

A POPPERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT QUESTION

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Abstract

Not long after most African countries gained political independence in the 1960s from their colonial masters, the new African leaders realized they needed to match their political independence with economic self-reliance. But the leaders were too engrossed with power tussle against their local rivals to be able to mount economic infrastructure to support their political independence.

The new leaders, therefore, sought and obtained and relied on the economic expertise, economic ideologies and aids from their colonial masters. This bred the economic dependency of the new African States. This economic dependency has persisted and has become rationalized and formalized as the *given* by the Western-dominated international economic and financial institutions. This paper questions such false *given* and employs Karl Popper's critical philosophy as a recipe to the philosophical questions in the country's economic development matrix. Popper's philosophy eschews political and economic blue-prints or idealisms and advocates problem-solving activity of the piece meal social engineer. It is argued that Popper's critical philosophy proffers intellectual guide to help Nigeria to evolve a home-grown development paradigm.

KEYWORDS: QUESTION, PERSPECTIVE, NIGERIA, ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT.

Introduction

Neo-colonial Obstacles to Africa's Development.

Nigeria's development question is a microcosm of Africa's development question and as such requires a fair grasp of the latter for it to be understood. Indeed, Africa's development question had set the new states on tenterhooks. It was a function of general natural striving for survival impelled by the inexorable pressures of natural selection at independence in the 1960s.

The pressures of Darwinian natural selection, this time, of States, became a stark challenge to the leaders of the new African States because they realized they needed to match political independence with economic strength. They realized that political independence without economic viability was fragile and spurious.

Regrettably, however, the new African leaders were too absorbed in power tussle with their local rivals to be able to mount economic infrastructure to support their political independence. In the circumstance, they turned to their former colonial masters for both economic aids and economic development models.

The former colonial masters celebrated and exploited the economic fragility of the new independent states. They handed out paltry economic aids and grants and tendentious economic theories and doctrines which ensured that the new independent states became permanent producers of raw materials that were also strategically and conspiratorially low-priced in the international market while these former colonial masters became permanent producers of over-priced finished goods, machines, and expertise. In this way, Africa's economic dependency on the West became effectively established as an instance of a dubious international division of labor.

This economic dependency eventually became rationalized, formalized and institutionalized by the so-called modernization theory and sundry development theories and macro-economic policies and mechanisms advocated and funded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and their subsidiaries. The World Bank and the IMF and their subsidiaries have conspiratorially and strategically made Africa's asymmetrical economic relations with the West (and lately with Japan, and China) appear as the *given*, a natural order

of things, an instance of international division of labor to which African leaders and technocrats have got to reconcile themselves to in their search for development options.

The chief weapon of attack and defense which Western capitalism employs to maintain an inequitable and obnoxious international division of labor (within which Africans and the Third World are assigned the role of production of low-priced raw materials and the West are called upon to produce finished goods and machines) is the so-called modernization theory. As Claude Ake (1996, 9-10) succinctly puts it, "modernization theory is a complex unity of diversities of social, political and economic factors". A capitalist ideological ferment of the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory has authoritatively been defined by one of its leading lights Wilbert More, as a "total transformation of traditional or pre-modern societies into the types of technologies and associated social organization that characterize the advanced economically prosperous and politically stable nations of the Western world (quoted in Offiong 1980,20).

In its most common form, modernization theory posits an original state of backwardness or underdevelopment characterized by, among other things, a low rate of economic growth that is at least potentially amenable to alteration through the normal process of capital. This original state of backwardness is initially universal. According to the theory, the industrialized countries have managed to overcome it. All the other countries could conceivably overcome backwardness if they adopted appropriate strategies.

Modernization theory, particularly, Rustov's theory of stages, assumes that progress tends to be spatially diffused, a process by which more and more countries evolve from the state of backwardness, capitalizing on the experience of those that developed before them. It holds that the spatial distribution of progress, however skewed at any time, is not static but dynamic and by proximity and interaction, progress is diffused through space. It further postulates that progress or modernity, by its very nature, is apt to stream beyond its locus, overflowing into the adjacent space and transforming it. Thus, according to modernization theory, uneven development is a transitional phenomenon that can be removed sooner or later by creating certain favorable conditions within the underdeveloped regions and by ensuring the appropriate interaction between them and the developed regions.

Without exception, modernization theory used an evolutionary scheme that regarded the ideal characteristics of the West as the end of social evolution. This meant that, reduced to essentials, the development of the backward parts of the world was also implicitly a matter of becoming Western. But since the theories viewed development, not westernization (that was only implicit) as a state of being that is objectively good and universally desirable, they did not seem culturally biased. When modernization came in conflict with the divergent social structures in the third World, the modernization theorists talked simply of making the structure of the backward country identical to Western ones. When the theorists encountered cultural resistance, they proclaimed that all that was needed was modernization of attitudes (Ake 1996, 10)

Modernization theory under the auspices of Western capitalist institutions like the World Bank and IMF set the agenda and logic of third world's asymmetrical relationship with the first World economically, politically and culturally. This asymmetrical relationship has been strategically and conspiratorially structured and imposed by the Western theorists and technocrats on the third world and popularized by the condescending phrase, "catching up with the West".

In effect, the ramified theory of modernization does for contemporary neocolonialism what the "civilizing mission" theory did for the old colonialism. As the missionary churches and trading companies strengthened the hands of the old colonialism, the World Bank, IMF and Western multinational corporations are today working to strengthen the hands of neo-colonialism.

The World Bank and IMF were established about the same time. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) came into existence in 1944 and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) otherwise called the World Bank was founded in 1945. The two bodies are often referred to as the Breton Woods Institutions because they were born out of the 1944 conference held in Breton Woods, New Hampshire in the U.S.A. The forum examined ways of reviving European economies that had earlier been devastated by World War II (1939-1945) and this became the mandate of the World Bank; while strategies for reviving

international trade and growth in the world economy and to help promote international financial order was the focus of the IMF. However, IMF has since gradually taken on responsibilities similar to those of the World Bank.

The two institutions almost duplicate and surely reinforce the policies of each other in developing countries. The countries that set the Breton Woods agenda, mainly from Europe and North America, saw themselves as making up “the World” and controlled most of the affairs of all other countries. Participants of the conference had no reason to be concerned about “Third World” issues because most of the South was still colonized and regarded as satellite states of the countries at that conference (Abudu 2003, 167). This is unmistakably the origin of the partisan, imperialistic and ideological character which the World Bank and IMF are known to have.

Both institutions are in reality a world-wide neo-colonial infrastructure for under-developing the third world despite appearances to the contrary. The neo-colonialist agenda and character of the Breton Woods institutions is evident in their formulation and advocacy of the policy of Accelerated Development for Africa, their veiled opposition to Lagos Plan of Action and the much maligned Structural Adjustment Program.

Accelerated Development was a socio-economic development policy authored by the World Bank and IMF upon the request of African leaders in the latter’s reaction to the World Bank Report of 1972 which presented a bleak future of Africa’s development prospects. The Accelerated Development Report recommended that Africa should concentrate on primary production particularly, agricultural products. By emphasizing agricultural production for export, the Accelerated Development Report was re-enforcing Africa’s dependence on hostile international market that the West has strategically made protectionist to their favor.

African leaders rightly regarded Accelerated Development Report as a Western political and ideological agenda masked as economics which attempts to induce African leaders to accept largely false or misleading issues and irrelevant projections and solutions about African economic development. African leaders’ opposition was expressed by the African ministers (responsible for economic development and planning) in a document titled “Declaration of Tripoli on the World Bank Report Entitled ‘Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action” produced by the ministers in Tripoli during their Seventh Session in April, 1982. The ministers argued that:

‘The strategy recommended in the World Bank Report which emphasizes export-oriented in general and primary commodity export in particular regards industrialization and economic co-operation and integration in Africa as long-term issues and completely disregards external factors as being major constraints on Africa’s development and economic growth, that it adopts approaches, concepts and objectives which are divergent from those of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos and opposed to the political, economic and social aspirations of Africa’ (Ake1996,25)

Meanwhile, the Breton Woods institutions maintained a veiled opposition to the Lagos Plan of Action because they know it was well-thought out and cogent and would terminate Africa’s economic dependence on the West. The Lagos Plan of Action and the resultant Final Act of Lagos were adopted as blue-prints for the economic and political emancipation of Africa by the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the OAU at its Second Extra-ordinary Meeting devoted to economic development problems in April, 1980. The Plan, to a large extent, demonstrates the fact that Africa’s leaders were coming to grips with the realities of the deepening crisis facing their economies. The Plan, therefore, enabled the leaders re-evaluate their inheritance, location and role in the World system and to map out new paths to self-reliant growth and development. Professor Ihonvbere (1989, 19) shares this view in his assessment of the Plan:

'.... The Lagos Plan of Action is the instrument which African countries, their heads of states and governments have fashioned to attack the economic, social and technological problems so that they may not only initiate and nurture an internally-generated and self-sustaining development and economic growth process but also attain national and collective self-reliance albeit overtime, in various economic social, technological and even cultural areas'

The Breton Woods institutions' veiled opposition to the Lagos Plan of Action was expressed by their ignoring it and refusing to re-orient their economic relations with Africa so as to connect with, and address the programs and policies of the Plan. That was enough to render the Plan inoperable. In the end, African leaders found that they were too dependent and too weak to have their way, and they started to retreat. They talked less about the Lagos Plan and signaled their willingness to reform their economies along the lines suggested by the World Bank study, and most significantly, they increasingly adopted structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and IMF.

The structural adjustment program is an economic and financial model developed by Jacques J. Polak in 1957. It became controversial because of the unsuitability of its theoretical assumptions to African conditions and this explains why its application in Africa worsened African economies in the 80s. Apart from the privatization, devaluation and deregulation aspects of the structural adjustment program, its governing doctrine of free reign of market forces has continued to perpetuate Africa's location in the international division of labor in which she is relegated to the role of primary producer and mere consumer of manufactured goods. Although it has been argued in the foregoing that neo-colonialism and under-development have remained the defining characteristics of the relationship between the West and the Third World, there exists a cocktail of internal obstacles to the development enterprise in the Third World. These include military weakness, technological backwardness, ethnicism and centrifugal tendencies, corrupt leadership elite, poor labor discipline, lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning and incompetent management, inappropriate policies, the stifling of market mechanism, low levels of technical assistance, the limited inflow of foreign capital, falling commodity price and unfavorable terms of trade.

One concurs with Ake that beyond these external and internal obstacles to the development enterprise in Africa lay political conditions as the greatest impediment to development in Africa. The left-wing political scientist observes that:

"Besieged by a multitude of hostile forces that their authoritarian and exploitative practices had engendered, those in power were so involved in the struggle for survival that they could not address the problem of development....They did so not because they were uninterested in social transformation but because their minds were absorbed in the struggle for Power and survival" (1996, 7, 9).

Nigeria's Tortuous Search for Viable Development Option

Nigeria's economic development effort since independence is paradigmatic of the African development enterprise. Nigeria's striving for sustainable economic development since independence has been tortuous. This is unfortunately against the backdrop that at independence, Nigeria, economically speaking, was in a most fortunate and enviable position and capable of rising rapidly up the ladder of development. Not only were human and natural resources abundant, petroleum oil had also recently been discovered in commercial quantities

in the Niger Delta. Natural gas was to come later. Thus, by the early 1970's there was a dramatic upturn in the country's economic fortunes. The Second National Development Plan (1970-74) and subsequent Plans mirrored the country's new-found opulence. Such opulence found expression in the then military ruler's (General Yakubu Gowon's) boast to the world that Nigeria's problem was not how to get the money but how to spend it.

By virtue of her favorable economic resources and potential and per capita income of about \$1000, Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s was in the league of the middle level developing countries along with such countries as Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Singapore. Whereas these latter countries became known as the Asian Tigers because of their rapid economic development strides, Nigeria, on the other hand, has slid down the rungs of the ladder to the extent that, in 1993, the World Bank Report rated her the 13th least developed country (LDC) in the World (Otoni 2006,52).

More specifically, as regards industrialization and agriculture, Nigeria has made a poor showing. The Ajaokuta Steel Complex which was supposed to supply Nigeria's steel needs has become a failed project because of leadership ineptitude and a mishmash of local and international politics. A number of other minor steel mills had witnessed several vicissitudes including temporary closures.

A similar or worse scenario has occurred in the field of agriculture. Throughout the colonial era and right up to the dawn of political independence, agriculture did not only account for the bulk of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), provided employment for 70 percent of the population; it also made Nigeria self-sufficient in food production as well as an exporter of such cash crops as palm produce, ground nuts and cocoa. But unfortunately, from the 1970s till date, Nigeria has not only lost her pride of place in the agricultural export market, but has even turned worse by becoming a massive importer of food items, especially rice and wheat flour.

Against the backdrop of Nigeria's rich human and material resources, the burning question is: What explains the failure to grow and develop the Nigerian economy? Certainly, it is not that the various Nigerian governments were not interested in economic growth, development, restructuring and modernizing the Nigerian economy. Supposedly good programs and projects were formulated with attention on prioritized objectives and targets. Examples are the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th National Development Plans (1962-68; 1970-74; 1975-80; 1980-85) (Prah 2005, 8). There was also the realization that oil was a "wasting asset" and that oil revenues must be invested in diversifying the economy. Consequently, there was a felt need to exit from the dependence on one primary commodity- the export of crude oil -and to create stable renewable sources for future income.

The failure of these National Development Plans coupled with the socio-economic disaster caused by the Structural Adjustment Program led the country during the regime of General Abacha in 1997 to assemble about 200 stakeholders from all sectors of the economy to articulate comprehensive objectives, policies, procedures and road maps for achieving enviable growth targets in all sectors of economic activity and infrastructure, including education, health, power, transport, agriculture, manufacturing, telecommunications, etc. These growth targets constituted the vision 2010 of the General Abacha regime which did not see the light of day in terms of implementation and expired with the fatal expiration of that infamous regime.

A further broad economic recovery program was launched by President Obasanjo upon inauguration in 1999. The regime in its 8 years of existence articulated and pursued various economic reform policies which included market driven exchange rate, low-interest rates, lower customs tariffs on production inputs, rehabilitation of social infrastructure, improved salary for government employees, NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy), enhanced and cheaper GSM access, Paris and London debt forgiveness amongst others.

In the last days of Obasanjo's regime, an idea was mooted that Nigeria could become one of the 20 largest economies in the world by 2020 A.D. The Yar' Adua regime which succeeded the Obasanjo regime made the idea to dominate national discourse and government technocrats enriched and transformed the idea into a public policy objective known as vision 20-20-20. Despite the death of President Yar'Adua the vision 20-20-20 remains an economic development road-map for the Federal government because President Yar'Adua's vice, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, on assumption of office as President pledged to continue to prosecute the

economic development vision. It is an open question whether vision 20-20-20 will evaporate into nothingness like previous visions and programs.

With the above attempts at developing the Nigerian economy, there is no doubt that the various Nigerian governments meant to develop and stabilize the Nigerian economy but what has remained doubtful and controversial is the reason why such development visions and programs have failed. This paper provides the philosophical perspectives on such failures, particularly, from the point of view of Popper's critical philosophy.

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Philosophy in its essence examines the intellectual foundations of our life as the latter may be viewed in terms of our values, education, politics, arts, science and technology. However, in this paper, it is the critical tool of logic which philosophy employs in interrogating these spheres that Karl Popper draws our attention to.

Popper, as a philosopher, does not need much introduction because his ideas are in wide currency within the scientific and socio-political worlds. He is widely regarded as England's greatest philosopher of science of world-wide eminence since Bertrand Russell (Gardner 2001, 13). Born in 1902 to Jewish parents, Popper had a chequered material and intellectual career, having been a primary and post-primary school teacher, a holder of three doctorates respectively in Music, Psychology and Philosophy, a young Marxist frequently escaping police arrest, and a comfortable liberal ideologue admired and knighted by the British Monarch. He died on 17th September, 1994, at the ripe age of 92.

Popper's critical philosophy has its formative roots in the pre-Socratics who he said inaugurated the tradition of critical discussion as a consciously used method of expanding human knowledge (Magee 2003, 229). However, the taproot of his critical philosophy goes deeper into the realm of modern science from where it derives its vitality.

Popper, himself a former physics teacher, had an intellectual turning point after listening to Einstein's lecture on the new theory of universal gravitation. Popper claimed what impressed him most was Einstein's declaration that he would regard his general theory of relativity as untenable if it failed critical tests. Einstein had declared: "If the red shift of spectral lines due to the gravitational potential should not exist, then the general theory of relativity will be untenable (Truesdell 1967, 35). Popper saw in Einstein's declaration a fundamental attitude and procedure accountable for the obvious growth of science.

Popper, therefore, regarded scientific knowledge as the paradigm knowledge and proceeded to develop a theory of scientific rationality marked, according to him, by objectivity and testability of scientific theories which yield, he held, logic of discovery and advancement of human knowledge generally as he has argued copiously and ingeniously in his Opus Magnum, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1935.

The upshot of Popper's logic of discovery or methodological template for the advancement of knowledge is that knowledge is of its nature, provisional and permanently so and grows by constant criticism and revision. Popper (1963, vii) formulates this methodological template in his following intellectual account of scientific rationality and growth of knowledge:

'Knowledge can grow, and science can progress -just because we can learn from our mistakes. The way in which knowledge progresses, and especially our scientific knowledge, is by unjustified (and unjustifiable) anticipations, by guesses, by tentative solutions to our problems, by conjectures. These conjectures are controlled by criticism, that is, by attempted refutations, which include several critical tests. They may survive these tests, but they can never be positively justified: they can neither be established as certainly true or even as "probability"' (in the sense of probability calculus)'

Popper has reduced the implicit logic of scientific discovery in the above quote to his now famous and venerable schema: $P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$, in which P_1 is the initial problem, TT is the tentative theory or trial solution, EE is the process of error elimination applied to the trial solution or theory, and P_2 is the resulting situation, with new problems. Popper's logic of scientific discovery is essentially a feedback process. It is not cyclic for P_2 is always different from P_1 ; even a complete failure to solve a problem teaches us something new about where its difficulties lie, and what the minimum conditions are which any solution for it must meet and, therefore, alters the problem situation; nor is it dialectical (in any Hegelian or Marxist sense) since it regards contradiction (as distinct from criticism) as something that cannot be accommodated on any level, and still less welcomed.

Popper's model as rendered in the foregoing schema is, essentially, a logic of discovery and a problem-solving method formulated in his philosophy of science in which he construed science as a problem-solving activity. His model has a general application to most practical affairs, for example, politics, administration, and business.

Applied to the question of evolution of a sustainable economic development paradigm for Nigeria, Popper's model dictates a critical engagement of the country's human and material resources which in the terms of his model is the P_1 , that is, the objective circumstances, the *given*. A prudent management of the country's human and material resources which would drive a sustainable economic development of the country must, on Popper's methodology, begin with identification and analysis of the challenges or, in Popper's terminology, *problems* to the country's development. A distinctive feature of Popper's method is its dogged insistence on starting with identifying the practical problems in any situation. This is because he held in his philosophy of science from where this paper draws its inspiration that every scientific theory is an attempt to answer a practical problem in science. In the context of this paper, Popper's thesis will mean that every public policy is an attempt to solve a practical social problem. Nigeria's problems are legion: neo-colonialism, dependency, underdevelopment, endemic corruption, inept political leadership, ethnicism, sectarian violence et al. These problems in Popper's schema are the country's P_1 . The critical debates and suggested solutions constitute the TT (tentative theory or trial solution) and EE (error elimination).

The morale of Popper's philosophical template for Nigeria's sustainable economic development is the requirement to encourage debates and criticism of public policies, indeed for government to foster critical culture amongst the citizenry. Such culture is the natural manure to the cultivation of scientific rationality and inventiveness that will yield technological development without which sustainable economic development will continue to elude the country. The adoption and sustenance of the critical culture advocated by Popper's method will be a veritable check against present practice whereby government either politicizes or criminalizes contrary views by clamping down on the proponents and in the process the average man is left with the impression that criticism or disagreement is confrontation.

On a more general level, the fostering of critical culture in the country's public affairs as advocated by Popper's philosophy will remove the fog of false consciousness which had hitherto prevented the country's policy makers from seen through the cunning and ploy of Western-sponsored development programs which are indeed underdevelopment programs. Such critical re-orientation dictates that the country's human and material resources should be engaged to evolve home-grown solutions to the country's development problems. This will naturally lead to a jettisoning of the irrelevant and neo-colonialist development theories and paradigms spun, popularized and administered by Breton Woods institutions and their agents as veritable development options for the country. These theories and paradigms are, by their origin, intent and character, totally at variance and disconnected with the country's historic experience and would, therefore, not solve her development problems. These theories and paradigms are sheer blueprints for "developing countries" which are strategically aimed at under developing their economies and perpetuating their dependence on the West and the Asia Pacific.

Popper's problem-solving model eschews blueprints which are what the Breton Woods institutions' development programs for Africa are. Blueprints are by their nature fixed, static. Because they are fixed, people's attitudes towards them become fixed and they soon become objects of quasi-religious commitment and belief. Political opponents who actively try to prevent

them from being realized are seen as wicked and unpatriotic rebels, thus the well-known persecution of persons who oppose World Bank and IMF development prescriptions in Nigeria and other Third World countries.

Human affairs are subject to change and this is why Popper's method abhors blueprints and directs our attention to the need for a perpetual revision of aspirations and goals against the backdrop of what Popper calls (1962,95) "the unintended social repercussions of unintentional human actions" which social existence generates. Again, because of these "unintended social repercussions" of our existence, Popper's methodology is essentially one for management of change.

A wise management of change which is how Popper describes the goal of social science requires that the country's policy makers should look away from the World Bank and IMF prescriptions and start with proffering solutions to the country's problems enumerated above as they constitute her social reality, *her problem situation* as Popper would call it. The country's policy makers must examine the country's problem situation critically to proffer solution to it. The United States President, Barack Obama, validated and reiterated this Popperian methodology on 28, April, 2014 in his address to some five hundred young Africans concluding a six-week Washington Leadership Fellowship. In the address, Obama called on African nations to look inwards for solutions to economic woes and not make "excuses" based on a history of dependence and colonization and went further to say that: "At some point, we have to stop looking somewhere else for solutions, and you have to start looking for solutions internally"

Popper encapsulates his problem-solving method in the rule of thumb he recommends for public policy to wit: "minimize avoidable suffering" (Popper 1963, vii). Where ever you want to go, Popper says, you have to start from where you are, your problem situation; that is to say, that it is of the utmost importance to get diagnosis right before one proceeds to cure. Patriotic and informed Nigerians have ever continued to discuss and diagnose the country's economic development problems but the country seemed bugged down with a fatal political leadership ineptitude that has made it virtually impossible to direct and ensure efficient management of her human and material resources in order, in the words of Popper, to 'minimize avoidable suffering'. This point has been put pungently by a fallen patriot and renowned radical political scientist, Professor Claude Ake, in these words: "By all indications political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development" (1996, 1).

In accordance with Popper's method, the country's sustainable development should begin with solving the problem of inept and corrupt political leadership as its severest problem and which has indeed been unable to make political conditions in Africa conducive to development as Ake has rightly observed above. Popper's critical philosophy beyond proffering a philosophical solution to the problem of development in Nigeria also proffers a recipe to the problem of inept and corrupt political leadership which has made political conditions unsuitable to development in the country particularly and in the continent generally.

The problem of inept and corrupt leadership which creates political conditions that do not conduce to development in Africa can be tackled through institution of democracy. This is because democracy is the only mode of governance which provides a mechanism of popular change of bad government without violence. Popper's critical philosophy is a veritable tool for institution of democracy. Indeed it presents the most powerful theoretical justification of the case for freedom and democracy ever made.

The main contention of Popper's critical philosophy (otherwise technically called 'falsificationism') is that the only practicable way of expanding human knowledge is by an unending feedback process of criticism. For Popper, a leading philosopher of science, criticism is not limited to verbal critical arguments but includes observations and experiments because, according to him, observations and experiments play the same role as verbal arguments: they may be used to test theories, challenge theories, even refute theories, but are ever relevant in so far as they constitute potential criticism of theories.

The connection between Popper's critical philosophy (which is the theoretical framework of this discourse) and democracy is patently seamless. Popper's critical philosophy contains the most powerful theoretical justification of the case for freedom and democracy ever made. The upshot of Popper's critical philosophy or falsificationism is that all knowledge is tentative and should be held undogmatically, giving room for improvement. This is evidently the intellectual

counterpart of what is, in the social sphere, described as liberalism in the pristine, strict sense of the term. Popper spent his long life espousing this critical method of inquiry and the implied freedom as Helmut Kohl, the former German Chancellor, poignantly stated it:

'The age of totalitarian ideologies in Europe is drawing to a close. The belief in the historic mission of one race or class has proved to be the most devastating fallacy of this century: millions of innocent people fell victim to its sway. Karl Popper ceaselessly fought this fallacy. He is among the most significant champions of the open society.... The triumph of freedom and democracy in Europe demonstrates that Popper was right. His message for the future is that we must remain alert; critical rationality is the precondition for the coexistence of people and nations in dignity and peace' (Quoted in Popper 1992, 5)

Civil rule resumed in Nigeria in 1999 and periodic elections have been had in 2003, 2007, and 2011 but these periodic elections merely signify democracy, they were not definitive democratic elections because they were neither free nor fair. Respect for human rights, political participation, free and fair elections, transparency and accountability remain daunting tasks for democracy in Nigeria. This condition prevailed and still prevails because of two reasons. In the first place, the military, having been infiltrated and influenced by the bankrupt national political elites shortly after the coup d'état, was not corrective and redemptive. Instead it raised the coefficient of National decay as witnessed in the notorious regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha. In the second place, the long years of military rule has exacted a mortal wound on the national psyche. The national psyche is brutalized, militarized and vulgarized and, in consequence, has precipitated a culture of impunity in public affairs which is antithetical to the development of the country.

These points make it urgent that the extant, though fledgling, democracy in Nigeria should be stabilized and institutionalized in the very fabric of national policy. This calls for nothing short of a democratization policy and, to achieve this, Popper's critical philosophy will provide an indispensable theoretical framework. Popper's critical philosophy, as its foregoing analysis has shown, advocates critical culture and in that light regards every stage of affairs not as an end of the road, but a notch in the continuum of permanent revision and permanent progress. In this regard, the government would do well to make the cultivation of critical culture a deliberate governmental policy which should be assimilated into the country's national culture and made to permeate her national life through formal and informal institutions. Unfortunately, there is doubt that such democratization policy will be implemented given what a popular columnist, Tatalo Alamu, has described as "elite delinquency and conspiracy against democracy in Nigeria" but enlightened self interest dictates it as the elites have no rarefied upper atmosphere in the Nigerian space in which to live apart in the event of a national social convulsion and implosion which may be triggered by the conflicting cultural pluralities of the Nigerian federation if they are not tamed by democratic attitudes and practices. In the country's present socio-economic and political circumstances what is needed is openness and transparency which is most guaranteed under democracy. So, a true democratization of the Nigerian polity is a desideratum as opposed to the present charade which the government shamelessly calls democracy.

For the critical culture which Popper advocated as the mainstay of democracy to percolate and drive the Nigerian polity and create enabling environment for development, the government has to prosecute it by both formal and informal institutions. The extant formal institutions like the Judiciary, Media, Mass Literacy Program, National Orientation Agency and the Consumer Protection Council need to be overhauled and reinvigorated to perform their respective constitutional functions which presuppose a democratic state and society.

Conclusion

The temptation is to think that the West mean to develop Africa with their so-called development programs for Africa. The truth, however, is that the Darwinian impulse of survival of the species dictates that the West will first survive before lifting a finger in aid of her global neighbors. The Americans and Europeans are pursuing their interests in reprehensible exclusivity. That is why their so-called development programs for Africa through the channels of Breton Woods's institutions and their affiliates are strategically aimed at under developing Africa by recommending a path of specialization on primary or agricultural production for Africa. But with the adoption of Popper's model of discovery and problem-solving which envisages a critical engagement with the country's human and material resources, the country can learn to move beyond primary or agricultural production into secondary production or manufacturing. The realization of the country's socio-economic vision of being among the strongest 20th economy in 2020 lies in her bestriding the contexts of primary and secondary productions in the world economic sphere. The need for democratization through systematic inculcation of democratic attitudes and practices both at the institutional and individual levels is exigent and compelling in an ethnically and culturally plural society like Nigeria. Social peace and social harmony are attained in such a society by free debate and amicable resolutions of issues of the day than by authoritarian muzzling of dissent. Furthermore, historical evidence invariably shows that rapid economic development is, with very few exceptions, higher in stable democracies than in authoritarian and totalitarian societies. Hence, the common refrain that democracy and development are complementary.

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