

**OVERCOMING UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES,
OPPORTUNITIES, AND PATHWAYS**

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY.

OCTOBER, 2025.

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
(B.SC) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

OCTOBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

Akhigbe Anselade declare that,

- i. This study is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of **Prof. A. Otoghile** of the Department of Political Science, Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.
- ii. This work has not been submitted for the award of degree elsewhere.
- iii. Ideas and views are product of my personal research and where the view of others has been expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.
- iv. Any liability arising from this work is to be wholly borne by me alone

AKHIGBE ANSELA EDEWEDE

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Date

CERTIFICATION

We, certify that this research project was carried out by **AKHIGBE ANSELA EDEWEDE** in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in Political Science.

Prof. A. Otoghile

(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. Godstime Igiebor
(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for His inspiration and my family for their love and support.

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Firstly, I would like to thank God for giving me the grace to complete this journey. I could not have done it without him, He came through in ways I least expected it, and He never failed me, and for that, I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

Underdevelopment in Nigeria has been attributed to numerous factors, both internal and external, which continue to hinder the nation's socio-economic progress. Overcoming these challenges is a very necessary topic for both the general public and the government. It is essential for sustainable development and national growth.

The study seeks to explain and understand the root causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria and examine its effect on society and the state. It also explores possible pathways for overcoming these challenges, drawing insights from scholarly suggestions and recommendations, empirical research, and past studies.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, relying on secondary data from academic articles, books, government and international bodies reports, and publicized works. Through the use of theories like the Modernization theory, the Dependency theory, and the Human Development theory, we are able to understand the causes of and solutions to underdevelopment.

Finding reveal that corruption, weak institutions, and the structural nature of Nigeria's economy has contributed significantly to underdevelopment. External factors such as unequal trade relations, foreign aid dependency, and the colonial legacy further compound the problem. All these have hindered development efforts, and continue to make life hard for citizens, while moving the state backwards.

The study concludes with recommendations for policy reform and increased public investment in education, healthcare, and social infrastructure, and key economic sectors as vital pathways for addressing the historical and modern challenges of underdevelopment in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Underdevelopment remains a constant challenge in many Third World Countries, especially in Africa. It is a situation characterized by abject poverty, lack of adequate facilities, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. Underdevelopment undermines the standard of living for citizens of a state and further pushes such state into political and economic backwardness, whilst tampering with all aspects of the state. The prevailing underdevelopment in the world generally and Nigeria specifically, have been historically linked to inherent colonially imposed dependent economic structure within the third world states (Otu et al., 2022).

W. W. Rostow (1960) described underdevelopment as a stage in the linear progress of economic growth where traditional societies are yet to experience the industrial transformation and technological advancement that leads to modernization.

Samuel Huntington (1968) explained that underdevelopment reflects the absence of social, economic, and political modernization, characterized by low levels of education, weak institutions, and limited social mobilization.

Andre Gunder Frank (1967) says that underdevelopment is not an original or natural condition, but the result of the historical process of capitalist development that created a

structure of dependency between the developed “metropolis” and the underdeveloped “satellites”.

Fernando and Enzo (1979) posit that underdevelopment results from the structural dependence of peripheral economies on the core capitalist countries, where economic, political, and social dynamics are shaped by external forces that limit autonomous development.

The concept of underdevelopment draws attention to the condition of many African states. Underdevelopment is defined as a condition characterized by weak political and social institutions, which impedes effective governance and regulation. In political science, underdevelopment is understood not simply as a lack of development, but as a condition actively produced by global and historical power structures. Underdevelopment is a persistent problem in many Third World countries, especially in Africa, including Nigeria. Nigeria is one African country that faces severe underdevelopment despite its robust natural resources and man-power. Nigeria’s underdevelopment can be traced back to historical causes such as the siphoning of human and material resource, slavery, colonialism, erosion of the pre-Nigeria culture etc., and linked to modern causes such as corruption, political influence, bribery, class systems, neo-colonialism, dependency etc. Underdevelopment has plagued Nigeria since independence in 1960, until present day 2025.

Many have studied the root cause of underdevelopment in different parts of the world, and even in Nigeria. Some have attributed underdevelopment to the past and current actions of external forces (dependency theory), while others justify actions of the West claiming it to be an introduction of modernity, and attributing underdevelopment to a host of internal issues and the pervasive culture of the developing state (modernization theory). It is no news that the West benefits from the underdevelopment of African states. However, we still see this West providing alleged opportunities e.g., financial aids, loans and grants, for development to African countries. Now, the assumption is, *“Are these actions purely for the benefit of the developing country, or for the hidden agenda of the international society?”*. We have seen this evident in many cases such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP), which to the open eye aids development in developing countries, but secretly pushes these countries into big debts and less government role in provision of some necessary public services. There is also the case of the Lomé EU – ACP Agreements of 1975, 1979, 1984, and 1989, whereby the agreements provided trade opportunities and access to European markets for African states, as well as development aid. However, on closer inspection, it revealed that the agreement aimed to foster the EU’s initial purpose; access to raw materials from African states, and a stagnation in their industrial sector, as the agreement promoted the export of agricultural produce, and provision of incentives for the extraction and exportation industry, while stifling progress in the technological industry. This led

African states to remain primary industries at the benefit of a little trade, and Europe's legal access to Africa's resources. The question remains *"Is any form of help or aid from the international society for the benefit of the developing states, or is it another means to further reinforce the Global North-South relationship, keeping Africa underdeveloped and Europe developing?"* The international society gives out loans to most African states in order to attain the international standard of development, thereby making Africa indebted to the European countries. It is also for the same reason most international organization are established, towards the development of Africa states. Development of most African states here implies meeting up with the European standard.

This study attempts to understand underdevelopment not only in relation to the external causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, but as well as the internal factors that reinforce this underdevelopment and keep it thriving in the state. The study will also look at possible means to tackle this underdevelopment besides the theoretical adoption of European standards, and economic suggestions to further open the state's market access, or totally cut off ties with the West.

1. 2 Statement of the Problem

Many African countries experience immense underdevelopment and stagnation in their domestic affairs with focus to Nigeria. Nigeria faces underdevelopment in many aspects. The development of an entire state cannot be achieved by mere-say, as efforts put into

developing states by previous leaders and charismatic individuals have met sudden and abrupt ends.

There is a need to understand the causes and consequences of underdevelopment of underdevelopment, thus the question of this research. What are the causes of this major underdevelopment, stagnation, and backwardness of the state, and in what ways can this be solved in a possible span of 10-20 years?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. This study aims to examine the causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, and its consequences on the state.
2. To evaluate the possible opportunities in overcoming underdevelopment in Nigeria.
3. To discover the pathways to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What brings about underdevelopment in Nigeria, and how does it affect the state?
2. What are the possible opportunities in overcoming underdevelopment in Nigeria?
3. What are the pathways to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria?

1.5 Significance Of the Study

1. This study would directly benefit government institutions such as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development, the Federal Ministry of Environment, the Federal Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Federal Ministry of Industries, and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity in carrying out their specific duties and in revising their approach towards carrying out their duties.
2. It would aid Policymakers and Government Officials to create more effective development strategies, and Development-oriented organizations and Individuals working on development projects to improve their interventions.
3. This study would also benefit the General Public as it pertains to the contribution of their culture towards the state of underdevelopment in Nigeria, and by improving the quality of life for citizens of the state.
4. The study will also benefit the Academic Sector by contributing to existing knowledge and providing valuable insight and data for future research on development and underdevelopment.

Overall, this research has a very promising and positive impact on major stakeholders, the general public, the academic sector, policy makers, and the International System.

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

- Underdevelopment: In this study, the term underdevelopment refers to the persistent state of economic stagnation, weak political institutions, poor infrastructure, corruption, and lack of social progress in Nigeria, despite its abundant human and natural resources.
- Sustainable Development: For this study, sustainable development is used to define Nigeria's ability to achieve long-term growth and improved living standards through good governance, inclusive institutions, environmental protection, and equitable distribution of resources that meet present needs without compromising future generations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of related literatures, which are discussed under the conceptual review, empirical review, and theoretical framework.

2.1 Conceptual Review

This involves analyzing and evaluating the ideas and concepts for this study, understanding their principles, assumptions, and implications.

2.1.1 Concept of development

Development is a multi-dimensional concept. It refers to the progression of a concept from a previous state to a much better state. Development could be personal, related to a state, society or institution. Development is often seen from various angles. Some scholars see it in measurement of economic activity, some see it in the political aspect of the state, and others see it in the welfare and socio-cultural standing of society in the state. Overall, development can be seen as the gradual or rapid transformation of a society from a state of lack to a state of plentiful.

Development refers to a holistic process through which a society experiences economic and socio-political transformation which improves the living conditions of its inhabitants. It is the rapid or gradual transformation of a society to a desired state of being characterized by improved standard of living and quality life. In this work, development

would refer to the movement of an unorganized, lawless, poor and traditional state, to a more organized, lawful, rich, and modern state. Here, it is a situation whereby a state is very capable of providing for itself and its citizens, while having a progressive and beneficial relationship with other countries in the international sector, and being a well-respected player in international affairs, capable of shaping decisions.

2.1.2 Indices of development

These centers on the characteristics of a developed nation or State. Developed States are believed to possess certain features which hint at their development. they include:

- **Human Rights:** Human rights are fundamental entitlements inherent to every person from the moment of birth, ensuring a life of dignity, equality, and freedom from discrimination, regardless of their background. These rights are universal – that is they apply to every single individual on earth, inalienable – that is they cannot be taken away or surrendered, inherent – that is they are not granted by any state or institution but by virtue of being human, and often protected by law. Human rights include right to life, liberty, expression, work, and education. Human rights are protected by the government, which also entails individuals' responsibilities to respect the rights of others. The upholding of human rights is seen as an intrinsic feature of developed societies; a developed state is understood to be one that not only protects but also proactively fulfils the rights of its citizens, but carries along this

aspect while ensuring economic, social, cultural, and political development. Human rights have increasingly become a key measure of development in modern political, social, and economic discourse. Just as economic growth, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and industrialization are used to measure development, the quality of life, dignity, and freedoms enjoyed by citizens have become a measuring tool as well. Amartya Sen (1999) argues that freedom or in this case human rights, is both the means and the end of development. This implies that the realization of human rights is the ultimate goal of the state, and that it reflects a state's developmental state.

- **Democracy:** Democracy is often said to mean “rule by the people”. it is a system of government whereby decision-making power is vested in the general public. It is a system in which the people rule indirectly by voting in an elected representative into office. The term is associated with citizens participation in the decision-making process, ensuring that the government is accountable to its people. Democracy is widely evident in developed states, but the relationship is complex and not a simple cause-and-effect. Democracy cannot be said to be a driver of development, however, in a state whereby the citizens are the ones who pick their political leaders, it is much easier to turn development in their favor. Many developed countries today are democratic. However, their economic success was often achieved through different means before their democratic institutions fully matured. Research suggests that democracy facilitates growth and development, particularly when certain

preconditions exist. Some researchers believe that economic growth leads to a movement towards democracy – that is, economic growth and industrialization create new social classes and layers which lead to social change, other scholars believe that democracy is a factor that explains economic growth. According to Mohammadi et al (2023), democracy instills discipline and brings out improved economic performance which in turn stimulates economic growth. Where there is accountability to the power that places you in public office, there is higher tendency for efficiency and growth of the economy.

- **Standard of Living:** Standard of living refers to the degree of wealth and material comfort available to a person or community. It is the level of wealth, comfort, material goods, and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class or a geographic area (OECD, 2022). It is the measure of a population's overall wellbeing and prosperity. Just like how human rights and welfare have become measurement tools for development in a state, so also, standard of living – a noneconomic factor and a measure of a state's population wellbeing, is also a tool used to measure the level of development in a state. It is also how effectively a state converts its economic resources into human wellbeing. A high standard of living is a defining feature of a developed state, reflecting its advanced economy and mature institutions. A high standard of living depicts high income, stable economy, access to basic needs, and effective social safety net. It also includes

non-material aspects such as leisure, safety, and environmental quality. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2023), development should expand people's choices and improve their quality of life. This is reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI), which combines income, education, and life expectancy as measures of living standards. Thus, the standard of living of a state reflects the living conditions of the people, and in turn, the social, economic, and political stance of a state, especially when it comes to development.

- **Level of Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is the basic organizational framework and facilities for a society or business. In this study, infrastructure refers to the public and private physical structures such as roads, power lines, airports, or school available in a society. For a state to be developed, it must possess high-quality, reliable infrastructure, serving as the physical and institutional foundation for sustained economic prosperity and a high quality of life for its citizens. Infrastructure makes work easier and faster, it makes life much more enjoyable, and keeps the society well taken care of. Infrastructure is important for a nation's development because, it aids manufacturing, transportation, and distribution of the needed goods, services, and amenities a state must have to expand its revenue, and be considered developed. Countries like Japan, South Korea, the United States and even China have accelerated their development status with the use of technology and infrastructure development. The government of these nations purposely put in policies and mechanisms to ensure

the advancement of the societies from a state of underdevelopment and poverty, to a state of abundance and development. Infrastructure also serves as a means to create wealth and as such defeat poverty, therefore solving the major issue of underdevelopment. According to Zondo, a well-developed infrastructure enhances productivity by reducing costs and improving efficiency in business operations. It is worth note that robust infrastructure is a magnet for domestic and foreign investment, which results in higher economic activity, more revenue for the state, and increased development. thus, the level of infrastructure in a state depicts the level of development in that state. High level of infrastructure equals high level of development.

- **Security:** The need for security in any state cannot be overemphasized. A developed state is one that is not plagued by constant or an abundant presence of crime and insecurity. A state that has achieved a certain level of development is safe and secure for all its occupants. Security refers to the state of being protected against or safe from danger or threat. In a developed state, security goes farther than the national military defense. A stable, developed, and reliable system protects a nation and its citizens from a wide range of internal and external threats, which allows for sustainable economic growth, social progress, and personal freedom. A developed state has low rates of insecurity, as the motive of crime as a means to earn a living is not necessary, as citizens are already economically secured. According to Köhler

(2005), security and economic development are linked. Without security, there can be no sustained economic development. History has also proven that persistent and widespread poverty undermines the stability of a country. So also, if a large percentage of the society have no access to their country's natural wealth or opportunities, the political stability of that country is at risk. A developed state does not need to worry about crimes, as security is an inherent feature of development.

2.1.3 Concept of underdevelopment

The word "Underdevelopment" is derived from the word "Development" which originates from the French word "developpement" which means "unrolling". Underdevelopment and development have been seen as two sides of the same coin; one cannot exist without the other. The presence of development emphasizes underdevelopment, and the presence of underdevelopment emphasizes development. Hence, underdevelopment is not the absence of development, but a situation whereby a state has not attained a certain level of self-dependency, and cannot provide a standardized state of living for its citizens. It could also be seen as the inadequate or inefficient use of the country's resources to advance it to a level where it is seen as stable and capable of protecting and providing for its institutions to serve their assigned purposes.

A, G. Frank (1967) did not explicitly define underdevelopment, however, he believed that underdevelopment was not original nor traditional, and that the modernization theory of

Western civilization was false and unjustifiable. According to him; “We cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for the world’s population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how their past economic and social history gave rise to their present underdevelopment.” Frank was of the idea that the West underdeveloped countries such as Nigeria and other African states that are deemed underdeveloped through excessive exploitation, and created a ‘Centre’ of development, while the former colonies constitute the ‘Periphery’. Frank was a strong proponent of the Dependency theory which sees the relationship between developed and developing countries as exploitative and dominating. This theory argued that the Capitalism of the West and its resultant colonialism cum neo-colonialism is responsible for the underdevelopment of and dependency of the Third World. He opposes the Modernization theory which states that; Development is the Industrialization and Modernity exemplified by the Western Industrialized Capitalist Nations, arguing that the world is not a global village and that the method which worked for the West would not necessarily work for underdeveloped nation-states today. “Available theory therefore fails to reflect the past of the underdeveloped part of the world entirely, and reflect the past of the world as a whole only in part...Further, most studies of development and underdevelopment fail to take account of the economic and other relations between the metropolis and its economic colonies throughout the history of the worldwide expansion and development of the mercantilist and capitalist system...It is generally held that economic development occurs

in a succession of capitalist stages and that today's underdeveloped countries are still in a stage, sometimes depicted as an original stage of history through which the now developed countries passed long ago. The now developed countries were never underdeveloped, just undeveloped.”

Underdevelopment is evident in a number of situations. Some features of underdevelopment include insecurity, dictatorship, low life expectancy, corruption and poverty, abuse of human rights, weak democratic practices etc.

2.1.4 Concept of third world

The term Third World was first used in 1947, during the Cold War. It was used to refer to countries who were not aligned with either the NATO allied countries or the USSR. The term described nations who were neutral during the war, and engaged with both powers. Later on, after the end of the Cold War, and the dissolution of the USSR, the term was used to describe countries which were behind and are still behind in development. States were classified based on their economic systems, and grouped into First World, Second World, and Third World. Third world countries were countries who either had troubles enforcing their democracies or did not operate democracies, and countries who were undeveloped. Third World countries;

- Have the least diversified economies
 - Have very weak central government

- Have relatively weak institutions
- Tax bases were too low to support infrastructural development
- Depend on one type of economic activity, usually by extracting and exporting this economy
- Are fond of exporting their raw materials to semi-peripheral and core countries
- Have the highest level of corruption
- Are usual targets for investments by multinational companies
- Are usually influenced by core and semi-periphery countries
- Usually have high population, illiteracy, and mortality
- Are mainly found in Africa, Asia, Latin-America, and the Caribbeans

For this project, the term Third World would be used to refer to nations who are considered undeveloped, underdeveloped, and failing with their democracies.

CONCEPT OF FIRST WORLD

Just like the term Third World, the term 'First World' was first discovered and used during the Cold War. It was used to refer to countries who were aligned with the United States and NATO. These nations sided with NATO and the USA during the war, and against the USSR. After the war, the term was used to describe democratic and developed states. These states have their democracies working for them. There is freedom, fundamental human rights are upheld, development comes hand-in-hand with democracy,

and the system is generally functional. First World nations are generally considered the most developed and advanced nations. Countries who are in-between first world and third world are classified as Second World nations, and a lot of them advance to First World.

First World countries;

- Are economically diversified
- Are wealthy nations
- Have strong central governments that controls and manages their affairs domestically and internationally
- Can provide strong infrastructures for strong economies
- Are highly industrialized and are producers of most manufactured goods in the world
- Tend to specialize in information and service industries
- Are countries with very strong bourgeoisies and working class
- Are fore-front in technological advancement
- Have transparent and accountable systems
- Includes the United State of America, Japan, the United Kingdom, and other countries in Europe

For this work, First World would be used to refer to nations who are considered advanced and developed, and succeeding with their democracies.

2.1.5 Historical context of underdevelopment in Nigeria

Nigeria's underdevelopment can be traced back to the intervention of the Europeans (16th-18th century). Before colonialism, and the presence of Europeans, Nigeria was made up of many societies like Benin Empire, Hausaland, Oyo Empire, Kanem-Bornu Empire etc. each with its own thriving society, trade life, culture, art, and values. These societies were either centralized or decentralized. While the centralized societies were made up of Monarchs, Obas, etc. the decentralized societies were made to revolve around family heads, elders, etc. There were no industrial activities or large-scale industries, and agriculture was the primary economic activity, with others being art and craft, music, beadmaking etc. Each society thrived on its own and would often engage in trade between themselves, it was peaceful. The Portuguese, particularly ship captain Lourenco Pinto in 1691, referred to the Benin Kingdom as "Great Benin", noting that Great Benin was "larger than Lisbon" and possessed well-defined streets and grand architecture. Pre-colonial Nigeria can be believed to have been developed and developing in their own way. Slave trade was introduced into Nigeria and other African states in the 15th-17th century. Before European involvement, localized slavery existed in Africa. Slaves were taken in as byproducts of war, debt, or criminal punishment. The Sokoto jihad and the Yoruba wars stimulated the slave trade at a time when the British were actively trying to stop it. (Udo et al, 2025). A system of trade began between Africans and European powers where slaves were sold in exchange for European goods, especially guns and gunpowder.

Eventually, young people were being captured and sold by the Europeans with the help of Africans. Britain first visited formally in 1851, when the Lagos traditional ruler was unseated and the region occupied by British forces, leading to the establishment of Lagos as a British colony. The British fought a number of wars to completely conquer and subdue the other societies existing at the time. Then, the nation-state we know as Nigeria today, did not exist. Nigeria emerged as a result of the consolidation of Northern and Southern Nigeria into a single entity in 1914, known as the Amalgamation in Nigerian history. It is important to know that Nigeria already had previous trade engagements with Britain prior to the occupancy. This was the beginning of the colonial era, marked by the start of British intervention in Lagos. Colonial Nigeria was formally established in 1914 after the amalgamation as a British colony. British rule in Nigeria lasted approximately 60 years from 1900s to 1960 when Nigeria was granted independence from British rule. On the 1st of October, 1960, Nigeria was granted independence and became a free nation in control of its affairs. However, Nigeria remained a constitutional monarchy with the British monarch as its Head of State. On October 1, 1963, Nigeria officially became a republic, a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch (Oxford Languages, n.d.) Nigeria's constitution from independence introduced a parliamentary system of government – popularly known as the “Westminster Model” – which lasted until January 1966 when the military took over power. The Prime Minister

was the Head of government at the center in person of Nnamdi Azikiwe who was a representative of the monarch throne, and the Monarch was the ceremonial Head, Queen Elizabeth II. In 1963, Nigeria transitioned from a monarchy within the Commonwealth to a republic, this marked the first republic in the state. Former Governor-General Nnamdi Azikiwe became the ceremonial Head of state, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister. From 1960 when Nigeria gained independence, till 1999, the state suffered a series of recurring military interventions. The first intervention was in 1966 by Major-General Johnson Aguyi-Ironsi, who unseated President Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in a bloody coup, which many believed triggered a series of events leading to the Civil war. Every other coup that occurred in the state were bloodless coups, where a small group illegally took over government without violence or bloodshed, all except the one carried out by Lieutenant Colonel Buka Suka Dimka, which killed then military Head of State, General Murtala Mohammad. When the military left in 1979, Nigeria changed to a presidential system of government borrowing from the model of the United States of America. The state saw three military interventions, and is currently operating the Fourth Republic. A civil war broke out in Nigeria in July of 1967. The plethora of events, actions and perilous inertia that characterized the national scene between January 1966 and July 1967 prompted the catastrophic Nigerian Civil War (Aremu & Buhari, 2017, p.63). Nigeria's first military coup took place on 15th January, 1966, which was staged by five majors led by Major C.K. Nzeogwu (Mainasara, 1982),

this coup claimed the lives of notable Nigerian military and civilian leaders, mostly from the Northern and Western regions. Ethnic divisions came to the fore following a military coup on January 15, 1966, that became increasingly interpreted in the Muslim Hausa-dominated northern region as an Igbo coup against northerners (Williams, 2024). Unfortunately, the sectional nature of the killings raised the question of ethnic coloration of the coup. The coup opened a sharp chapter of suspicion in the annals of Nigerian history creating suspicion about the intent of the coup plotters (Aremu & Buhari, 2017). The Nigerian Civil War also known as the Biafra war was as a result of the secessionist attempt of the Igbos. The Igbos felt that they were treated unfairly and would never be understood by the state, and decided the best action in their interest was to secede and be independent just like Cameroon. However, this attempt met serious refusal by the Nigerian government under the administration of Yakubu Gowon. Eastern Nigeria was not granted the lease to become independent, and this led to the outbreak of the devastating war lasting three years. The Igbos fought for their freedom. However, they were not very successful and lost the war to the Nigerian government with Biafra's surrender on January 15, 1970. The resistance collapsed when Lieut. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, who led the Biafra secessionist state, fled to the Ivory Coast, prompting a cease-fire by Philip Effiong, Ojukwu's chief of state () Since the war, the nation has thread on light surfaces, ending any secessionist tendencies and propositions, while striving to ensure unity and fairness to all members of the state. The nation has also implemented

economic and social policies to ensure equal treatment of all regions. Nigeria continues to strive for a society and economy in which it is able to provide for all members of the state, major and minor, and develop itself all-round. Despite the natural resources and strategic standing of Nigeria in Africa, the state still faces deep-rooted challenges in attaining sustainable development. It is no doubt that at independence, Nigeria was believed to be one of the African countries to pave the way to development to for other African countries. However, in the country's trajectory, the economic and political aspect of the state began to fail, rendering the state underdeveloped. This failure can be attributed to the failure of leadership and political economy. Nigeria has continually put much effort at increasing the pace of development and changing the structure of the economy. Unfortunately, the efforts have not been matched by the outcomes, which have remained largely unimpressive (Kayode, 2004). A quick appraisal of the Nigerian economy shows that the basic feature of the economy has not changed much from the situation of the 1960s; rather, it is growing worse. At independence in 1960, the structure of the economy was positively skewed in favor of Agricultural sector as a source of foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, and contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Felix & Wilson, 2011). The economy took a nosedive in the 1970s when the focus of the economy shifted from produce of agricultural products, to the extraction and exportation of oil. Originally, the export of oil brought in large earnings for the Nigerian government, just like when the prices of oil increased by almost 300%, so much that the government

began to neglect other sectors, and focus solely on oil production. However, when the oil prices balanced out, oil producing states like Nigeria that had their economies solely focused on oil began to experience a decline in their economies. Nigeria for example faced this decline in a state where it was not prepared and as such, the heavy dependence of the country on oil production, and its neglect of its core economies like agriculture which at some point was the major revenue generator, caused the nation to go into financial crisis, up to the extent to which the nation had to borrow from foreign countries to finance its economy. These major events in Nigeria's history contributed to the evolution of underdevelopment in the state today.

2.2 Nigeria and underdevelopment

- **Corruption:** Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon that continues to devastate states with corruption activities. It is true that corruption is one of the fastest ways to hinder development in any society. Though in some quarters, it is argued that corruption could trigger development (Otite, 1986). However, corruption is a widely condemned opinion, which calls for eradication of the activity. Corruption is a dishonest and fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery (Oxford Languages, 2025). Corruption is a very widespread activity in Nigeria. Corruption has been a major issue in Nigeria, dating all the way back to the colonial era, when most of the warrant chiefs prospered materially through the process of bribery and corruption. These individuals were considered people of questionable

character and were usually intoxicated by power, leading them to abuse and misuse their positions. The military regimes that overthrew civilian governments after independence, claimed to have done that due to the high level of corruption in the governing space. They claimed to use it as a means to purge out corrupt practices. Unfortunately, military regimes tended to be more corrupt than the regimes they claimed to correct. The military that took over in 1966, as observed by Salawu (2007), entrenched the culture of corruption on the country. A more serious attempt at tackling this problem was made under Muhammadu Buhari/Tunde Idiagbon regime (1984-85) (Moyosore, 2015). After the era of military intervention ...since 1999, the democratic space has been dominated by political elites who consistently violate fundamental principles associated with a liberal democratic system, such as competitive elections, the rule of law, political freedom, and respect for human rights (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). The daily activities of the leaders of the society which permits actions that are against the law, whilst practicing those actions themselves, is a typical example of corruption in the Nigerian society. Actions such as electoral malpractices, misappropriation of government funds, misuse of government funds, and neglect of the society they are accountable to etc. Corruption goes beyond activities of those in power to include the activities of an average Nigerian in their day-to-day activities. Corruption comes in various forms including, favouritism, nepotism, embezzlement, extortion, fraud, and the most common, bribery. To get into some places today in

Nigeria, you have to bribe your way through many officials and personnel. It even comes down to school activities. Lecturers are bribed by students to increase their grades, or to excel in their school work, and there are also forms of extortion amongst students, etc. Getting a job or random opportunities entails having to know someone who can work it out for you, or bring up your chances of selection amongst competitors. What we call “connection”, is also in itself, a form of corruption. The failure in governance in Nigeria can be seen in the declining capacity of our leaders to recognize their faults in leading a nation they made promises to, and put in place necessary measures to resolve these challenges. There is also the issue of weak governance. The institutions in place by the government hardly perform their duties, and most of the time, they tend to not function at all.

- **Insecurity:** Insurgency, burglary, kidnapping, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, armed-robbery, ethnoreligious conflict, theft, rape, extortion, etc., these and more are all security challenges evident in Nigeria. These issues are spread across the country, impacting various aspects of life. These security challenges have made national security threat to be a major concern for the government and have attracted huge allocation of national budget to the security sector (Achumba and Akpor, 2013). The security and sovereignty of the Nigerian State have been under threat as a result of the emergence and activities of insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram in the Northeast and other militant groups in other parts of the country (Olanrewaju et al, 2017). Boko

Haram dealt a serious blow to Nigeria, especially in 2014. In an article, Kate Hairisine (2024) explained the incident. Ten years ago, 276 schoolgirls were abducted from their school dormitory in Chibok, in north-eastern Nigeria. At night, dozens of fighters from the Boko Haram Islamist militant group stormed the school dormitory, and abducted 276 schoolgirls, mostly aged between 16 and 18. Some girls escaped, some killed, some forced to marry and reproduce for the insurgents etc. Through a conversation with an insurgent, the motive behind the attack was revealed. These insurgents were against Western education being received by the girls and wanted to confront and teach the ways of Islam. The name of the militant group, Boko Haram is usually translated as “Western education is forbidden”. There have also been cases of unknown gunmen, who kidnap, kill, and extort Nigerians, bringing grief to the families involved and fear to the society at large. According to Akinyetun, killings by unknown gunmen have become a daily occurrence even when the reportage is repetitively downplayed. The attacks by these misfits have claimed the lives of several people, including political elites (2023). These killings depict the high level of insecurity in the country and the government’s loss of its internal security mechanism. Cases includes frequent clashes with the community, kidnapping and extortion, armed robbery, rape, and even killing of victims. “A nation that opens her borders, allows other nationalities to come in at will and has many ungoverned spaces would certainly face security challenges”. This statement simply describes Nigeria’s lax

attitude in protecting her borders and ensuring that only legal individuals are allowed into the country. The borders of the state are not clearly specified nor protected by military personnel, there is a lot of free movement around the borders especially when it comes to herders and nomads, and the activities of these illegal entities are not properly checked nor regulated. Insecurity in Nigeria is largely caused by lack of economic opportunities and high poverty rates that drive individuals to participate in criminal activities, political tension that creates an avenue for insecurity to thrive, unequal access to resources, the easy availability of weapons, religious and ethnic differences that can be used to incite and justify violence etc. As much as the government is putting in efforts to curb or put an end to these insecurity challenges, insecurity has resulted and would continue to result in loss of lives and properties, displacement of people from their homes, discouragement of economic investments, decline in education, and a threat to government legitimacy and peace in the country, if not handled accordingly.

- **Poverty:** Poverty in Nigeria is a significant issue, with a large population living below the poverty line. A poverty line here is the minimum income deemed necessary for basic standard of living in a specific country or region. Poverty can come in different forms. In Nigeria, the rates of monetary, educational, and other dimensional poverty are at an all-time high. According to the United Nations, poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its

manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation (United Nations, n.d.). Poverty has existed for a while now in Nigeria and it continues to persist even in today's economy. In Nigeria, 40.1% of people are poor according to the 2018/19 monetary poverty line, and 63% are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI 2022. Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Since coming into power in May, 2023, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has introduced reforms aimed at reviving the economy of the nation. Measures includes the liberalization of the battered naira currency and cutting fuel subsidies, which allowed the state to keep gasoline prices low for decades. The World Bank said in a report, "the new policy direction is essential, but in the short-term it has added to already intense pressures on households and firms". The World Bank reports over 56% of Nigerians living below poverty line; poverty has soared to hit more than half of the population over the last six years. "Since 2018, the share of Nigerians living below the national poverty line is estimated to have risen sharply from 40.1 percent to 56.0 percent", additionally about 129 million are living in poverty (theafricareport [AFP], 2024) The rise in poverty can be attributed to the COVID-19, natural disasters such as flooding, insecurity, high inflation, and low economic growth. Poverty is even more pronounced in rural areas. There is poverty in

access to education, healthcare, and living standards, and with the current rate and situation of things in the country, the rising cost of living, inflation, exchange rate, crime, insecurity, unemployment, and lack of entrepreneurship, poverty would continue to persist if measures are not taken. Moreover, Nigeria faces high levels of inequality, with the wealth of the richest individuals contrasting starkly with the level of income of the average man. It is no news that the minority who controls the economy have a way of structuring it to suit the benefit of these few elites; making policies, agreements, and partnerships, that don't necessarily benefit the general public, and this issue remains persistent without repercussions. Nigeria is not a poor country, however, the difference between the level of poverty within the average man and the level of wealth of the top richest men in Nigeria is so alarming. This wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, when distributed, can lift the nation and its citizens out of perpetual poverty. In addition to the already poor multitude, a significant portion of the population is considered vulnerable to falling into poverty.

- **Abuse of Human Rights:** There have been numerous cases of human rights abuse in Nigeria, ranging from police violence, government oppression of the citizens, sexual assault and crimes, to ethnic and or religious based conflicts. These tensions result in the abuse of basic human rights in the society, and victims rarely get justice or get compensated. The root causes often include a culture of impunity, government corruption, ethnic and religious divisions, and an ineffective and politicized justice

systems. There have been cases of abuses by security forces such as the police and military carrying out arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and other degrading treatments. According to amnesty.org (2024), Nigerian police used excessive force against protesters during the nationwide #Endbadgovernance demonstrations between 1 – 10 August, killing at least 24 people in the states of Borno, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa and Niger. In these cases, the victims were shot by the police, firing live ammunition at close range often at the head or torso, suggesting that officers were shooting to kill. Others who were severely injured, also suffered the indiscriminate use of tear gas. The Nigerian Police Force has long been criticized for corruption, extortion, and brutality against citizens. Despite the 2020 #EndSARS protests against police violence, abuses have not ceased to occur. The justice system of the State remains compromised by political pressures and corruption, leading to prolonged pretrial detentions and impunity – freedom without consequences – for perpetrators of abuse. Many victims spend years in court without ever receiving a fair trial nor justice. There is also a case of suppression of the right of free expression, prominent in the State. The government uses threats, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests to silence journalists and critics. Women and minority groups also face widespread discrimination rooted in the cultural norms and ineffective laws of the state. Abuses usually include domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage. There is a

national law that bans FGM, but enforcement is rare. Victims are left to suffer with psychological burdens and social stigma. So also, victims of early and forced marriage, a practice largely prevalent in the North, despite a federal law setting the minimum marriage age at 18. One more scenario of human rights abuse includes ethnic and religious violence and conflicts, especially between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt. These conflicts often take on ethnic and religious dimensions, leading to widespread killings and displacement.

- **Weak Democratic Processes:** The central government of Nigeria possesses a percentage of power that the states and local government combined do not possess. Power is overly centralized in the centre. The State operates a Federal System, which empowers the state and local governments to be considerably independent and autonomous, and in control of power within their jurisdiction. However, the Central or National government comes in the way of the operations of activities of these component units, and nothing is done to curb that interference. The Central government wields a certain amount of power that undermines that of the state and local governments. This also makes room for the weakening of institutions and democratic practices in the state. Elections is the backbone of any democracy. However, any state that is incapable of carrying out its democratic practices peacefully and without

2.3 Empirical Review

This is the scientific, fact-based, proven review on the topic of underdevelopment in Nigeria. This section includes previously conducted research. For this study, two previous works will be reviewed and summarized.

Mohammed Mudei Hassan – Underdevelopment: A Case-Study of Nigeria (Master’s Thesis, 2022)

This thesis addresses the enduring problem of underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with Nigeria as a case study. Hassan notes that since independence, African States have grappled with persistent poverty, high unemployment, weak institutions, and lack of economic transformation. The core question is: **“What is causing underdevelopment in Nigeria?”**. Hassan makes use of the Dependency and Neo-Classical Realism theory to explain the causes of underdevelopment. Stating that underdevelopment is not single-handedly caused by structural, external, or systematic factors, but by the domestic and state-level actors and dynamics which are more decisive causes. Hassan also brings up cognitive divides (material and ideational) and temporal divides (past and future) to understand how states make choices influenced by both external pressures and internal dynamics. He also focuses on the **Elite decision-makers** as autonomous actors to account for how elites may instrumentally deploy norms, disorder, and informal politics to their advantage. At the end of his research, he came to the conclusion that **“the cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria lies primarily in domestic-level elite choices,**

mediated through socio-political culture and norms”, rather than being rigidly determined by external structures.

Oladimeji Sogo Osewa – The Lingering Challenges of Underdevelopment in Africa and Nigeria: The Root Causes, Impacts, And Panacea (2022)

This work talks about underdevelopment in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. Osewa contends that this cannot be adequately explained by internal failures alone (e.g., corruption, poor leadership), he argues that these factors alone are insufficient to explain the persistence and depth of underdevelopment. Thus, he leans on the historical and external explanation – especially the legacy of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and the exploitative global order. He makes use of the “development and underdevelopment” thesis by Andre Gunder Frank, and the “relative deprivation theory” to explain how African nations have been systematically deprived of development opportunities. Through the “**relative deprivation theory**” Osewa describes how individuals or groups perceive themselves as deprived relative to others, especially in terms of resources, lifestyle, opportunities, and amenities. He uses it to show how Africa compares with more developed regions. Africa is deprived not only in absolute terms, but relative to others. Osewa divides the drivers of underdevelopment into two broad classes: internal and external factors. He insists that one cannot fully understand the problem unless both are taken into consideration. He claims bad leadership, corruption and embezzlement, ethnic and religious divisions, misuse of public office, and institutional decay, are the

internal causes of underdevelopment, while slavery and slave-trade, colonialism and imperialism, exploitation of resources, unequal terms of trade, neo-colonialism, and debt dependencies are external causes of underdevelopment. Thus, Osewa sees underdevelopment not as a natural condition or a “failure of Africa” alone, but an ongoing historical and structural outcome of asymmetric relations.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theories to be used to further explain and understand development and Underdevelopment in this study are the **Dependency theory** and the **Modernization theory**.

2.4.1 Dependency Theory

Dependency as a concept refers to the inability to stop doing something harmful, or using something harmful, especially a drug. It refers to a person’s constant reliance on something which is mainly harmful to that person, but due to a form of addiction, this person cannot just stop using this thing, or engaging in the activity on which they are dependent. According to scholars, dependency refers to an underdeveloped state’s reliance on more developed nations to determine how their internal affairs are conducted, how their economies shaped, and how their resources would be used. It involves continued reliance on an advanced state by poorer states for aid, either in form of governance or financial.

The Dependency theory emerged as a result of the shortcomings of the Modernization theory. The Dependency theory was primarily developed in the late 1950s and 1960s. According to Britannica, the theory was “first proposed in the late 1950s by the Argentine economist and statesman Raúl Prebisch, and gained prominence in the 1960s. This theory sees the relationship between developed and developing countries as exploitative and dominating. It also sees development and underdevelopment as two sides of the same coin, because one cannot exist without the other, and because they are inevitable outcomes of the world capitalist system. The theory classified the world into two; Core or Centre (industrialized capitalist nations) and the Periphery or Satellite (colonized and poor countries). The Core nations keep the Periphery nations dependent on them through capitalism and in some cases democracy. The theory argues that the capitalism of the West and its resultant colonialism cum neo-colonialism is responsible for the underdevelopment of the Third World. According to this theory, capitalism driven by a need for profit maximization led the Europeans to source for cheap raw materials, cheap labour, and a market for finished goods. This led to colonialism and today neo-colonialism through which resources of colonies were, and are still being colonized.

Claude Ake was a Nigerian political economist and one of Africa’s most prominent scholars on underdevelopment and political economy. His major focus was Dependency theory in the African setting. In his work, he extended and localized Dependency theory to the African context. Ake argued that underdevelopment in Africa is not due to external

exploitation by the global capitalist system alone, but also due to internal alliances between the African elite and foreign capital. He said that the African ruling class benefits from the continuation of dependency and underdevelopment because their power and wealth are tied to and comes from the existing global economic order. This idea is in line with Paul Kenyon's theory, where he postulates that African leaders, often in collaboration with Western powers, exploit their countries' resources for personal gain, leading to underdevelopment and poverty. Kenyon examined the cases of several African dictators, including Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and Sani Abacha of Nigeria, highlighting their corrupt practices and their involvement with Western governments and corporations. Ake rejected the idea that capitalism would naturally lead to development in Africa, rather, he believed that capitalism in Africa produced "disarticulated development", which refers to an economic and social structure where different sectors or aspects of a society develop unevenly, leading to a lack of integration and coordination between them. Ake explained that capitalism served foreign interests and elite consumption instead of meeting the needs of the people. He viewed capitalism as a system imposed on Africa through Western imperialism, which prioritizes the interests of Western powers and elites over the needs and well-being of the majority of Africans. Claude Ake does not see capitalism as a viable option in most of the Third World, he sees capitalism as a tool used by the West to further ensure dependency of the Third World. The central idea in his work – "A Political Economy of Africa" (1981), – is that

underdevelopment in Africa is the result of the interaction between imperialist forces and internal political and economic structures that serve elite interests over mass welfare. In his work, he also submits that – “due to the contradictions on capitalism that reduce the rate of profit and arrest surplus value, the capitalist bent on profit maximization would look for new environment in which the process of accumulation could proceed quickly”. Thus, capitalists turned to foreign lands, attacked and subjugated the population while looking for new markets and profit maximization, and integrated the economies of those lands into those of the Western Europe. This led to dependency in Third World nations, even though they are now free from colonial masters. His contribution to the Dependency theory was to Africanize Dependency theory, depicting how both external exploitation and internal political economy keep Africa underdeveloped.

Immanuel Wallerstein believed that the process of underdevelopment dated as far back as the 16th Century, during mercantilism and slave trade and eventually colonialism through which Western Europe enriched itself with the human and material resources it siphoned from other continents, particularly from its colonies in Africa and Latin America. The plunder of Africa, Asia, and Latin America enhanced development in Europe by human and material investment into their industries, and brought about underdevelopment of former colonies and their dependence on the West for survival. Wallerstein proposed a global economic structure in which nations are categorized into three main groups i. Core countries ii. Semi-periphery countries and iii. Periphery countries. He highlights the

interconnectedness of nations in a global economy where core states maintain their global dominance by controlling resources, technologies, and labour from developing countries. Immanuel Wallerstein's contribution to the dependency theory was the development of "World-Systems theory". It was built upon the Dependency theory and significantly expanded the theory. While the Dependency theory focused on the relationship between core and periphery countries, Wallerstein's theory introduced the concept of a semi-periphery and analysed the global capitalist system as a single, interconnected unit with a complex division of labour. The positions of countries in this system are dynamic, with some moving upward or downward in the hierarchy based on shifts in economic and political power. The theory has significant implications for domestic economic planning and policies. Countries positioned in the semi-periphery or periphery often face challenges in developing independent economic policies due to their reliance on core countries for market and capital. This dependency influences domestic policies, as government may prioritize policies that align with the interest of powerful global players, sometimes at the expense of local development needs. World system theory suggests that for peripheral countries to achieve substantial development, they may need to adopt policies that are independent of foreign or core countries, although doing so is often more challenging with the existing global structure.

Frantz Fanon was born in France, but was from Algeria. He identified as a French West Indian and was an influential intellectual, psychiatrist, and political philosopher. Frantz

Fanon was not formally a dependency theorist like André Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, or Claude Ake, but his ideas have profoundly influenced dependency theory and post-colonial intellectual thinking, providing a framework for understanding liberation, identity, and enduring effects of colonialism. He gave a psychological, cultural, and political dimension to what dependency theorists mainly describe in economic terms. His main ideas centre on the psychological and societal devastation of colonialism, and its effects on not only the colonized, but the colonizer as well. He emphasized that colonialism did not just exploit resources, it structured the entire economy, politics, and psychology of colonized nations to serve the colonizer. This laid the foundation for Africa and the Third World's continued dependency even after independence. He describes how colonialism strips colonized people of their humanity, forcing them into a state of psychological strife and alienation. Even those who adopt the colonizer's culture, language, and customs are never truly accepted as equals. In his book "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952), Fanon explored how the experience of being "black" under colonial rule creates a profound sense of inferiority and a desire to assimilate into white society, as against a sense of superiority in the "Whites". He argues that colonialism creates a binary world – the colonizer's world which is civilized, pure, and human, vs. the colonized's world which is savage, dirty, and subhuman. He also noted that the identity of colonizers depends on them maintaining this superiority. And that without the colonized to define themselves against, the colonizer's sense of self would collapse. He also argued that

colonized elites internalize the colonial mindset, aspiring to mimic the West instead of building indigenous development. In another of Fanon's most famous work, "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961), he explains that "colonialism dehumanizes people and locks nations into dependency. True liberation requires violent struggle, social transformation, and the creation of a new humanism". He also talks on the violence that comes with colonialism, because it destroys cultures, economies, and identities; the psychological effects on colonized people who now suffer from inferiority complexes, self-doubt, and alienation, which prevent them from asserting independence; and the sustained sense of superiority in the minds of colonizers, where the colonizers see themselves as the bearers of civilization, progress, and reason, while the colonized are treated as "beasts of burden" or "children". He speaks on neo-colonialism, recognizing that even after political independence, former colonial powers continue to influence and control post-colonial nations through economic and social means. And to truly achieve liberation, stressed the importance of rebuilding a unique national culture and consciousness that is not a copy of the colonizer's. Fanon detailed the nature of colonial violence and the path to decolonization, which includes the necessity of violent struggle leading to the creation of a new socialist society. To him, true liberation is not just political independence, but the complete destruction of colonial structures and the birth of a new human-centred society. He emphasizes the use of counter-violence to destroy colonialism's violence, and decolonization as not a negotiation or reform, but a total

overthrow of the colonial order. He also explained that this liberation must involve peasants, workers, and marginalized masses, not just elites. He stressed that the rural poor in Africa and the Third World were the most revolutionary force. In short, Fanon added the psychological and revolutionary dimension to dependency theory; saying that underdevelopment is not only economic, but also psychological, cultural, and mental, and breaking it requires total transformation.

Vladimir I. Lenin made the first Marxist analysis of modern imperialism in his work “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism” (1916), and thus contributed greatly to the Dependency Theory. He pointed out that one of the features of capitalism was the export of capital (not regular commodities) from industrialized nations to less developed countries as a key mechanism, and showed that this was the result of certain changes that had taken place within capitalism itself. This capital export driven by the search for greater profits, leads to the subjugation of poorer non-industrialized countries and their integration into the global capitalist system on unequal terms. He described imperialism as a special stage of capitalism – the highest. According to Lenin, the early day industrial capitalists, in moving with the fast-pacing industrial markets facilitated by technical advancements, sought to develop their factories and industries at even greater speed, while achieving maximum profit. The domestic market of these industrial capitalists became saturated and overflowing with similar products and low profits. Thus, these industrial capitalists decided to go in search of new markets, low labour costs, and

efficient production, which led them to engage in imperialism. While imperial proponents continue to justify colonialism by arguing that there were other economic reasons for the policy of expansion e.g., the need for new markets, need for raw materials and food, or need for land where an overcrowded home population could find an outlet, Lenin argued that foreign countries are perfectly capable of all these. They have perfectly good markets, raw materials and food supplies can always be obtained from domestic sources, and it is only severe conditions created by capitalism that drives people out of their home country and force them to seek a living in someone else's country. Lenin argued that capitalism, in its final stage (monopoly capitalism), inevitably led to imperialism, where powerful nations seek to control and exploit weaker nations for resources and markets. He posits that colonialism and neo-colonialism led to the development in industrialized capitalist states, and underdevelopment as well as dependency in the colonized or Third World countries. He emphasized the concept of uneven development, where the capitalist industrialized nations experience growth while the less developed nations remain underdeveloped or dependent. This uneven development according to him, is not accidental but a structural feature of the capitalist system itself.

The Dependency theory also known as the Underdevelopment School of Thought blames the West for the underdevelopment of the Third World. However, the theory is not without its own shortcomings and faults. The theory argues that underdevelopment is as a result of colonialism and neo-colonialism which led to the exploitation of the human and

material resources of the third world, hindering their development. It also argues that the only way the periphery can develop is to delink totally from the world capitalist system and design a new path to development. Regardless, the theory still has some limitations;

- **Oversimplification of Development:** The theory's broad framework often oversimplifies complex socio-economic and political dynamics, falling to account for the diverse experiences and varying degrees of dependence among different peripheral nations.
- The theory's broad notion of Centre-Periphery relations in the global state economic system is ambiguous. Tagging or grouping developed countries as 'centre' assumes there are similarities among all developed nations, be it capitalist or socialist. So also, lumping underdeveloped nations and tagging them 'periphery' or 'satellite' assumes that all underdeveloped nations have the same level of exploitation and underdevelopment. Critics of this theory believe that dependency theorists should revisit their centre-periphery classification and tools of analysis, as there is no clear-cut exploitation and having being exploited. Thus, they should come up with a more representative schema accommodation of all the differences particularly in economic relations amongst nations of the world.
- The theory does not recognize the presence of corruption, bad governance, and political instability of underdeveloped nations in question. Although the impact of

colonialism is still present in Africa's development, the role of corruption and bad leadership cannot be underplayed. The large scale of corruption and bad governance in the Third World has led to the mismanagement of huge human and material resources, and has in no small measure, contributed to its underdevelopment. Therefore, colonialism is not the only reason for underdevelopment of the Third World as other factors also contribute.

- Total delinking from the global capitalist system as the only answer to underdevelopment in the Third World, is not really practical and proven wrong in some cases e.g., experiences of the Asian Tigers has shown that underdeveloped countries. The theory also fails to appreciate and take into consideration the law of relativity and interdependence of nations of the world. Thus, the idea of total delinking or isolation from the global economic system becomes likely impractical, unfashionable, and unprofitable.

2.4.2 Modernization theory

The Modernization theory emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s; it was particularly rampant after the Cold War, due to the desire to reshape collapsed and affected societies and bring about an alternative to the communist models of development. Modernization theory finds its origin in the ideas of Max Weber, the German sociologist who discussed the irrationality and rationality in a traditional society's transition into a modern society (Mayhew, 1985, Dibua, 2006). Weber's approach laid the foundation for the paradigm of

modernization by later theorists. The theory was developed in the late 1950s, and it sought to address poverty, especially in 3rd world countries with an evidently non-communist solution that embraced a capitalist model of industrialized development and Western democratic values. According to Perera (2024), Modernization theory was the dominant approach to global developmental issues in the 1950s and the 1960s, characterized by the search for factors that underdeveloped countries lacked, and which were presumed to cause their lack of development. Rostow compared developed countries with undeveloped countries to identify the differences between them. These differences were then put forward as the reason for the third world's lack of development, such as lack of technology, a lack of capital, over-population, and a lack of entrepreneurs. According to Max Weber, ideas, values, and religion are just as important as economic and material conditions in determining societal development. In his work "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1960), he argued that the work ethic of protestants particularly hard work, frugality, discipline and individual responsibility, fostered rational economic behaviour, accumulation of wealth, and ultimately capitalist development, especially in Western Europe. Max Weber described two societies; i. Traditional society characterized by traditional authority and ii. Modern society characterized by rational, legal and bureaucratic authority. He also described modernization as a process of rationalization, whereby traditional, religious, or emotional forms of authority are replaced by legal-rational authority; society becomes more bureaucratic and efficient; and

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science and reason increasingly guide decision-making. Weber provided a non-economic, cultural dimension to modernization theory. He also provides comparative references to other civilizations – like China, India, and the Islamic world – and explains why they did not develop modern capitalism, despite having advanced cultures and economic systems.

Weber's main contributions include;

- The contrast between traditional societies ruled by custom, religion, and kinship, and modern societies driven by rational organization and economic calculation.
- Why the West developed and others did not
- How protestant values shaped the capitalist spirit

Emile Durkheim is another contributor to this theory. He theorized that the pre-modern society is characterized by mechanical solidarity while the modern society is characterized by organic solidarity. In his work, "The Division of Labour in Society" (1893), he analysed social structures and their role in societal transformation; he explored how the division of labour changes as societies modernize. His main argument is that, in traditional societies, labour is generally more mechanical and homogeneous, while in modern societies, it becomes more specialized and differentiated. This specialization, leads to greater interdependence among individuals, which is a key feature of modernity. According to him, Mechanical solidarity is found in traditional societies, where individuals perform similar tasks and there is a strong collective consciousness; while

Organic solidarity is found in modern societies, where individuals perform specialized tasks, and social cohesion is based on the interdependence of individuals. Durkheim's theory helps explain the transition from traditional, agrarian societies to modern, industrial ones, with an emphasis on how societies maintain order as they become more complex. His emphasis on specialization as a key to modernity align with the major idea of modernization, particularly the idea that societies evolve through stages of development.

Gabriel Almond was another key figure in political science whose work significantly contributed to the Modernization theory. Almond developed a framework to analyse how political systems function and change, especially in transitioning societies. He sought to create a comparative framework by identifying functions – like interest articulation, political socialization, and rule-making – that all political systems, whether traditional or modern must perform. In his work “The Politics of Developing Areas” (1960), he posited that all political systems perform similar functions regardless of cultural or historical context; these functions include law making, enforcement, communication, recruitment etc., but they do so through different structures. According to him, Traditional systems are based on ascription, customs, and limited differentiation; while Modern systems are based on achievement, secularism, complex institutions, and functional differentiation. He also sees political development as a process, emphasizing that developing countries must undergo political institutionalization to achieve modernization. And this involves

building stable, adaptable, and coherent political institutions as exemplified by the West. The main ideas in Almond's work includes; Structural Functionalism – which is, every political system has structures performing key political functions; Political Modernization – a movement from traditional to modern political systems; and Institutionalization – stability and adaptability of political institutions as exemplified by the West, as key to modernization.

Bingham Powell, a political scientist who worked closely with Gabriel Almond. His main contributions are expressed through his collaborative work with Almond – “Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (1966). In this work, they further expand on Structural Functionalism in Comparative Politics. Powell argued that all political systems perform universal political functions, and that the structures that perform these functions vary across societies and stages of development. He also sees modernization as involving increasing complexity and specialization of political institutions – as societies modernize, political systems evolve from simple, undifferentiated structures to specialized, complex institutions. Powell emphasized the role of political culture in supporting political development. This has to do with a process in which members of a society become rational, critical and analytical in their socio-political actions. Their orientations towards politics becomes pragmatic and participatory due to an increase in their cognitive orientation, affective orientation, and evaluative orientation. As such, a participant (civil) political culture replaces the parochial (subject) political culture which initially

dominated the political system. Powell sees development as stages of political transition which nations would eventually come to follow while embarking on the journey of modernity. He also sees the Western liberal democracies as the most advanced model. The main ideas in Powell's work includes; Advanced Structural Functionalism – the idea that all political systems must perform core functions, although structures may differ, they exist; Political Development – which describes how political systems evolve through institutional differentiation; and the role of Political Culture and Participation in transforming citizen engagement for successful modernization.

David E. Apter was another prominent political scientist and sociologist who played an important role in shaping the modernization theory, especially through his studies of political development and change in Africa and Asia. He specialized in analysing how traditional societies transition into modern, democratic, and industrial states. His contribution to the Modernization theory is in his work, “The Politics of Modernization” (1965). In this work, he explained modernization as political transformation; not just economic or social, but deeply political. This political transformation involves how a society in search of development must be willing to adopt stable, capable political institutions that manage modernization-related conflicts, deliver basic public services, and adapt to change while maintaining authority. He emphasized the need for strong, legitimate political institutions, because without legitimacy, modernization efforts collapse into instability. He posited that the political systems in developing countries face

a sort of challenge, which is they must both legitimize authority and create effective institutions to manage modernization. He studied how societies transition from traditional forms of authority – based on custom, kinship, and religion – to modern authority – based on law, rationality, and democracy. According to him, modernization causes conflict between old and new values, and as such, developing societies should not attempt to erase their traditions, but adapt them creatively e.g., traditional institutions should be integrated or redefined within a modern framework rather than destroyed. He also stressed education as a core element in developing a modern political culture. Finally, Apter warned against blind imitation of Western political models without adapting them to local cultures and histories.

Lucian W. Pye, a political scientist, was another significant contributor to the modernization theory, especially during the 1950s–1970s. His work focused on how political culture and traditional values affect a society’s ability to modernize. Pye introduced the idea that political culture deeply determines if modernization succeeds or it fails. He argued that modernization requires changes in attitudes, such as moving from obedience to questioning authority, or from a parochial political culture to a participatory political culture. He makes contrasts between traditional societies – where political roles are fused, authority is personal, and power is sacred – and modern societies – where roles are specialized, power is impersonal, and institutions are rational or legal. Pye’s major contribution to the theory is vested in his book “Aspects of Political Development”

(1966), where he said, “Modernization is not simply a matter of building roads and factories, but of cultivating new habits, values, and ways of thinking.” In this work, he argues that political development is essential to national modernization, and that it involves much more than simply adopting Western-style political institutions. Instead, political development is a multidimensional process that includes building institutional capacity, political participation, legitimacy, and adapting traditional societies to the demands of modern politics. He noted that a society is developed to the extent it has development syndrome, which includes; equality, capacity, and role differentiation. The society is able to manage crisis of identity, legitimacy, participation, distribution, and integration. “Political development is the process by which political systems acquire the capabilities to deal with the stresses and demands generated by modernization.”

Adams Smith did not explicitly contribute to the modernization theory, however, his ideas about free markets, economic progress, and the natural stages of societal growth are cornerstones of modernization thinking. His vision of a transitioning society –from agriculture to industry, from tradition to market logic– is exactly what later theorists like Rostow, Almond, and Pye tried to describe and model. Adam Smith lived long before the modernization theory emerged in the 20th century. His economic ideas laid the intellectual foundation for many aspects of modernization theory. Adam Smith is often seen as one of the initial scholars whose work and ideas led to the development of the modernization theory. He emphasized economic progress through division of labour, free

markets, and capital accumulation – Division and Specialization. He argued that individual self-interest guided by the “invisible hand” of the market, leads to national prosperity – Capitalism and Limited Government Intervention. He also promoted the idea that societies develop economically from primitive agriculture to advanced industrial capitalism – Economic Growth. In this main work “An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations” (1776), commonly known as “The Wealth of Nations”, he explained how dividing work into specialized tasks greatly increases productivity, which led to the hallmark of modern economies –“specialization leads to efficiency and wealth.”; how individuals pursuing their own economic self-interest inadvertently benefit society as a whole, and through competition and free markets, resources are allocated efficiently without central planning; and how investment in tools, infrastructure, and education increases productivity and economic growth. He supported laissez-faire capitalism, a system in which the government should not interfere heavily in economic affairs, except to provide defence, administer justice, or maintain public works and infrastructure. His contribution to the theory can be seen in how he described the evolution of a society through four stages of economic activity; hunting, pastoralism, agriculture, and commerce/industry. He stated that through division of labour and specialization, limited government intervention in economic activity, capital accumulation, and the invisible hand of a free market, a society would evolve and

become economic efficient. Adam Smith also attributed wealth of nations to development which was made possible by the increase in production and capitalist principles.

The Modernization Theory was one of the most influential approaches to understanding development, particularly after the World War 2, and the wave of decolonization in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Modernization theory posits that all societies follow a similar, linear-progressive path to development from traditional, agrarian societies, to modern, urban, and industrial societies, and this idea has been reinforced by scholars over time. From all the contributions of scholars and the proponents of the modernization theory, certain patterns have been realized, and these can be considered the features of the theory.

- Universal Evolutionary Path:
- Internal Drivers of Development:
- Industrialization:
- Adoption of Technology and Culture
- All-round Development Model:

The main advantages of the modernization theory

- Clear Framework: The theory offers a relatively simple and structured way to understand development. It suggests that societies follow a predictable, linear progression through stages of economic and social transformation.

- Focus on Economic Growth: The theory emphasizes how economic growth and the adoption of new technologies can lift the society and people out of poverty, decrease inequality, and promote economic stability.
- Universal Applicability: The theory claims to offer a universal model for development, which can be applied to any society, regardless of This has contributed to its widespread adoption by states, and even international organizations.
- Promotion of Democracy and Liberation: The Modernization theory accompanies democracy, capitalism, liberation, and other Western ideals, which when applied righteously, is advantageous to the society of question.

The Modernization theory is not without challenges. Many scholars who criticized this theory contributed to the creation of the Dependency theory. they asserted various shortcomings of the theory. The modernization theory has made us understand that development is as a result of certain progressive values that are possessed only by the advanced capitalist nations of the world. It argues that the Third World is underdeveloped because they do not possess these values that the West possesses. As such, for the Third World to achieve development, it must imbibe the certain characteristics and values which the West operates. However, on further in-depth investigation, it was revealed that the theory was not only deficient and conjectural, but also myopic and misleading. Some shortcomings of the theory include;

- The theory is ethnocentric and Eurocentric, regarding Western culture and institutions as the best and superior to other nation's cultures. It regards development as a unilinear process which can only be achieved by imbibing western culture and adopting its institutions, making development synonymous with 'trying to be like the west' or 'Westernization'. This theory has been proven wrong by history. In fact, every society has a capacity to develop, and all societies had developed in one way or the other, though some have developed more than others. History has shown that no culture is superior to another culture development-wise. Thus, development cannot be 'Westernization'.
- Another misleading argument of the modernization theory is that Africa can develop by simply imbibing or acquiring the artifacts of western civilization or western technology. This thought has put the idea in African states to import western-made products – cars, textiles, electronics etc. which they have done for years now, and yet the Third World remains underdeveloped. In some instances, the third world nations lack the technical know-how to operate and maintain these technologies and depend on the West for their operations and repairs. Various incidents have proven that imbibing certain western artifacts tend to underdevelop the Third World more because these imported technologies are either in short-supply or are dysfunctional e.g., ill-equipped schools, roads filled with potholes, non-functional hospitals,

epileptic electricity etc. These prove that importation of western technologies does not translate to development.

- Modernization theory is unscientific and imperialist, because it is both value-laden and ideology bound. It tries to force the western ideology of capitalism on the Third World as the answer to their underdevelopment. Based on this fact, development becomes synonymous to Westernization and the quest for development becomes a matter of making developing countries more like the West. The modernization theory suggests that capitalism and its institutions bring about development. This has been proven wrong by the development of Russia and China under socialist economies. The theory also recommends globalization as the only therapy for development crisis. However, the Third World countries have since adopted capitalist ideology, yet it could not bring the promised development. Overall, the theory and its recommendations are aimed at further exploitation, dependency and underdevelopment in the poor countries of the globe, rather than fast-tracking their development.
- The theory has also been criticized for being anti-historical. That is, the theory fails to take into cognizance the historical events that shaped and reshaped the cause of underdevelopment around the world. The theory also de-emphasizes the impact of colonialism on development and how different types of colonialism affected countries of the world differently. It is recorded that Africa experienced 'Extractive

Colonialism' which penetrated and disarticulated African economies and structured them in such a way that they would perpetually remain dependent and underdeveloped. This is partly the reason why Africa seems not to be succeeding where other colonized continents such as Asia have succeeded.

- Finally, another shortcoming of the modernization theory is that it is ridiculed with the fallacy of taxonomic dualism. Dualism simply means reality itself is comprised of two distinct substances. Taxonomic duality can be seen as the classification of reality or phenomenon into two distinct events. The modernization theory is filled with a misconception of the world being divided into two opposite nations – the rich nations and the poor nations. The theory ascribed development, technology, and basically everything good to the advanced countries and ascribed backwardness, retrogression and everything bad to poor nations. However, social realities have shown that no nation is completely developed where all its citizens are rich, and contains everything that is good. Every society, be it developed or underdeveloped has both positive and negative sides. The difference is that developed societies have a significant level of social infrastructure with majority of its citizens experiencing high standard of living, while underdeveloped societies have a significant level of deficit social infrastructure and majority of its citizens are poor.

These are a few of the numerous shortcomings of the Modernization theory as postulated by scholars.

From the various contributions of the above scholars and many others, the Modernization Theory can be seen as a developmental plan or process postulating that development comes to nations and societies who embody a specific set of institutions, values, and practices, that differentiate modern societies from traditional societies. These values, institutions, and practices vary from law-making and enforcing bodies, legitimate authority, and rationality, to industrialization, capitalism, and democracy. The main idea now, is that these institutions, values, and practices were constructed by the West, in the West, for the West, and as such, the values, institutions, and practices are that of the West. The Modernization theory thus says, for a society to advance from traditional to modern, it must adopt the institutions, values, and practices of the West, by following a linear progressive route while discarding its own historical practices and customs considered barbaric and ancient.

According to the modernization theory, Nigeria is seen as stuck between the “Transitional stage” and the “Take-off stage” of development. The state cannot be classified as traditional by the theory as it practices most of the characteristics of modern societies. The state cannot also be classified as a modern society according to the theory, because the state retains traditional and pre-modern traits such as dependence on primary exports, weak institutions, ethnic and religious dominance in politics, widespread poverty, and infrastructural underdevelopment. Thus, the state fits into the “developing” category. Nigeria still lacks in major areas of development even as the state copies and practices

most of the institutions of the West, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States of America. According to the theory, Nigeria needs to adopt all values and institutions as embodied by the West, and follow a step-by-step trajectory to achieve development. Nigeria came in contact with external influences in the 16th Century through colonialism. The colonial period introduced new ideas, technologies, and institutions, which the Nigerian state adopted religiously. Legal systems were introduced, Western education was introduced, government was introduced etc. There was also a level of investment in infrastructure and technology. However, Nigeria did not progress to the stage of maximum industrialization in any sector, which is a requirement to progress to the “Take-off” stage in Rostow’s model of development. The modernization theory outlines steps necessary for Nigeria to transition into a modern society. These include;

- Economic Diversification and Industrialization.
- Strengthening Institutions and Bureaucracy.
- Expanding Education and Human Capital
- Urbanization and Planned Development
- Promoting Cultural and Value Change
- Technological Advancement and Global Integration etc.

According to the Modernization theory, Nigeria's development strongly depends on a comprehensive transformation of its economic, political, and social systems. For Nigeria to move from this transitional state to a fully modern society, the State must diversify its economy, strengthen institutions, invest in education, etc. Critics may argue that theory is Eurocentric and overlooks historical factors, but its prescriptions remain valuable as a blueprint for structured development. If Nigeria can personalize and adapt these principles to its unique context, it has potential to fully transition from a developing nation to a true modern society.

2.4.3 Human development theory

The Human Development Theory was a theory founded in 1990, with the launch of the first Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was largely developed by economist Dr. Mahbub ul Haq and others, like Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, as a shift from prioritizing economic growth like GDP to focusing on expanding on people's choice and well-being. These were scholars who felt the Modernization and Dependency theories did not do justice in explaining how a state or society can achieve development. This school sees development beyond economic, social, and political dimensions. Development has more to cover beyond the political or governing structures and institutions of the state, the economic systems and practices in the state, and the social and or cultural beliefs and practices within a state. Development goes as far as the people or citizens in the state that seeks development. The people make

up the state; a state without a population or demography, cannot be considered a state. And as such, proponents of this theory believe that as the human factor is the main aspect of a state, a state in search of development, must focus on the main factor that makes it a state – the people. Human Development theory entails empowering a state's population, which in turn leads to the betterment of the state. It focuses on expanding human capabilities through investments in health, education, and opportunities, allowing individuals to actively participate in shaping their own and their society's future. By empowering individuals, human development creates a more capable, productive, and socially conscious population that drives sustainable progress and strengthens the state.

The Human Development theory also entails sustainable development. This means that it emphasizes the importance of balancing economic growth with social inclusion and environmental protection, to ensure long term progress and well-being of the people now, and generations to come. Unlike traditional development models that focus primarily on economic gains, the Human Development theory seeks a holistic approach that considers the role of the human factor in development, and social and environmental impact of growth in a society.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistical measure used by the United Nations to evaluate and rank countries based on their level of social and economic development. The HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the

ultimate criteria for assessing the development status of a country, not economic growth alone. (United Nations Development Programme, 2025)

Amartya Sen is an Indian American economist and philosopher. He taught and worked in England and the United States. He is well known for his contributions to welfare economics, social choice theory, and the development of the Human Development Index (HDI) which emphasizes capabilities and freedoms over simple income measures. By providing the foundational and conceptual framework for human well-being, known as the “Capabilities Approach”, the HDI was created to shift the focus of development economics away from national income towards people-centred policies. Amartya Sen resisted developing an index on human development, but after being ultimately persuaded by Mahbub ul Haq, who argued that an index was necessary to communicate the idea that people’s well-being, not GDP growth, has the real purpose of development, the two worked together to create the HDI (International Science Council, 2020). Amartya Sen redefined development beyond mere economic growth like GDP to focus on what people are actually able to do and be – that is, their capabilities and freedom. According to his “Capability Approach”, development is best understood based on what people are able to do and be (their capabilities), rather than only on what they have e.g., income and resources. He believes that the ultimate goal of development is to expand people’s substantive freedoms, not just increase income or economic growth. Freedoms include political freedom, economic freedom, social opportunities, protective security etc. in his

book “Development as Freedom” (1999), Amartya argued that true development means expanding people’s real freedoms, not just increasing national income or economic growth. That is, freedom is both the means and the end of development. Freedom is the goal of development, and also the means to achieve it.

Mahbub ul Haq was a Pakistani economist, international theorist, and politician who served as the Minister of Finance and Revenue of Pakistan. He is known for co-creating the concept of human development and the HDI. He led a development philosophy that prioritized human well-being including education, equity, health, and poverty alleviation over purely economic growth. According to PuneMirror Bureau (2023), Mahbub ul Haq’s finest hour came after he joined as the Special Advisor to UNDP Administrator in 1989, where he teamed up with Amartya Sen and other scholars and developed the HDI as an alternative measure for economic progress and prepared the first annual Human Development Report in 1990. The report aimed at placing people at the center of development progress. Mahbub ul Haq’s main contribution to the Human Development Theory comes to light in his book “Reflections on Human Development” ()

Martha C. Nussbaum

2.5 Literature summary and gap

Despite the rich body of research, certain areas remain unaddressed or unexplored when it comes to the study of development and underdevelopment. Such of these areas include:

- The integration of political culture with development outcomes. Many studies highlight corruption and elections, while few comprehensively link the attitudes, norms, and behavior of citizens to Nigeria's development trajectory.
- The role of the international community beyond aid. While many research focuses on aid, loans, and trade between developed and developing countries, there is less on how international organizations, bilateral partnerships, and global governance frameworks can actively enable or hinder Nigeria's transition.
- Application of comparative lessons to Nigeria. Major development and underdevelopment studies reveal methods by which developing countries can achieve development, through one means or the other, however, they do not provide clear, Nigeria-specific pathways, tailored to meet the needs of the State, such as governance reform, -social transformation, and global positioning.

Most of the studies on Nigeria's underdevelopment talk about history, corruption, weak institutions, or dependence on oil and foreign aid, but they don't really connect these issues with how the political culture of the citizenry and elections shape development outcomes. So also, while there has been a lot of comparison with places like the Asian Tigers, very few works actually show how those lessons can be applied in Nigeria's own political and cultural context. Another gap is that many of these writings either focus on politics, economy, or international relations separately, instead of bringing them together

in one analysis. This leaves room for research that takes a more holistic view, tying politics, economy, and international influence into a single picture and showing clearer, Nigeria-specific pathways to sustainable development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The research design adopted for this study is an explanatory survey research design method, which is suitable for capturing the opinions of respondents towards the development of their country, Nigeria. The data to be used in this research consists of primary and secondary data. Data will be collected from secondary materials such as published books and articles, public statements, and researches. It would also be obtained from a questionnaire answered by the sample size through a random sampling technique. The data will be analysed through qualitative means. The research design allows for active participation in the study of development and underdevelopment by undergraduates at the University of Benin. It is also suitable as the study is conducted within the premises of the University of Benin.

3.2 Population of the study

The population of the study refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that the research focuses on to draw conclusion. For this study, it consists of university students in the University of Benin, Edo state, Nigeria. Thus, the population is over 77,000.

3.3 Sampling technique and size

A simple random sampling technique will be used to generate a sample size for this research.

The simple random sampling technique used in the study was introduced by Anders Kiaer in 1895, and further developed by Ronald A. Fisher and Jerzy Neyman in the 1920s for statistical theory and evaluation.

3.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument is a Nominal Scale questionnaire titled “Nigeria’s Opportunity in Overcoming Underdevelopment”. The research instrument was divided into three sections, section A, section B, and section C.

Section A covered the demographic data of the respondents in age, gender, level of study, and faculty/department.

Section B covered the causes and consequences of underdevelopment in Nigeria. Here, respondents were asked their perceived causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, and the way it has affected the country so far.

Section C covered possible remedies for underdevelopment in Nigeria. Respondents were asked if they see a future for Nigeria, and in what ways this desired future could be realized.

The insights gained from the respondents were fresh and inspiring, with each individual giving his or her diverse opinion towards development, and ways to approach it.

3.5 Validity of research instrument

This research will be confirmed by lecturers and the Head of Department (HOD) of the Department of Political Science.

A draft of the questionnaire will be placed after this chapter to be reviewed by the experts.

3.6 Sources of data

Data was sourced from a number of students from the prestigious University of Benin.

They were handed the questionnaires which they voluntarily filled.

3.7 Method of data collection

The research was conducted with a survey-questionnaire format. Data was collected through a mixed method questionnaire. That is, questions were both quantitative and qualitative.

Ethical considerations were obtained from the respondents. Respondents were informed on the use of their response and briefed on the topic the research is conducted on. They remain anonymous, and participated voluntarily. Respondents were assured of their confidentiality and gave informed consent. This research is a means to give voice to the respondents, by implementing their suggested solutions, and combining it with practical realities to achieve development of the State.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Presentation of data

This section contains the data acquired from the research. The research adopts the use of primary and secondary data, therefore, in this section, we would be discussing the causes and consequences of underdevelopment, as well as the opportunities to achieving sustainable development.

4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The demographic data for this study is as follows:

- The population consists of six females and four males
- 60% of the population is within the 16 – 19 age group, while 40% is within the 20 – 23 age group.
- 60% of the population was in their first year of school (100 level), 10% in the second year (200 level), 10% in the third year (300 level), and 20% in 400 level or above.
- The population was a mix of students from different departments and faculties in the institution of the University of Benin.

4.1.2 RESPONSE FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section will cover the answers gotten from the research instrument – the questionnaire, filled by the respondents.

A major percentage of the respondents attribute Nigeria's underdevelopment to corruption, bad governance, and lack of infrastructure in the state. Answers claim that the opinion of those in power by the public, is one filled with distrust and lack of reliance.

Respondents agree that corruption, lack of economic diversification, the leaders, bad governance, lack of trust by the people, neglect of agricultural resources, greed, disunity, mismanagement of funds, poor educational quality etc., are the main problems in Nigeria.

They claim the solution to the problem of underdevelopment include investing in education, strengthening anti-corruption measures, exploration of other revenue sources, enforcing transparency and accountability measures, discovery of other talents in the state, promotion of the agricultural sector, more production and less consumption, investment in technology, investment in infrastructure, and encouragement of the private sector.

The respondents gave significant insights into the causes of underdevelopment in the state as well as possible solutions. These factors are discussed below.

4.2 Discussion of findings

This section combines the findings from secondary data as well as the primary data – the questionnaire. According to the research, the causes of underdevelopment can be

attributed to a number of factors. These factors in turn, bring about consequences which are evident in the society today. Below are the results of the research.

4.2.1. CAUSES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

- **ECONOMIC STRUGGLES:** The Nigerian economy is really a dependent one (Otu et al., 2022). Nigeria is dependent on oil exports, imports, foreign technology, and foreign aid. While Nigeria swiftly exited the Covid-19 recession, per-capita income has stagnated. Real GDP growth slowed to 2.9 percent in 2023, with the weak agriculture and trade despite the improvement in oil production and financial services (IMF, 2024). The nation is known for its production and sale of Crude Oil. Nigeria's economy is heavily reliant on oil and gas exports, making it vulnerable to global oil price volatility. The sale of this natural resource builds up a major percent of the nation's total revenue. Thus, there is a heavy reliance on the production and sale of this natural resource, resulting in an unstable economic foundation. Nigeria's economy remains heavily reliant on oil and gas, which dominates both export earnings and government revenue, with limited job creation in the sector (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development [BMZ], 2024). This dependence on oil exports impoverishes other economic sectors in the country e.g., Agriculture – due to large revenue from oil exports, the agricultural sector has been neglected, this has created a pause in the sector, resulting in loss of local businesses and efforts, and a threat to food security in the nation; Industrialization – focus is on

the extraction and sale of a single economic commodity; thus there is hardly any room for manufacturing industries to grow and prosper in the nation. Nigeria imports a wide range of goods, particularly manufactured goods and refined petroleum products. Despite being a major crude oil producer, Nigeria still relies on importing refined fuel. This import dependence strains foreign reserve, hinders the growth of local economies, and negatively affects the country's balance of payments. The Nigerian economy is in reality a dependent one. This is because the technological basis of the economy is largely foreign. Available statistics show that 80-90 percent of the technologies used in local manufacturing which are also critical to the real sector in the country are imported (BusinessDay, 2015). This means that in terms of consultation, production machineries, and knowledge, foreign instruments are employed. This is very evident in the manufacturing and the oil industry. In the manufacturing industry, huge sums of money are used to fund the use of technology as payment annually. Unfortunately, this is the same in oil industry. Six decades after the discovery of oil in commercial quantities, the technology of the industry is still largely alien to Nigeria. This has resulted in Nigeria focusing on just the upstream sector of oil production – which mainly involves exploring and extracting crude oil. Nigeria has not developed the midstream and downstream sectors which involve refining oil, producing related products, or building industries that can use oil as raw materials; unlike other oil producing countries, who have used their oil industries to

develop more sectors and industries, helping their economies grow in all aspects. This is also seen as an irony, because even though Nigeria has over 100 universities – many of which are researching ways to help the country become technologically independent – there is still very little progress. The key problem is a “lack of connection” between what the universities are doing and what the Nigerian economy actually needs. Nigeria’s high dependency on primary products export and weak technological development have led to its reliance on foreign aid, a significant issue in its underdevelopment. Foreign aid is often intended to promote economic development, alleviate poverty, and promote self-sufficiency in recipient countries (BusinessDay, 2024). However, Nigeria, despite receiving billions of dollars in aid since independence, continues to grapple with poverty, corruption, and underdevelopment. Disguised as a benevolent gesture, foreign aid is a means for foreign powers to maintain control over Nigeria’s vast resources and economic destiny. The Dependency Theory as opined by scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank and Walter Rodney, states that underdeveloped countries will remain subordinate to developed countries due to their reliance on them for capital, technology, and market access. Foreign aid in Nigeria is a neo colonialism tool to keep the nation reliant on international countries and stop real economic growth. This is due to the several conditions attached to getting the aid e.g., Structural Adjustment Programs, high

interest rates etc. Nigeria's reliance on foreign aid has led to a cycle of dependency, causing the country to prioritize external assistance over domestic priorities.

- **EDUCATION DEFICIT:** Nigeria's educational system is structured around a 1-6-3-3-4 system, which encompasses one-year early childhood education, six-years primary school, three-years junior and three-years senior secondary school, and four-year university education (UNESCO, 2024). The country aims to provide free and compulsory basic education for all children, as a way to build a foundation for the citizens. Before modern times, education was not really accepted in Nigeria. However, that changed with the series of events that followed the nation's history. Society evolved to accept education – education became a beacon of hope. Parents were proud to send their children to school, youths were proud to be graduating from the university, and society saw education as an achievement. There remained an issue – sending the girl child to school. It is no news that the traditional man believes that a woman's place is in the kitchen and the bedroom, providing and taking care of the man's offspring. This has also evolved overtime, to society seeing the value of the girl-child as beyond reproduction. Education has been made more inclusive, open to individuals of all ages, religion, gender, and ethnic group. There has been a shortfall between the educational reality that children experience around the world and what the governments have promised and committed to through human rights treaties (Human Rights Watch, 2016). The gap between what government promise in

international human rights treaties and the actual educational experiences of children is quite alarming. Nigeria has signed several human rights treaties – such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – which entitles every child to the right to free and quality education. However, in reality and in practice, millions of Nigerian children still struggle to access quality education due to factors such as insecurity, underfunded schools, overcrowded schools, hidden costs, poverty, gender inequalities, cultural and regional disparities etc. Despite efforts to improve access and quality of the educational system, challenges such as low attendance rates particularly in the north, shortages of resources in public universities, and infrastructure deficits persists. Even though primary education is free and compulsory in Nigeria, about 10.5 million of the country’s children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6–11-year-olds regularly attend primary and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education (UNICEF, n.d.). There are also issues such as the increase education fees. Severe cuts in public spending and a slash in education budgets have resulted in tuition increase in public universities and a deterioration of basic infrastructure, including shortages in electricity and water supplies. The Nigerian educational system has also been viewed overtime as stagnant and non-evolving. Many of the courses taught in the universities, are courses that were taught to the now lecturers. The system has not evolved to adapt the changing technological

and globalized world. It still focuses on age-old knowledge – which is a very important tool if harnessed properly, as society often forgets roots – and does nothing about teaching to students, the new digitalized ways of life. In essence, the educational system in Nigeria is back dated and not accepting to the new ways of life. Education is a very important factor in every state. Education can break generational cycles of poverty by enabling children to gain the life skills and knowledge needed to cope with today’s challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Education can also bring about sustainable development and economic growth in a state. According to the World Bank, education is a foundational infrastructure for job creation, and good jobs are the surest way out of poverty. Education is a powerful driver of development, it is one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income, and is the most important factor to ensure equity and inclusion.

- **DEPENDENCE ON OIL:** Nigeria’s economy is largely monolithic. That is, majority of revenue generated by the state comes from one source. That source is oil. After the 1980s oil boom, the nation became extremely wealthy. The revenue from oil was more than enough to sustain the state and even give away. The Nigerian government was giving financial assistance to other African states facing one challenge or the other. The oil wealth also increased Nigeria’s global status as the state became a very powerful and influential state in the international system.

However, with the fall in oil price and global price fluctuations, Nigeria's 'golden geese' was no longer bringing in as much revenue. This led to economic shock and eventually borrowing to sustain the Nigerian state. The oil boom led to the neglect of key economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. So, by the time the economy began to fail, these sectors could not be relied on to sustain the nation. Today, the country still faces global price fluctuations, with highs and lows. But the constant focus on this revenue source and the neglect of others still emphasizes the nation's underdevelopment. Revenue generated from oil exports is no longer enough to sustain the nation because although revenue generated is high, the population is higher, and the revenue is not enough to sustain the population.

- **OVER-POPULATION:** Nigeria is considered the most populated state in Africa relative to its land mass. The population continues to grow without regulation, and thus has become a major cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria. The infrastructure in place can only benefit a set number of people, however, way too many people use them, results in deterioration, depreciation, and damage of social amenities. Schools are overpopulated, classrooms are overpopulated, laboratories are overpopulated, hospitals are overpopulated, event centres are overpopulated etc. Overpopulation swallows up the little effort of the government and brings about even more challenges.
- **HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES:** Healthcare challenges is another lacking sector in Nigeria. Nigeria federal hospitals lack the needed facilities and staffing that a

functional hospital requires. Private hospitals on the other hand, find it hard to fund their hospitals and provide the needed facilities for a functional hospital, and private hospitals that have been able to achieve this, fully fund, provide equipment, and staff the hospital, are often high maintenance hospitals which cost a lot in bills, and are not accessible to the average Nigerian. Lack of proper facilities, inability to perform some procedures due to unavailability of equipment, brain drain which puts on more work on the available staffs, and the meagre wage compensation

These are major causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, others include unemployment, infrastructure deficit, ethnic and religious divisions, widespread crime etc.

4.2.2. CONSEQUENCES ON THE STATE

- **INEQUALITY:** The continuous economic challenges of the state has led to increased inequality. The gap between the poor and wealthy continues to widen, with the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer. This inequality is facilitated by the theft and corruption of individuals in power, and the success of big private investors and businessmen on the rich side, and the unemployment, lack of opportunities, and high prices of commodities on the poor side. The rich and the poor would always exist in any society, however, the largening gap between the two in Nigeria is alarming. The policies made by government always affects the poor while benefitting the rich. The poor pay the most taxes, are always on the giving end, and yet does not

enjoy basic needs in the society. The system is constructed against the poor. And even when some few manage to escape that rat-race, there is no security, and always a risk of falling even lower. Thus, inequality as a result of the corrupt practices of the top 1%, the unfavorable conditions available to the poor, and the complexity of the economy has become a major consequence of underdevelopment in the country.

- **DISCOURAGED FOREIGN INVESTMENT:** Insecurity, lack of basic infrastructure, unfavorable economic policies and practices, etc, all contribute to deter foreign investment. Foreign investment is one fast way to achieve development, however, if the socio-economic environment of the stake is not favorable, it compels foreign investors to pack up and leave, and discourages future foreign investment. This lack of flow in capital leaves the country... These factors create a high-risk environment for investors due to a lack of reliable power, inconsistent policy enforcement, weak legal systems, and a volatile exchange rate, increasing costs and uncertainty. Poor road networks, limited rail connectivity, and inefficient ports create significant bottlenecks for businesses. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) reported in 2024 that over 60% of businesses in Nigeria experience logistical delays due to poor road conditions and congestion at the ports, leading to increased operational costs (NESG, 2024). Reliable power is essential for industrial production, commercial activities, and digital operations. However, Nigeria's electricity sector has been plagued by frequent blackouts, inadequate generation capacity, and high

operational costs (Osoghoyai, 2025). The World Bank (2023) reported that businesses in Nigeria lose approximately \$29 billion annually due to unreliable electricity supply, making it one of the most significant barriers to investment sustainability (World Bank, 2023). Thus, challenges such as deficient infrastructure in transportation, electricity supply, water supply, digital infrastructure etc., deter foreign investments as the lack of these basic infrastructure can cost businesses a whole lot, and no business would want to risk capital like that.

- **EXTERNAL CONTROL:** When a country or a state begins to borrow to sustain itself, that country can be influenced by external bodies. It is no news that the West benefits from the underdevelopment of African states. However, we still see this West providing alleged opportunities e.g., financial aids, loans and grants, for development to African countries. Now, the assumption is, *“Are these actions purely for the benefit of the developing country, or for the hidden agenda of the international society?”*. We have seen this evident in many cases such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP), which to the open eye aids development in developing countries, but secretly pushes these countries into big debts and less government role in provision of some necessary public services. There is also the case of the Lomé EU – ACP Agreements of 1975, 1979, 1984, and 1989, whereby the agreements provided trade opportunities and access to European markets for African states, as well as development aid. However, on closer inspection, it revealed that the

agreement aimed to foster the EU's initial purpose; access to raw materials from African states, and a stagnation in their industrial sector, as the agreement promoted the export of agricultural produce, and provision of incentives for the extraction and exportation industry, while stifling progress in the technological industry. This led African states to remain primary industries at the benefit of a little trade, and Europe's legal access to Africa's resources. The question remains *"Is any form of help or aid from the international society for the benefit of the developing states, or is it another means to further reinforce the Global North-South relationship, keeping Africa underdeveloped and Europe developing?"* The international society gives out loans to most African states in order to attain the international standard of development, thereby making Africa indebted to the European countries. It is also for the same reason most international organization are established, towards the development of Africa states. Development of most African states here implies meeting up with the European standard.

Other consequences of underdevelopment in the country include pollution, brain drain, dependency on aid and debt crisis, natural resource mismanagement etc.

4.2.3. OPPORTUNITIES TO OVERCOMING UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

- **ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** Entrepreneurship is a critical role player in the aspect of development. It is the cornerstone of any economy. For a developing country like Nigeria, entrepreneurship offers a powerful opportunity to create employment, stimulate local economies, and reduce poverty, while also providing room economic growth, social progress, and individual empowerment. Entrepreneurship is the process of creating, launching, and managing a new business venture, often involving innovation and the assumption of financial risk (Oxford dictionary, n.d.). It involves identifying opportunities, developing ideas, and building a business to generate profit or create value. This is a task done by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are individuals who take on the risks and rewards of starting and own running their own businesses. What can entrepreneurship do for Nigeria? According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data, micro, small, and medium scale Enterprises (MSMEs) account for 49.8% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as constitutes a significant proportion of the number of businesses in Nigeria in recent decades (Olufemi, 2023). These businesses whilst being micro, small, or medium scale, still contribute 49.8% to the nations GDP. What would happen if these businesses were invested into, protected and given a conducive environment to grow and function? From access to capital to regulatory hurdles, Nigerian entrepreneurs and their

businesses face numerous challenges. These challenges often include limited access to capital or credit, inadequate or epileptic power (electricity) supply, inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent government policies, a challenging regulatory environment etc. These obstacles hinder the growth and sustainability of businesses in the country, impacting job creation and economic development. However, with varied steps, policies, and programs, the government and the society at large can make entrepreneurship an economic weapon in the state, and promote sustainable development. Nigeria's position as Africa's largest economy offers a fertile ground for business growth. The country's youthful demographic, with a median age of around 18 years, is driving innovation and change (Spratt, 2024). This abundant gift can be harnessed, improved and managed to bring entrepreneurship to life, and as such, bring about sustainable economic development. To enhance entrepreneurship in Nigeria, a multifaceted approach is needed. There is a need to focus on improving major challenging areas e.g.,

- * Finance - improving access to finance by increasing funding programs, improving access to loans, practical credibility and application for loans, awarding grants, encouraging public-private partnerships etc. it would make it easier for small businesses to access capital for their businesses.

- * Fostering and encouraging entrepreneurial skills through mentorship, vocational training e.g., workshops and on hands programs, leadership training etc. By inserting

these qualities in young aspiring individuals, it would equip them with the technical knowledge to handle a business and make it prosper.

* Investing in infrastructure - committing redeveloped areas equipped with adequate water supply, ample electricity supply, security, good roads, community access etc. to commercial purposes. This would ensure a conducive social environment for business conduct and consumer appreciation.

* Government policies – it is the role of government agencies and regulatory bodies to make and implement policies that protect local businesses, provide opportunities for upcoming business ventures, make special provisions for entrepreneurs and individuals who contribute to the nation’s economy privately etc.

* Provision of legal assistance – by providing necessary guidance on navigating legal complexities to entrepreneurs, it aids them in protecting their businesses, and ensuring compliance with regulations. This helps entrepreneurs minimize risks, build sustainable businesses, and contribute to economic growth. All these would promptly encourage entrepreneurship in the country and overall create a supportive business environment. The entrepreneurial spirit in Nigeria is further fuelled by a cultural shift. Trade and business have always been in the nature of Nigerians, and will continue to be despite the conditions of the country. However, with better business conditions, more citizens would want to go into entrepreneurship, and this is a path towards sustainable development. More Nigerians are embracing entrepreneurship as a viable

career path, driven by the desire for economic independence and the opportunity to make a difference. Entrepreneurship as it were, is one of the greatest potentials to contribute significantly to the sustainable development of any nation, and most especially Nigeria.

- **PUBLIC INVESTMENT:** Public investment in technology, agricultural, and basic infrastructure is one strategy used by many developing countries to advance from developing to a developed nation. Singapore for example, was a resource-scarce nation. However, upon recognizing its lack of natural resources, the nation built an economy focused on producing goods for export, and using its strategic location as a trade route and an investment in human capital to transform itself to a wealthy country (Duchene, 2023). Through strategic government intervention by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1959, the nation's status changed. From the 1960s until the 1980s, the regime focused on developing the island and training its people. The government invested heavily in infrastructure, education, and workforce skills, thereby attracting the much-needed foreign investment that further developed the nation.

In the case of Nigeria, where the state still has a major case of infrastructural deficit, public investment in roads and transport systems, energy and power generation, clean and accessible water systems, telecommunications etc., can rapidly develop the state.

So also, public investment in technology such as Information and Communication

Technology (ICT), industrial and engineering technology, medical and health technology, agricultural technology, and environmental technology, would boost the economic standing of the state and usher in increased foreign investment. Public investment in agriculture, in support of farmers, favorable agricultural policies, loans and grants etc., would further enhance food security, reduce poverty and hunger, create employment, boost income, and generally just contribute to the economic growth of the state. Thus, public investment can lead to development in Nigeria by enhancing infrastructure, creating better environment, promoting the private sector, and encouraging foreign investment.

- **DIVERSIFICATION OF THE STATE’S ECONOMY:** It is no news that Nigeria's economy is a monolithic one, with large dependence on revenue from oil exports. Component units in the country do not have sufficient Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) which compels them to depend on the national government for support. The national government on the other hand, is majorly focused on oil export revenue which it has to share with the other levels of government. Thus, resulting in insufficient resources to manage the state, and eventually economic challenges. However, by diversifying the state’s economy and focusing on multiple revenue generators, both by the national government and its component units, the state would have enough resources to sustain itself, and even have more to spare. This successful strategy can be seen in the case of the Asian Tigers – South Korea, Singapore, Hong

Kong, and Taiwan. After the fall of Japanese rule post World War 2, these countries rebuilt their infrastructures to compensate for the devastation left by the war (Pebl., 2025). The Asian Tigers combined a use of transformation of the agricultural sector to improve agricultural productivity, investment in domestic industries, human resource development, industrial development, and export-led initiatives to completely transform their economies and state.

This will be a case of similar success for Nigeria, if the state adopts policies and measures to diversify the economy. By modernizing and commercializing agriculture, Nigeria can move from subsistence farming to large-scale industrialized farming. This would not only feed and sustain the nation's population, it could also become an export channel. By building human capital and technical skills through the use of schools, universities, workshops etc., the state can employ this medium to move into higher-value industries. So also, by switching to a manufacturing instead of a consuming economy, Nigeria can drive economic growth, and in turn achieve development.

- **REFORM POLICIES:** Nigeria has implemented reform policies over the years. These policies have been used to address various challenges including economic stagnation, corruption and underdevelopment. They span over different eras and reflects the country's effort to combat its many challenges and build a resilient economy. In 2004, under President Olusegun Obasanjo's admin, Nigeria adopted the

National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). A program designed to reduce poverty, create jobs, and enhance and institutional reforms (NEEDS, 2004). There was also the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) of 2017, under President Muhammadu Buhari's admin. This program aimed to address Nigerian's 2016 economic recession by promoting macro-economic stability, economic diversification and inclusive growth. (Centre Bank of Nigeria, 2017). Besides these economic based reform programs, political based reform agencies have been institutionalized to combat corruption, governance challenges, crimes, and other financial malpractices. For example, Nigerian's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) are tasked with combating corruption. These agencies, in their operations promote transparency and accountability in Nigeria through their anti-corruption efforts. Now, you may wonder, "How does corruption and lack of transparency and accountability still persist in Nigeria if institutions like EFCC and ICPC are present?" This can be attributed to the operational efficiency of these institutions. Therefore, for Nigeria to achieve development, the state has to strengthen institutions and programs like these. In theory, they are effective and can solve Nigeria's problems. However, in reality, continuous challenges plague them and undermine their effectiveness.

To achieve development in Nigeria, and curb governance and political challenges, these institutions need to be strengthened, well-funded, and immune to political

interferences. Only in total control of their operations, and an independence from influences and political affiliations, can these institutions and programs take effective stance and bring about development in Nigeria.

- **EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE IMPROVEMENT:** Education is the foundation of any system. A system run by individuals who are not knowledgeable, is a system bound to fail. This is simply to say, that the one who has acquired knowledge in one field or the other, or in general life, such a person has higher chances at success, as opposed and unknowledgeable person. A society is made of the people. Any society that seeks development and does not put into consideration education or empowerment of the human resource. Thus, any society or state that seeks development would have to begin with the basis, the education and enlightenment of its population. Such society also needs to consider the health sector, another important aspect of human development. The people being the main focus of any society are to be taken care of. In situations where there are accidents or health issues, a working health system would not only treat and nurse the sick and injured back to health, but would also aid in preventing the spread of diseases, and providing health standards across the state.

Environmental caution, welfare programs, community-based development, waste management, technological advancement, proper waste management, enlightenment etc.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

This research examined the persistent issue of underdevelopment in Nigeria, focusing on both internal and external causes. Despite Nigeria's abundant natural and human resources, the country continues to face economic stagnation, insecurity, and widespread poverty. The study explored how factors such as corruption, poor governance, and weak democratic processes combine with external pressures like colonial legacy, unequal trade relations, and foreign dependency to hinder progress.

The aim of the study was to analyze these causes, assess their effects on Nigeria's development, and propose practical strategies for overcoming them. The research adopted a qualitative method, relying on secondary data drawn from academic books, journal articles, government reports, and previous empirical studies.

Findings revealed that corruption and weak institutions have crippled effective governance, while dependence on foreign aid and the dominance of multinational corporations have maintained Nigeria's economic dependency. Additionally, insecurity and human rights abuses have weakened public trust and slowed investment.

The study concludes that tackling underdevelopment in Nigeria requires sincere political will, institutional reform, and citizen participation. It recommends diversification of the economy, strengthening of anti-corruption agencies, investment in education and infrastructure, and protection of democratic values to promote inclusive and sustainable national growth.

5.2. Recommendations/ pathways to sustainable development

Over the course of this study, we looked at causes, consequences, of underdevelopment, and opportunities to development along economic, political, and social aspects. Now, while recommending pathways to achieving sustainable development, we would also look at it through economic, political and social aspects.

ECONOMIC

- Support of other economic sectors or rather the diversification of the state's economy as explained in the previous chapter. This includes investments in technology, human capital development, and infrastructure, as well as government role and investments in the agricultural sector.

- Implementation of policies such as "State Farm" and "State Industry". Whereby each state has the responsibility to own a large communal farm and provide food, security for its citizens, fund a program whereby each state would pick a particular industry and specialize in it over the course of a decade or more.

POLITICAL

- Explicit punishments for involvement in crimes relating to corruption, neglect of duties, unfulfilled promises, embezzlement, governance misconduct etc.
- Empowerment of the military through special military personnel benefits such as free transportation on public systems, accommodation provision, and better funding. An empowered military would curb insecurity.
- Establishment of state police and state centric institutions to fight the centric nature of governance

SOCIAL

- Investment in education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure as discussed in the chapter before. As well as intentional efforts towards human capital development by special skill set training, workshops, creative hubs etc.
- Social protection measures that is accessible to the bottom of the population. Care for the poor, the orphaned, the disabled, the old, the abused etc.
- Regulations against reproduction. Policies such as a ban on reproduction for individuals within a specific age bracket or below a particular age. With exceptions to those who have proven that they are physically, mentally and financially prepared to have an offspring. The policy would also dictate a particular number of offspring according to income bracket. This policy has to come with strict, enforceable punishments to deter individuals from breaking these rules.

5.3. Conclusion

This research examined the internal and external causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, focusing on how corruption, weak democratic institutions, insecurity, poverty, and external economic dependence have slowed the country's progress. The findings revealed that underdevelopment is a result of both internal governance failures and external pressures such as unequal trade systems, neocolonial influence, and foreign aid dependency.

The study emphasizes that meaningful development requires addressing these factors in a coordinated and strategic way. Strengthening democratic governance, fighting corruption, investing in education and infrastructure, promoting economic diversification, and reducing external dependency are critical steps toward progress.

Ultimately, Nigeria's development lies in the ability of its leaders and citizens to implement effective reforms, uphold justice and human rights, and build strong institutions that can support sustainable growth. If these measures are embraced, Nigeria can break free from the cycle of underdevelopment and secure a prosperous future.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Science,
University of Benin,
Benin City.
May 12, 2025

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an undergraduate student, undergoing a B.Sc. programme at the University of Benin. I am currently running a research titled, “Nigeria’s Opportunity in Overcoming Underdevelopment”.

I wish to appeal to you to assist by kindly sparing a few minutes to complete this questionnaire as honestly as you can. Your opinion or information supplied will be used purely for the academic purpose intended; and such information will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Ansela Akhigbe.

SECTION A

Please tick the appropriate answer

1. Age: 16-19[] 20-23[] 24-27[] 28 above []
 2. Gender: Male [] Female []
 3. Level of study: 100 level [] 200 level [] 300 level [] 400 level or above []
 4. Faculty/Department
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SECTION B

1. To what extent do you believe that these factors are responsible for underdevelopment in Nigeria?

FACTORS	5	4	3	2	1	DISAGREE
Corruption						
Lack of resources						
Nigerians (the people)						
Educational stagnation						
Insecurity						

2. The Nigerian economy is very focused on just one major revenue generator

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

3. The Nigerian economy neglects key sectors such as education, healthcare, and social welfare

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

4. The neglect of these sectors actively contribute to the underdevelopment of Nigeria

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

5. Nigeria has a hope towards development if necessary procedures are taken

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

6. Using your own words, describe whatever you believe is the problem with Nigeria

Section C

1. Strategic enhancement of the agricultural sector can regulate price of agricultural products and eliminate hunger and poverty in the country

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

2. An investment in education, health, and social welfare would create better standard of living for citizens, and prevent brain drain, resulting in sustainable development

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

3. Technological advancements is very crucial in Nigeria's development, allowing the nation to stand confidently in the midst of developed countries in the technological aspect

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

4. A more transparent and citizen-focused government can be created through enforced policies and stronger institutions

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

5. Creation of state armed police force would ensure better security in the country

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

6. Using your own words, describe whatever strategies you believe Nigeria should adopt
to overcome underdevelopment
