigeria and the unwillingness to subordinate Nigeria's interests to some global norms that are detrimental to Nigeria. This is because Nigeria is still struggling with overwhelmingly innumerable and intractable internal problems. Developmentally speaking, Nigeria has not come of age. While it should dream to be cosmopolitan one day, this is the time to be patriotic.

Therefore, patriotism, in the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races, is literally translated as fatherland which according to Cicero, "is the common parent of us all" (Gibbons, 1892). This is to say, patriotic citizens behave towards the state the way responsible parents would towards their children. Patriotism is a sentiment but not born of material and physical well-being, explains Gibbons (1892, p. 387), it is rather;

A sentiment that the poverty of country and the discomforts of climate do not diminish, that the inflictions of conquest and despotism do not augment. The truth is, it is a rational instinct placed by the Creator in the breast of man. When God made man a social being, He gave him a sentiment that urges him to sacrifice himself for his family and his country, which is, as it were, his larger family.

While Gibbons frames this theologically as he was writing in a 19th-century theological/philosophical tradition, contemporary research in evolutionary psychology similarly identifies an evolved predisposition for in-group loyalty and self-sacrifice as a basis for national attachment (Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989). Bowles and Gintis (2011) explains how humans evolve psychological mechanisms for cooperation and sacrifice beyond kin—this is the modern scientific version of Gibbon's instinct explained within theological paradigm. The assertion that patriotism is an inborn attachment to fatherland is also found in the writings of Rousseau who urged that all patriotic virtues should be glorified. To exhibit patriotism by citizens, Rousseau

(1986, p.170) proclaimed; "citizens should constantly be kept occupied with the fatherland, that it should be made their principal business, that it should be kept continuously before their eyes." The agent noun of patriotism is patriot. Keeping in mind the meaning of patriotism discussed above, it is easy to arrive at who a patriot is.

Who is a Patriot?

Simply put, a patriot is someone who exhibits an intoxicated love for their country. A patriot loves their country and demonstrates it. "He is not" like Achebe (1983, p. 15) rightly explained, "a person who says he loves his country. He is not even a person who shouts or swears or recites or sings his love of his country." To add to Achebe's, a patriot is not a person who could recite or actually recites their country's national anthem. Like in Nigeria, it is not about one's ability, inability, willingness or unwillingness to sing "Arise o compatriot" or "Nigeria we hail thee." [ ]"A patriot", Achebe (p. 15-16) continued

is one who cares deeply about the happiness and well-being of his country and all its people…A true patriot will always demand the highest standards of his country and accept nothing but the best for and from his people. He will be outspoken in condemnation of their short-comings without giving way to superiority, despair or cynicism.

It should be noted that being a patriot does not necessarily mean one is anti-cosmopolitan as evident, for instance, in Trump's sloganization of "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) which essentially promotes ethnic narcissism (Volkan, 2017; Saletan, 2019). A patriot, while not despising other people or countrymen, is committed to the development of their country with intoxicated devotion. Real patriots, according to Orr (2004), know that they are bound together by a constitution and the principles of justice, decency, and fairness. They know patriotism is about building decent and prosperous communities and protecting the soils, forests, water, and wildlife as the rightful legacy of our children and theirs.

Having defined who a patriot is and having conceptualized patriotism and explained what it means and why it is preferred to cosmopolitanism in this paper, the next focus is on the relationship between patriotism and national development

Research Gap

A substantial body of literature has addressed Nigeria's paradox of growth without development. Ake (2001) attributes underdevelopment to the absence of "civic consciousness" among citizens, arguing that lack of awareness of democratic rights and duties weakens accountability and participation. Rodney (1972) emphasizes the deficit of "political will" among post-colonial African leaders, contending that development failed because rulers lacked the determination to dismantle colonial economic structures and pursue autonomous development paths. Subsequent studies reinforced these explanationsand added corruption, nepotism and selfishness among others as major constraint to development (Dukku, 2012; Fatai, 2012,

Salaudeen, 2017). In proffering solution to these challenges, they encouraged strengthening the independence of our judiciary, empowering anti-corruption agencies, and upholding the rule of law. While these contributions are significant, they leave a critical analytical gap that this paper addresses.

To fill this gap, this study introduces patriotism as a distinct and novel variable. Conceptually, patriotism differs from civic consciousness and political will in three ways. One,it is affective, not justcognitive—it involves love and emotional attachment to the nation-state. Two, it is normative, not just instrumental. In other words, it imposes a moral duty to sacrifice personal and sectional interests for the collective good. Three,it is relational asit frames the nation as "fatherland" and citizens as members of one family bound by mutual responsibility. Patriotism therefore constitutes the missing link and the novel contribution of this study.

Theoretical Framework: Civic Nationalism

There are many theories that link patriotism to national development. Classical Republicanism emphasizes civic duty and loyalty to the state by all citizens. Liberal Nationalism merges liberal values with patriotism to advance democratic development of a state. Constitutional Patriotism is another theory that advocates loyalty to one's country by upholding its constitution for meaningful development. While there are obviously many other theories that link patriotism to national development, this paper adopts Civic Nationalism as its theoretical framework. Its major proponents are JurgenHabermas (2000), David Miller (1995), and Will Kymlicka (2000). They argued that civic nationalism gives precedence to shared citizenship, values, and institutions over ethnic and cultural identity as the foundation of national identity. Thus, civic nationalism encourages democratic participation, promotes solidarity among diverse citizens, and fosters sense of shared responsibility.

Though like other theories, civic nationalism faces some criticisms; critics argue that it downplays the importance of cultural and ethnic identity. They further contend that it is a myth and justifies exclusionary policies towards non-citizens (Yack, 1996; Tamir, 2019; Ozkirimli, 2005). While this holds true, contextually, the theory is appropriate for this study because civic nationalism is exactly what is needed in Nigeria to enhance national development for four reasons. One, ethnic politics has done much damage to Nigeria's development which needs true national (not ethnic) leaders to unite its ethnically and religiously diverse citizens for national development. Two, a country like Nigeria that is strapped in the quagmire of underdevelopment and still struggling to find its way out should not concerned itself with the welfare of non-citizens to the discomfort, or at the expense, of its citizens. In other words, until Nigeria comes of age, it should prioritize its citizens' welfare. Its leaders, while not being selfish themselves, should prioritize the welfare of their citizens and improve its human development index.

Three, even if civic nationalism is a myth, it could still serve as an antidote. If hundred percent civic identity is impossible, constitutions, shared institutions, and civic loyalty could

work as antidotal myth to bind Nigeria's 250 plus ethnic groups. The United States and Canada for illustration use civic framing to appear as a monolithic entity despite deep diversity. Nigeria needs this sort of myth to forge ahead. Four, the claim that civic nationalism is exclusionary towards non-citizen can be contextually dismissed. This theory is employed in this study to address how internal ethnic cleavages hamper development. It does not focus on non-citizens. In addition, the current ethnic-nationalism is already exclusionary. The former President Muhammad Buhari was accused of "Fulanization" just like the allegation of "Yorubanization" and "Lagosianization"made against President Bola Ahmad Tinubu. Thus, civic nationalism intends to exclude practices of ethnic loyalty that are detriment to achieving national development goals; not the exclusion of the Fulani, the Yoruba, or people of certain ethnicity.Having addressed the concerns raised by critics of civic nationalism, this paper utilizes it as its analytical lens not to eliminate ethnic loyalty/identity but to provide the theoretical basis for patriotism by prioritizing shared citizenship and constitutional loyalty over ethnic identity.

It should be noted that civic nationalism is different from related concepts like civic consciousness and political will because these latter concepts explain capacity and awareness, but not motivation. Civic consciousness assumes that once citizens know their rights, they will demand accountability. Political will assumes that once leaders have the capacity to act, they will act in the national interest. Nigeria's experience since 1999 challenges both assumptions. Citizens demonstrate awareness of corruption and poor service delivery, yet electoral behavior remains driven by ethnicity and patronage. Similarly, Nigerian leaders have repeatedly demonstrated political will to implement difficult policies like subsidy removal, foreign exchange unification, treasury single account. Yet, the direction of that will has prioritized elite interest over national welfare, as evidenced in Tables 1 and 2.

Methodology

This paper adopts qualitative directed content analysis, using Civic Nationalism and patriotism as pre-determined codes to analyze how Nigeria's ruling class prioritizes elite and sectional interests over national development. It utilizes purposive sampling of secondary government documents. Thus, as selection criteria, it focuses on documents that allocate public resources and that are publicly accessible. The documents chosen are the 2023 Supplementary and 2024 Appropriation Acts, accessed online. Budgets were chosen because they reveal resource priorities and thus observable evidence of sacrifice" or "self-interest". Data were coded in NVivo 14 using deductive codes "constitutional loyalty", "shared citizenship", "sacrifice" and inductive codes "budget padding", "lavish spending".

It should be noted that secondary documents show behavior, not intent. Therefore, patriotism is a normative concept and cannot be measured directly. While this limitation is acknowledged, the concern is mitigated by triangulating budget data with journalistic reports, books, journal and opinion articles, and qualitative observations. In most cases, "rulers" is used in lieu of "leaders." This is to emphasize that elected officials in government—president,

governors, and elected representatives—do not lead by example. They are thus described as rulers instead of leaders

Patriotism and National Development

Only patriotic citizens are pained to see their fatherland going down. Driven by patriotism, therefore, such citizens exert relentless efforts to see that their country develop, succeed, and prosper. "Only patriotism, enlightened by experience," asserts Rousseau (1986, p. 213), "can learn to sacrifice in the interest of greater goods." Patriotism is intrinsically linked to national development. There is always the tendency to speak about Nigeria as a great nation from the perspective of patriotism. That is to say Nigeria cannot develop while its citizens are not patriotic. Analyzing the trouble with Nigeria, Achebe (1983, p. 15) wrote:

> *There is no doubt that Nigerians are among the world's most unpatriotic people. But this is not because Nigerians are particularly evil or wicked; in fact, they are not. It is rather because patriotism, being part of an unwritten social contract between a citizen and the state, cannot exist where the state reneges on the agreement. The state undertakes to organize society in such a way that the citizen can enjoy peace and justice, and the citizen in return agrees to perform his patriotic duties.*

Momah (2013) clearly identified patriotism and productivity as the twin engines of development; the absence of which causes a country to nosedive into abyss of underdevelopment. By patriotism within the Nigerian context, Momah means patriotism to national cause not to ethnic cause which amounts to ethnic nationalism. According to him, democracy thrives only on virtues such as pragmatism, patriotism, nationalism, and strategic foresight. This aligns with Ake (2001) who avers that African underdevelopment persists because citizens lack a sense of ownership.Viroli (1995) lends his voice to support the argument that patriotism leads to national development. He contends that patriotism is one of the most powerful forces shaping world history. He further explains that the language of patriotism has been used, over the century, to strengthen a generous and caring love of the political institution and a way of life. Scholarly literature supports the link between patriotism and development. For illustration, comparative cases like post-war Japan, South Korea's "Miracle on the Han River,"[1] and resource-poor Singapore show that where elites commit to self-sacrifice and citizens embrace patriotism, economic growth translates into high human development (Chee, 1971; Vogel, 1979; Chang, 2006). However, this is not the case in Nigeria, where there is a disconnect between growth and development—what this paper describes as "growth-development paradox."

[1] "Miracle on the Han River" is the nickname scholars use for how South Korea went from one of the poorest countries post-Korean War to a top 15 global economy in just three decades.

Nigeria's Growth and its Poor HDI Ranking

Nigeria's economy has tremendously grown in terms of its gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP is the total expenditures for all goods and services produced within a country in specific period of time. In other words, it measures the national income and output for a country's economy. From $4.2 billion in 1960 with $93 per capita income and 0.19% growth in in subsequent year (1961), it climaxed in 2014 at $574 billion with $3, 200 per capita and 6.31% growth. As at 2022, Nigeria's economy was the largest in Africa with a GDP of $477.38 billion and its per capita was $2, 139 (World Bank, 2022). However, despite being the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria could not make it to the top 10 African countries by GDP per capita. It ranked 18th position in Africa on GDP per capita in 2022 (Nairametrics, 2023). GDP per capita is a measure of a country's economic output divided by its population and thus represents the country's average standard of living by its citizens. Nigeria being the largest African economy in 2022 but ranked 18th in per capita income shows that its growth has not been accompanied by corresponding development.

Poor ranking of Nigeria's per capita income (PCI) gives a hint about its human development index (HDI). Though PCI does not absolutely determine HDI, it is one of the three components of HDI which measures overall well-being and development. It combines three dimensions: a) life expectancy at birth (health); b) expected years of schooling (education); c) per capita income (standard of living). Nigeria's growth has not led to its development as it continues to struggle with its Human Development Index (HDI). According to World Population Review, "a developed country is one that boasts features such as a mature and varied economy, a stable and functional government, a robust infrastructure, a strong educational system ample job opportunities, comprehensive health and social services, and a high degree of personal freedom." Nigeria does have some elements of the listed features, but not as robust as to be grouped among the developed states. One cannot tick any of the boxes above except perhaps stable government; that is if stability means unbroken democracy that experiences periodic elections—flawed or flawless—which enable both inter and intra party transfer of power. However, the question is: what is the essence of stable but dysfunctional or non-functioning government?

According to World Population Review (2024), HDI is calculated in index value (0-1) and is categorized into four tiers:

1. Very High Human Development (0.8-1)
2. High Human Development (0.7-0.79)
3. Medium Human Development (0.55-0.69)
4. Low Human Development (0-<0.55)

Measuring country's progress using HDI in Country economy (2024) latest published data, Nigeria's HDI stood at 0.535 points in 2021—occupying 164th position in the table of 191 countries. In West Africa, it was ranked below countries like Cape Verde (0.662), Ghana (0.632), Togo (0.539), and Cote d'ivoire (0.550). Instead of leading, Nigeria is at the lowest tier of the

ranking with index value of 0.548 in the World Population Review report of 2022 (published in 2024). Nigeria's poor ranking in 2022 unfortunately stands out to be its best ranking since transition to democracy in 1999. That is to say, previous rankings were poorer.

Why Hasn't Nigeria's Growth Led to its Development?

Nigeria's growth has failed to translate to development because those who engineered its growth were not real patriots and do not engage in genuine politics. This is also one of the greatest shortcomings of those who currently paddle the canoe of the country's economy. Absence of real patriots and genuine politics explains why there is asymmetrical relationship between Nigeria's GDP and HDI. The annual budget is the transmission belt through which patriotism—or its absence—becomes development outcomes. Because Nigerian rulers lack civic nationalistic orientation, they distort budget process by inserting non-mandate projects and padding estimates. This diversion of resources from priority sectors like health and education directly constrains HDI improvements, while creating GDP-HDI gap observed in Section 7.Salaudeen, Balogun and Abdulsomad (2025) argue that annual budget in Nigeria is tantamount to annual deepening of the country's development crisisbecause of the unpatriotic practice of budget padding and misappropriation of funds. According to Havel (quoted in Orr, 2004, p. x), "Genuine politics—politics worthy of the name—is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community, and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole." Put differently, genuine politics is selfless politics which obliges politicians to serve the community with passion and patriotism.

On the other hand, real patriots are citizens who wield political powers and are aware that they are, according to Orr (2004, p. 6), "bound together by a constitution and the principles of justice, decency, and fairness. They know patriotism is about building decent and prosperous communities and protecting the soils, forests, water, and wildlife as the rightful legacy of our children and theirs." Those entrusted with the management of Nigerian political economy have not displayed any of Orr's characteristics of real patriots. Elected rulers in Nigeria neither feel bounded by Nigerian Constitution nor are they loyal to it. This practically places them above the law. They are neither just, decent, nor fair. Therefore, they could not build decent and prosperous communities but communities under the grip of bandits. They could neither protect the lives of citizens which is their utmost constitutional responsibility nor could they protect the soils, forests, water, and wildlife as the rightful legacy to be banqueted to upcoming generations.

One of the major reasons why Nigeria keeps growing in the quantitative term but fails to qualitatively develop in terms of improved living standard of its citizens is the character of its rulers.Identifying where the problem of Nigeria lies, four decades ago, Achebe (1983, p. 1) was not only very assertive but factual. He said:

> *The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.*

Recent studies confirm Achebe's thesis. Oil revenue has increased Nigeria's GDP quantitatively but failed to improve HDI or reduce poverty due to leadership failure and elite rent-seeking (Eke & Osaghae, 2019). Suberu (2001) argues that elite competition over oil rents undermines national development and public service delivery. Obi (2010) argues that Africa which Nigeria is its giant is oil rich without development because the bulk of African resources and capital are exported from the continent rather than being directed at the development of its people. It is unfortunate to note that after four decades of Achebe's thesis, failure of leadership is still strongly identified as the major reason why Nigeria has not developed and not developing. Leaders in Nigeria continue to fail not because they get their policy priorities wrong but because they do not plan to succeed due to their unpatriotic disposition. While Nigerian rulers display unpatriotic behaviors in many ways, it suffices to cite two of such: (a) annual budget and (b) lavish spending in the midst of scarcity.

Nigeria's Annual Budget

A country's annual budget is one of the vital tools for achieving national development. Through budget, resources are allocated to enhance infrastructural development, reduce poverty, and bridge inequality gaps. As Ngara and Dasat (2020) observed, the annual budget is the vehicle provided by law through which national resources are allocated for socio-economic development. Its successful implementation will go a long way to address development deficit.

However, annual budget in Nigeria has rather perpetuated challenges of development. It has become annual rituals where lawmakers and other politicians struggle to have their shares of what they call "national cake" through padding [2]. Annual budget in Nigeria is tantamount to annual deepening of the country's development crisis. "A troubling aspect of the budgeting process that has no end in sight," BudgIT (2024, p. 7) bemoans, "is the repeated insertions of projects into the budget. This singular act draws resources away from budget priorities to the personal fancies of legislators." Reading Nigeria's budget gives one an insight into why Nigeria continues to grow but never developed. Adeniyi (2024, para.1) who has consistently written on Nigeria's annual budget over the years refers to it as "the distribution of political spoils." Lamenting on the damage budget padding by Nigerian politicians has done to Nigeria's

[2]Budget padding is the practice of intentionally inflating budget figures with some questionable estimates.

development, he writes: "I have also repeatedly referenced a Twitter thread by Laolu Samuel-Biyi who once concluded: 'If you want to keep hope alive in Nigeria, don't look at the budget.'"

Budget padding made it to the national headlines when a serving senator, Abdul Ahmed Ningi, alleged that the 2024 budget was padded to the tune of about N3.7 trillion. This is about 12 per cent of the entire N28.78 trillion budget. Rather than investigate the allegation, Ningi was suspended for three months. That means the 2024 appropriation bill approved by the lawmakers and signed into law by the President cannot be a tool for achieving national development. According to Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC, 2024), "Since the budget was passed, the economy has nosedived and the several indices and indicators contained in the budget appear to have been impacted…it is unclear how the 2024 budget will accomplish its set goals."

For instance, the budget was predicated on the naira exchange rate of N750 per $1, crude oil was set at $77.96 per barrel with the production volume of 1.78 million barrels. As at 23rd September, 2024, the exchange rate is N1, 597 to a dollar. In addition, Nigeria is nowhere around producing 1.78 million barrels per day. Addressing the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria[3] in a televised speech, President Bola Tinubu announced that Nigeria's oil production has risen to 1.61 million barrels per day (mbpd). Even though this wasn't up to the expected production upon which the 2024 budget was predicated, it was fact-checked to be incorrect. The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) puts Nigeria's average daily production at 1.270 million bpd as at June 2024, lower than May's figure which is 1.261 million bpd (NUPRC, 2024).

It can be concluded from the above that the 2024 budget cannot accomplish its set goals because there is no display of seriousness or patriotic display from its conception to show that it is meant to achieve its objectives. The budget was titled "Budget of Renewed Hope" despite the fact that those who drafted it and the lawmakers who subsequently approved it do not show a single streak of patriotism in their mannerisms as will be shown in Table I and the next theme below.

[3]It is a 2024 protest that was aimed at putting an end to bad governance and worsening cost of living in Nigeria under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Table I Extract from the Project of Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment in 2024 Renewed Hope Budget

ERGP Code	PROJECT	TYPE	Amount (N)
ERGP20241488	Provision of financial support to students of tertiary institution in the North West geo-political zones.	New	5,000,000,000
ERGP20241489	Procurement and distribution of official vehicles to selected traditional rulers in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria.	New	5,000,000,000
ERGP20241490	Construction of manual/solar boreholes in some towns and villages in Kaduna State.	New	2,000,000,000
ERGP20241491	Provision of medical outreach services in some selected communities in Kaduna State.	New	1,000,000,000
ERGP20245105	Purchase of operational vehicle for security purposes across Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ekiti, Ondo and Osun State	New	1,200,000,000
ERGP20247129	Provision of medical outreach, consultation, drugs and glasses to rural areas in Abak & Essien Udim Communities	New	300,000,000
ERGP20247131	Provision of medical outreach, consultation, drugs and glasses to rural areas in Ikono & Ikot Ekpene Communities	New	300,000,000
ERGP20247641	Construction of female ward in General Hospital Zauro	New	300,000,000
ERGP20247642	Construction of two store buildings of classrooms at College of Education Jibwis Jegain Kebbi Central Senatorial District	New	400,000,000
ERGP20247643	Provision of solar powered street lights in Andarai, Mungudi, Karaye, Jan Dutse, Mayalo, Zama, Sabige land Dakala Villages	New	300,000,000
ERGP20249045	Provision of medical surgical outreach for the people in Shira/Giade Federal Constituency Bauchi State	New	41,870,000

Source: Extracted by authors from page 656-667 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2024 Appropriation Act.

Using the coding frame from Section 2, analysis of the 2024 Appropriation Act reveals two dominant patterns coded as "sectional loyalty" and "absence of sacrifice". "Sectional loyalty" refers to insertion of projects that prioritize geo-political zones or non-mandate constituencies over national priorities, while "absence of sacrifice" refers to allocation of funds to non-essential items during fiscal constraint. In the Renewed Hope Budget which later became the 2024 Appropriation Act, the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment took it upon itself to provide financial support for students of tertiary institutions in the North West Geo-Political Zone. This is clearly outside its mandate. In addition, what is the justification for singling out

North West to the exclusion of other regions in providing students financial support? What has the provision of medical surgical outreach and provision of female ward in hospital got to do with Ministry of Industry? In what ways does the procurement and distribution of vehicles to traditional rulers help to promote industry, trade, and investment?

Table I illustrates clearly how budget is padded by augmenting estimates and inserting irrelevant projects.The Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment has only been chosen as a case study and for brevity, similar frivolities are found in virtually all sections of the appropriation bill. In its analysis of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in the 2024 Appropriation Act, Budgit (2024) explains that 7.95% of SMEDAN's budget (N6.13 billion) was allocated to the installation of streetlights and drilling of boreholes; N4.7 billion on medical outreaches and the construction/rehabilitation of health centers and classroom blocks; N2.03 billon on road construction; N9.79 billion on the purchase of cars for traditional rulers and others. This does not reflect projects that focus on the activities related to SMEDAN's functions which among others include facilitating development programs, providing instruments and support services to accelerate the development and modernization of Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) operations; providing access to industrial infrastructures such as layouts, incubators, industrial parks; and intermediating between MSMEs and Government etc. Therefore, Budgit (2024, p. 98) concludes,

> *The National Assembly has found SMEDAN a haven for frivolous and constituency-like projects which distracts the agency from its core function. MSMEs are the lifeline and drivers of growth in any vibrant economy. Hence the development of MSMEs, devoid of any distractions, should feature highly on the priority list of any government.*

This ugly practice is not new. In hisfront-row account of Nigeria under the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Adeniyi (2011) gave account of how budget padding and "warehousing money" [4] at the end of budget cycle led to an altercation that almost resulted in legal confrontation between the former President and the lawmakers. The President was reluctant to sign the budget due to the suspected meddlesomeness of the lawmakers which he strongly believed extremely altered its content. According to Adeniyi (2011, p. 143)

> *A review of the 2008 Appropriation Act as passed by the National Assembly revealed that the legislators had virtually rewritten the budget not only by jacking up their own figures but also by introducing several clauses in contravention of the principle of separation of*

[4]This refers to the practice of deliberately withholding funds allocated for specific programs or projects until the end of the fiscal year by government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). This is to avoid returning unspent money as required by law. Rather, these "warehoused" funds are embezzled and would be claimed to have been spent on questionable projects.

> *powers…In summary, the legislators unilaterally initiated projects for which they provided money without any input from the executive, which ordinarily should design, cost, execute and supervise such projects.*

From the foregoing, it is evident that budget padding is one of the vilest ways to display disloyalty to national development by those elected to govern and make law; and entrusted with the general affairs of the state. This paper now turns to the other major cause of growth without development in Nigeria.

Lavish Spending

Lavish and unconscientious spending of public funds by elected rulers is a second manifestation of lack of patriotism identified through content analysis. This behavior is coded as "absence of sacrifice"—the allocation of scarce public resources to presidential lifestyle and assets while citizens face subsidy removal and wage delays. This is also one of the crudest ways the Nigerian elected rulers have chosen to display their disloyalty—consciously or unconsciously—to the Nigerian state. It will take the country a long time to develop (if at all it develops) with this blatant disregard for public goods and misappropriation of public funds. It was once said that the problem of Nigeria is not money but how to spend it. This is not the case in the longest republic in Nigeria which began with the 1999 transition from military to democratic regime. Now, the problem is not how to spend money but how to patriotically utilize it for general benefits to improve Nigerians' conditions and facilitate national development.

The Nigeria handed over to the current President, Bola Ahmad Tinubu, is said to be bedeviled with a lot of challenges (too numerous to mention) and is highly indebted with over bloated loans. While this is true, a patriotic commitment to put things in shape and self-sacrifice on the part of Nigerian leadership could make a lot of differences; and in addition, win the citizens' trust. However, this is not the case. Nigerian rulers continue to sermonize the masses to sacrifice while they continue to maintain extravagant lifestyle. Since the removal of oil subsidy at the inception of this government which is three years as at May 2026, nothing noticeable has been done to cushion hardship except palliatives that are acutely insufficient in addressing the widespread hunger. Money allegedly saved from oil subsidy has not positively reflected, in the least, in the lives of the suffering masses. Negotiation on minimum wage has dragged on for too long and the ultimate decision to pay N70, 000 (which is still far away from being a living wage my any measure) was arrived at after over a year of negotiation. While the federal government has agreed to pay, it is yet to pay. It is also not certain if state governments will pay.

Meanwhile, to display a crude lack of patriotism as the masses wallow in hunger, the federal government embarked on many frivolous projects. Table II below highlights some of these projects that belie the "no fund" narrative.

Table II A Glimpse of Unpatriotic Projects and Provisions in the 2023 Supplementary Budget

No	Project Description/Budgetary Provision	Amount
	Purchase of SUV vehicles	N2.9 billion
	Renovation of residential quarters for Mr President	N4 billion
	Renovation of Aguda House	N2.5 billion
	Renovation of Dodon Barracks official resident of Mr. President	N4 billion
	Renovation of official quarters of Vice President in Lagos	N3 billion
	Construction of office complex within State House	N4 billion
	Purchase of official vehicles for the office of the first lady	N1.5 billion
	Maintenance of Presidential Air Fleet	N12.7 billion

Source: Extracted by authors from the 2023 Supplementary Budget

From Table II above, one can conclude that one of the easiest ways to ascertain how patriotic or unpatriotic Nigerian elected rulers are is through the annual budget document. The items in the Table reveal that Nigerian leaders are mindless of poverty in the land. They do not see Nigeria as a fatherland which according to Cicero, "is the common parent of us all" in which case we are all supposed to be supportive siblings. They see themselves rather as people who are entitled to all kinds of enjoyment while the masses toil.

Although the emphasis in this paper is on the national budgets, budgets at the state level are just replicas of what is obtainable at the federal level. The contents in Tables 1 and 2 above are evidence to show that our rulers do not pretend to be patriotic. They obviously behave like people who are less concerned about development of the country. To further illustrate, a five-billion-naira Presidential Yacht wasin the proposed 2023 supplementary budget submitted to the National Assembly. However, it is not in the approved supplementary budget probably due to the public criticisms of the obvious extravagance which its purchase amounts to. Despite its absence in the approved budget, the yacht was purchased by other means (Nwachukwu, 2023).

To tell Nigerians that they do not care about hardship in the land, our rulers insisted that presidential jet must be prioritized over the terrible condition of hungry Nigerians. Thus, our rulers have no problem with replacing nineteen-year-old jet with fifteen-year-old one at a whopping sum of US$100 million; that is about N150 billion. Ugly display of patriotism is why our rulers give their family members access to (and abuse of) state resources. Presidential jets that are maintained with billions of naira (taxpayers' money) as shown in Table 2 above are used to fly our rulers' children to any location of their choice for pleasure. Former President Buhari started it when one of his daughters was flown to Bauchi State in presidential jet to snap pictures (Akinkuotu, 2020). President Tinubu who proceeded from where his predecessor stopped continues the I-do-not-care-about-what-people-say extravagance. One of his sons, out of sheer display of unpatriotic manners, also abused public asset when he was flown to Kano State to watch polo (Abdulmalik, 2023). Thus, Salaudeen and Ibrahim (2024) argued that socio-

economic injustice—perpetrated by unpatriotic elected rulers in Nigeria against the ordinary Nigerian citizens—cannot coexist with democracy and economic development.

Patriotic Leaders in Nigerian History—A Lesson

Nigeria had had quite a number of patriotic leaders who prioritized the development of the state. But since Nigeria's transition to democratic republic in 1999 which now stands to be the country's longest republic, such exemplary leaders are hard to find. Financial propriety of AlhajiAhmadu Bello, the first and only premier of the North (and Sardauna) during regional government in Nigeria, was said to be both exemplary and legendary. In their account of the Premier, Gumi and Tsiga (1992: p. 121) wrote:

> *He seemed to be at his happiest whenever he was distributing presents or making donations…Yet, he was careful not to waste the public funds in his care. He kept meticulous accounts of his earnings and spendings. Anyone interested today can read the Premier's official files, which are available in the archives to show how much concern the Premier had for records and accountability.*

After the Premier was killed, true to his lifestyle which was mostly defined by generosity, he hardly left any assets because he gave out virtually everything. His killers were amazed and acknowledges his innocence when they saw his records. Gumi & Tsiga (1992, p. 122) further stated "He left behind many unsettled bills and huge bank overdrafts. One of the Igbo coup plotters was said to have shouted in annoyance, 'Who will pay these overdrafts?' The Sardauna did not care to accumulate money and never owned any notable property." Bello's efforts in promoting education in the North is well documented. Ahmadu Bello University that was built by the Northern government under the leadership of Ahmadu Bello. The like of it has not been replicated anywhere in the North. In addition, he invested hugely in education to include modernizing traditional Quranic education in Northern Nigeria. His greatest achievement was the modernization and unification of diverse people of Northern Nigeria (Louis, 1993; Ousmane, 2003).

Another sterling example is Alhaji Lateef KayodeJakande, who in just four years, not only laid the foundation of Lagos (Nigeria's former Capital) and built it as the first civilian governor but actually transformed it to a modern city. Akinfesoye (2022) chronicles Jakande's landmark achievements whose motivation was to promote good governance and make life livable and better for all and sundry—the poor and the rich.Olumide (2019) extols him and emphasizes how his political administrative genius continues to shine in Lagos. What is said about these two notable political leaders can hardly be said of any political leaders in the present-day Nigeria. What was present then and lacking now is that sense of sacrifice and patriotism.

Summary, Findings, and Conclusion

This paper acknowledges the fact that Nigeria has all what it takes to develop in terms of human and material resources. It clearly shows how Nigeria has grown over the years to be the largest economy in Africa at a point in time. It also highlights the consistent growth of its gross domestic product. However, this paper bemoans that Nigeria's growth does not lead to development. It has never, since 1999, risen above its traditional fourth tier in the Human Development Index ranking. Countries in the fourth tier of the HDI ranking are categorized as those with low human development in terms of health, education, and standard of living (measured in a unit of 0-<0.55 on a scale of 0-1). While corruption, failure of leadership, lack of accountability, insincere politics, ethnicism, disobedience to the rule of law, zero sum game politics, etc. are genuine causes of Nigeria's growth without development, this paper subsumes all the aforementioned under lack of patriotism. For, patriotic citizens will, by default, shun all the above without being admonished to do so. It cites budget padding and lavish spending by Nigerian rulers as the two major ways through which lack of patriotism is displayed, while the masses wallowed in excruciating hunger. However, this paper argues that patriotism is a necessary condition rather than a sufficient condition for national development. While the absence of patriotism entrenches underdevelopment as evidenced in Nigeria's, its present alone does not guarantee development without complementary factors such as institutional capacity, rule of law, and sound economy policies.

Thus, this paper finds that Nigeria is too endowed to be poor but it is poor due to the lack of patriotism which birthed many ills that constitute obstacles on its trajectory to progress and account for its underdevelopment. Discussing Nigeria's growth without development from the perspective of civic nationalism which encourages democratic participation, promotes solidarity among diverse citizens, and fosters sense of shared responsibility, this paper concludes that attitudinal change, patriotism, and self-sacrifice (exemplified by the ruling class),alongside functional institutions and accountable governance are necessary catalysts for national development.

Recommendations

1. Government should institutionalize the practice of "Patriotic Track Record" screening for elective office to ensure that only individuals with verifiable indicators like commitment to public/community services, constituency projects, and absence of corruption are elected to manage the country's economy in order to harness its resources towards sustainable development.

2. Citizens' enlightenment and education should be geared towards qualitative political participation which are essential keys to national development. This can be achieved by reviewing curriculums of related subjects like Civic Education and History andmotivation of teachers with good remuneration and teaching tools to achieve teaching objectives.

3. Love for the fatherland, which should go beyond singing national anthem, should be inculcated in the young ones right from their formative age by narrating to them, in form of stories, the legacies of Nigerian past heroes. In addition, "Hero on Screen" program should be institutionalized by mandating National Film and Video Censor Board in collaboration with Ministries of Education and Art, Culture, and Creative Economy to produce appropriate biographical films of Nigerian past heroes like Ahmadu Bello, Aminu Kano, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe, Gambo Sawaba, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Dora Akunyili, etc.

4. The practice of "indigeneship" which creates room for narrow ethnic nationalism should be abolished and replace with "residency" to promote citizenship that emphasizes civic nationalism. In the latter case, the Igbo will not feel alienated in the North and the Hausa will freely contest as governorship candidates in any state in the South. This will require amendment of relevant sections of the Constitution. For instance, Section 318 of the Constitution that interprets "belong to" to mean "indigenous to" should be amended to mean "resident in".

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