

Developmental State Discourses: Recalibrating the Candidature of the Nigerian State

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Abstract

Many countries in Asia, which were at par with Nigeria in terms of economic development at Independence in 1960, have since overtaken Nigeria in almost every economic development index. Whereas Nigeria has experimented with various notable economic and political ideologies, including socialism, capitalism and the eclectic mid-path called mixed economy, none has been able to substantially address Nigeria's developmental challenges nor enabled it catch up with its Asian counterparts. Several studies attribute the Asian countries' economic development 'miracle' to the state's strategic role in their nation's development agenda, resulting in what is now referred to as developmental state. This paper, therefore, takes a critical examination of the nature and character of the Nigerian state, its seemingly irresponsiveness to developmental treatments, apparent immunity to multi-sectoral development, and its prospects of attaining a developmental state status. The study is anchored on the logical deductions and assumptions of the Developmental State theory. We deployed documentary method and content-analysis for data collection and analysis, respectively. The paper concludes on a note of optimism that although the Nigeria state may have lost its golden opportunity to become developmental, the emergence of a truly national leader with appropriate policies on socio-economic, structural and institutional engineering, coupled with the resources and resilience of the country, the road to its transformation into a developmental state—though not too rosy—is clear, straight and navigable.

Keywords: Developmental state, Authoritarian corporatism, Embedded autonomy, ASEAN Tigers, Nigerian state

Introduction

The Nigerian state, being a third world post-colonial state, has consistently been confronted with various developmental challenges. The manner in which it has tried to engage this retinue of challenges, including the chequered pathways, successes and failures, has earned the Nigerian state various descriptive appellations and qualifiers, among which are "weak state", "failed state", "failing state", "rentier state", etc. The persistence of emasculating poverty, growing youth unemployment, galloping inequality, low middle-class income, rudimentary development of the forces of production, violence, diseases, high infant and maternal mortality, low life expectancy, illiteracy, insurgency and insecurity, pathetic and brazen corruption, debilitating state of critical infrastructure, etc. have all conduced to the diminution, indeed, dwarfing of a few sincere developmental efforts of the Nigerian state. It is worthy of note that

Nigeria has experimented and still experiments with various abstractions of the notable extremes of economic and political ideologies, including socialism, capitalism and the eclectic mid-path called mixed economy. Regrettably, however, none has been able to substantially address the above developmental challenges of the Nigerian State.

The situation becomes more pathetically worrisome when it is recalled that most of the oriental countries, including Malaysia—an oriental agrarian backwater in early 1960s that came cap in hand for Nigeria's palm seedling at what one may describe as Nigeria's glorious agricultural days—have all since overtaken Nigeria in virtually all developmental indices. When the countries of East Asia (Japan, Taiwan and South Korea) and indeed the ASEAN TIGERS initially regarded as peripheral nations began making some real economic gains and geometric growth/development between the 1960s and 1970s, some development-minded scholars began to research into what was responsible for this developmental escape from periphery to semi-centre/centre nations. Prominent among these scholars were Chalmers Johnson (1982) and Peter B. Evans (1985). It is interesting to remark that the outcome of their research and enquiries led to the formulation of the developmental state theory.

Now, this theory is another theoretical effort at *dirigisme* (complete and direct government regulation of a nation's economy and social structures). The fundamental concept of the developmental state is that deliberate interaction of the state with the market can bring about serious industrialisation on overall economic development. Arising from the apparent incapability of the much-vaunted neoliberal economic policies to arrest poverty, inequality, unemployment and other developmental challenges of the global south, there is now a renewed enthusiasm to bring the state back into the vanguard of industrial transformation and economic growth and all round development of countries with late development.

In that spirit of enthusiasm, this paper sets out to explore the prospects of transforming the Nigerian state into a developmental state, given its inherent character and capabilities of surviving a 30-month bloody civil war, remaining united (although not in unity) in the face of roughly 300 hundred ethnic and tribal groups, trudging ahead regardless of threatening religio-cultural diversities, Boko Haram and herdsmen attacks, banditry, etc. The paper is divided into 5 sections. Following this Introduction is the section, which presents a brief theoretical discourse of the Nigerian state. The next section explores the developmental state theory with the Nigerian state in perspective. While the penultimate section discusses the prospects and challenges of transforming the Nigerian state into a developmental state, the last section draws

a general conclusion on recalibrating the candidature of the Nigerian state for a developmental agenda.

A brief theoretical discourse of the Nigerian state

With development in mind, exploring the Nigerian state presupposes the admission that the state and its apparatus are products of a social contract. It further presupposes that the state is the receiver and management of the people's rights, and therefore, the protector and provider of basic values to the people. In a word, it interrogates the state's role in engineering socio-economic growth and all-encompassing development. However, studies (see Enerjaho, 2024; Ogbonna, Aluko, & Adeyanju, 2022; Adibe, 2012) that aimed to reflect the Nigerian state highlight the continuously widening gap between the state and society. This lack of connection has the potential of not only undermining the legitimacy of a state, but also of causing the collapse of the state and other consequences, such as violent conflicts or terrorism. Based on empirical evidence, Uzodike and Maiangwa (2012) identify the different criteria and characteristics of a failed state in relation to Nigeria. These criteria include the Failed States Index, where Nigeria ranked 15th out of 177 countries in 2020, the Global Terrorism Index (2023), which ranked Nigeria 8th of the 10 terrorism most impacted countries of the 163 countries measured, and the Human Development Index Trend (2023), where Nigeria ranked 157th out of 189 countries. According to Uzodike and Maiangwa (2012), the disorderly and anarchic state of Nigeria serves as a prime example of a failing or weak state that is deteriorating into complete failure.

In the face of the severe indications of state failure, the Nigerian state strongly disputes the classification. However, the economic sabotage that takes place on a daily basis in Nigeria, carried out by its citizens, such as the deliberate destruction of oil pipelines to divert oil, the exploitation of critical infrastructures like electricity, railways, and bridges, and the widespread plundering of solid mineral resources, extend beyond mere criminal activities. These acts reflect the citizens' feeling of being excluded from and lacking ownership of the shared patrimony. Within the realm of politics, Nnamdi Obasi's book, *Ethnic Militias, Vigilantes and Separatist Groups in Nigeria* and Tunde Babawal's book, *The Rise of Ethnic Militias, De-Legitimization of the State and the Threat to the Nigerian Federation* offer both theoretical and empirical evidence that Nigeria, while not completely disintegrated, has fulfilled the essential criteria of a fragile state. Indeed, if Karl Maier's political biography of Nigeria, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis* (2000), is disregarded as the cynicism of a foreigner, the

renowned Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, in his *The Trouble with Nigeria*, not only criticises the leadership issues of the Nigerian state some decades ago, but also acknowledges that Nigeria is a prime example of a country that has experienced a complete collapse (Achebe, 1983; Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012).

Yet again, multi-faceted insecurity challenges in forms of the Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorism, kidnapping for ransom (K4R), banditry, and unmitigated economic hardship, in the final analysis, seem to mirror the underlying crisis afflicting the Nigerian state, which the different theories, discussed subsequently, aim to elucidate. On the pattern of relationship between the Nigerian state and management of insecurity, Adibe (2012) contends that contrary to media portrayals, the Nigerian state is perceived as an adversary, not only by Boko Haram, but also by numerous Nigerians and regions, each assailing it with equal intensity as Boko Haram's explosives, employing all available means. He goes on to chronicle how politicians, tasked with safeguarding our collective heritage, embezzle national resources; law enforcement officials turn a blind eye for minimal bribes, while government employees exhibit lethargy and neglect their duties while engaging in secondary employment. According to the scholar, organised labour incites university lecturers in public institutions to embark on indefinite strikes capriciously; and journalists accept 'brown envelopes' to distort the truth or become uncritical advocates of a selective anti-Nigerian state narrative. What all these groups have in common with Boko Haram is that they feel that the premise on which they act is acceptable and that the Nigerian state is unfair to them, if not an outright enemy (Adibe, 2012).

Allied to the above is the menacing threat of ethnic cleansing going on in the country in the hands of Fulani herdsmen. The Nigerian state's apparent silence on this orchestrated extermination of a section of the citizenry and the suspected/alleged collusion of the security forces with the perpetrators of the heinous crimes have led to the interpretation of the criminality as a state sponsored genocide (Chimtom, 2024; Tukur, 2014). All of these various manifestations of the Nigerian state characterize the unhealthy and "difficult relations between state and society" as summarized in Wale Olaitan's *Hanging State*, Hamza Alavi's *Overdeveloped State*, Terisa Turner's *Entrepot State*, Gunnar Myrdal's *Soft State* and Claude Ake's *Irrelevant State* (Ekeh, 1989).

Exploring the developmental state theory: The Nigerian state in perspective

The 1990s witnessed a widespread support for the assertion made by development-minded academics such as Johnson (1982), Evans (1985), Amsden (1989), and Wade (1990) that the East Asian ‘miracles’ were a direct outcome of successful and multifaceted state interventions in markets, rather than the ‘opening-up’ promoted by the World Bank. Much of the progressive faction within the development-oriented academics subsequently promoted the developmental state concept as a blueprint for the remaining countries in the developing regions of the world, including post-communist Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. For a considerable period, the scholarly community was particularly interested in the remarkable expansion of East Asian economies, following World War II. Several scholarly works like Wade (1992), Woo-Cumings (1999), Polidano (2001), Öniş (1991), Johnson (1999, 1982), Evans (1995) have endeavoured to elucidate the fascinating phenomena. However, there is no agreement on the nature and origins of the extraordinary development, and theories are controversial. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that all the successful situations mentioned are closely linked to substantial state involvement in development initiatives and their implementations. In the 1980s, Chalmers Johnson proposed a new viewpoint called the capitalist developmental state to analyse the prolonged golden age.

Developmental state, as first proposed by Johnson in 1982, is a significant advancement in American literature about Northeast Asia (Woo-Cumings, 1999). As stated by Johnson himself: “I used the term ‘developmental state’ to describe the role that the Japanese state played in Japan’s remarkable and unforeseen postwar enrichment” (Johnson 1999, p.3). The first formulation of this concept aimed to provide an explanation for the process of industrialisation in Northeast Asia. Woo-Cumings (1999, p.6) defines developmental state as the whole network of political, bureaucratic, and financial forces that shape the economic development in capitalist Northeast Asia. The initial thesis in developmental state is based on actual findings conducted initially in Japan, and subsequently in South Korea and Taiwan.

Notably, the account of Johnson (1982) on Japan’s economic miracle raises the question of the state’s role in the process of industrialisation. It is his contention that the developing state is the essential factor behind the swift expansion of the economy during Japan’s golden years. Remarkably, Japan’s economic planning system presents a novel state paradigm that is neither socialism (“plan-irrational”) as described by Johnson, nor free-market. Instead, it constitutes a plan-rational capitalist developmental state that enforces private ownership under state

direction (Cai, 2010). Progressively, Johnson identifies four crucial factors that he believes were crucial to this process: firstly, the presence of a small, cost-effective, and professional state bureaucracy staffed by the most skilled managers in the system; secondly, a political system that allows the bureaucracy to take initiative and function effectively; thirdly, the refinement of market-oriented approaches to state intervention in the economy; and lastly, a pioneering organisation such as MITI (Johnson, 1999, p.6). MITI is an acronym for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

Furthermore, he argues that some institution should be designated with the role of being the focal point of policy decisions. An inherent benefit of consolidating the development process inside the government apparatus is its facilitation of process concentration and improved organisation. This is associated with the rationale behind the exclusive employment of highly educated persons in the government. The endeavour to develop Japan was approached with great seriousness, thereby necessitating the employment of highly skilled professionals. Advancing, Johnson underscores the dedication of the Japanese government to the pursuit of progress. Nevertheless, he refutes the copy-and-paste ideology promoted by the United States (Johnson, 1999, p.9). Johnson justifies and defends his ideas since his thesis contradicts neoclassical assertions that the success of East Asia is mostly due to its observed commitment to “free market ideals” rather than the influence of the state. He acknowledges that his book serves as a clear indication of the ideological opposition to the prevailing Anglo-American belief in economic correctness during the Cold War (Johnson, 1999, p.34). Therefore, Johnson’s research illustrates how the state used its instruments to stimulate economic development and its significant role in doing so. He asserts that the primary focus of a state will determine its fundamental nature. For almost half a century, the Japanese state prioritised economic development (Johnson, 1999, p.37). In South Africa, this characteristic is evident as the government played a crucial role in determining the fundamental objectives of her industrial policy.

Another invaluable contribution to the development of the developmental state thesis came from Evans (1989). In somewhat corroborative sense, he also highlights the role of the state apparatus, and how it interacts with businesses. He discusses the problem of state bureaucracy and its role in bridging the gap between the market and the social goods required for the growth of a state and its citizens (Evans, 1989). His primary concern is the state’s autonomy. He quotes Gershenkron, who discusses the risks that a late emerging state must take in order to accomplish

its objectives (Evans, 1989, p.568). Even though it was done decades later, putting all resources behind one industry was deemed too hazardous at the time.

Moving further, Evans (1989, p.575) highlights two factors, “long bureaucratic traditions” and “direct economic intervention”, to explain the developing states of Korea and Japan by drawing on their histories. Evans also makes a solid case for the commitment to industrialisation that robust state authority allowed. He uses the concept of “embedded autonomy” to describe the initiative involving a well-developed bureaucratic system with intervening capabilities based on past experience, together with a well-structured group of private organisations that may offer valuable intelligence and the potential for decentralised execution (Evans, 1989).

Relying on the insightful accounts/works of Chalmers Johnson (1982) and Peter B. Evans *et al* (1995), there are three basic features of the three experimental states of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea that were responsible for the East Asia miracle. Also, summaries of the characteristics can be seen in literatures like Öniş (1991), Wade (1992), Doner (1992), Douglass (1994), and Polidano (2001). In general, and with reference to the trio, the developmental state is characterized by the following features:

- The secret to a progressive state’s success is “Embedded autonomy” (Evans, 1995), which forges a strong connection between bureaucracy and the broader social structure. Between the corporate sector and elite bureaucracy, close ties are formed. The way the public and private sectors interacted was vital. Industry and business are governed by the state. The state intervenes and gives instructions to the private sector in accordance with national strategies, even if it does not immediately supplant private ownership.
- The central government of the developmental state is powerful and engaged. An important function of “pilot agency” is to maintain technocratic policy bureaucracies. In the bureaucracy of economic policy, a limited number of highly skilled individuals create policy tools. The development project’s specifications can still be defined with the help of a pilot agency. A useful place to start reading about the features of a developmental state is Johnson’s (1982, p.26–28) account of the “pilot agency”—the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). As an organisation tasked with overseeing the implementation of “industrial rationalisation” and “industrial structure policy”, MITI was granted the right and power to control how Japan provides and

manages new capital. Johnson refers to the MITI as “the greatest concentration of brainpower in Japan” because of its immense power.

- The political network that makes up the bureaucracy responsible for economic policy provides ample room for initiative and efficient functioning. A robust bureaucracy is essential to the development path’s success.

To be added to these basic three are the following requirements, which logically flow from the first three:

- The state that is developing has a great desire to advance. The national interest’s top objective is economic prosperity. The state wanted to achieve the outcomes of industrialisation and economic growth, which is why it established ministries and other institutions.
- Established a framework for public-private collaboration. It is evident that institutionalised public-private cooperation in the process of formulating and implementing policy is the common denominator between the “authoritarian” and “democratic” variants of corporatism (Onis, 1991). Wade, for instance, shows how Taiwan deviated greatly from both Japan and Korea, in that it met Johnson’s “bureaucratic autonomy” prerequisite but did not comply with the “public-private cooperation” requirement. The development state’s cornerstone has been the close collaboration and engagement of elites in industry, government, and bureaucracy.

The rationale behind the developmental state is strictly based on the integration of bureaucratic independence with a unique level of collaboration between the public and commercial sectors. The shared educational backgrounds of the bureaucratic and commercial elites, together with their substantial cross-functional integration, were crucial in creating exceptional levels of elite cohesion. Yet it would be quite deceptive to ascribe public-private cooperation solely to these factors. Moreover, the state elites have intentionally and directly orchestrated public-private cooperation. Both in Japan and other East Asian countries that have adopted the Japanese model, the state elites deliberately aimed to establish collaborative partnerships with private enterprises by establishing a range of atypical institutions. The state, for example, played a prominent role in fostering the most successful private commercial organisations. The remarkable expansion of the large corporate conglomerates, the Keiretsu in postwar Japan and the Chaebols in Korea, can be attributed to the unique incentives offered by the state (Onis,

1991). The initial nurturing provided by the state has thus made them unduly reliant on the state for their future stability. Therefore, the highly interconnected policy networks that define East Asia have been mostly strategically created by the ruling class. Therefore, it would be deceptive to consider public-private cooperation as a result of voluntary compliance by the dominant corporate class. A fundamental feature of the developmental state is the substantial level of coercion exerted by the bureaucrats to ensure public-private cooperation. The state's exceptional levels of monopoly and control over the financial system, together with the significant reliance of individual conglomerates on bank financing, have played a crucial role in forcefully ensuring adherence to the demands of strategic industrial strategy. The key observation is that the level of collaboration between the government and businesses, as well as the agreement on national objectives, which is particularly characteristic of the developmental state, is not solely determined by the cultural context, but has been mostly shaped by the state elites themselves. This has been achieved by establishing a distinct set of institutions that heavily rely on a substantial degree of coercion (Onis, 1991).

Prospects and challenges of transforming the Nigerian state into a developmental state

Transforming the Nigerian state into a developmental one given her historical antecedents and attendant characters that currently define it will not be an easy task. Although this is factual, it is not impossible. The road will be long and the path will be crooked, but with dedicated leadership and supportive followership, it is attainable in a matter of years. Indeed, the Nigerian state had got it wrong in the past, especially under military regimes, but would have been the ideal time to kick-start the process, as the initial stage of every developmental state requires a certain innocuous degree of authoritarianism. In some literature, this approach has been termed authoritarian developmental(ism) state (see Arsel, Adaman, Saad-Filho, 2021; Tang, 2000). At one point, it appeared that both Korea and Taiwan were in close alignment with the pattern of "authoritarian corporatism". This pattern involved the institutionalised collaboration of the state and business elites in the policy formulation and implementation process, which was accompanied (at least until very recently) by the severe repression of popular groups and the exclusion of labour from the political arena. Unarguably, all these indices of authoritarianism existed in Nigeria during the several years of military dictatorship that ended in 1999, except "authoritarian corporatism", which is an essential stage in the transformation of states to developmental ones.

Be that as it may, the emphasis should not be placed on previous errors and the lack of progress in the development of the Nigerian state, but rather on the necessary measures to be executed for the practical functioning of the developmental state in the country. Amuwo (2008) investigates the potential for African states to transition from a negligent state to a democratic developmental state by using Nigeria as a case study. He commences by examining the Nigerian state's appalling records in terms of human development, including healthcare and education. The Nigerian state's neglect of the basic human needs of the majority of its citizens is attributed to the primacy of what he labels "predatory politics" (Amuwo, 2008, p.24). Furthermore, he contends that the material conditions of the subalterns were not improved by the highly publicised market reforms that were implemented during the Obasanjo regime. In the light of this, he suggests that the democratic developmental state is the optimal choice for Nigeria. He emphasises the necessity of a patriotic and committed leadership, the necessity of domestic investment to facilitate domestic capital formation, and the formulation of people-centered development strategies that are congruent with the objective local conditions, in addition to the imperative of the state being democratic. To objectively project the prospects of transferring the efficacy of the developmental state theory to the African, indeed, Nigerian socio-economic milieu, the different countries of Africa have to hold against the basic assumptions and characteristics of a developmental state theory as enunciated by the proponents.

The implication of the foregoing is that for the Nigerian state to become a developmental one, there are certain fundamentals that must be seen and treated as imperatives. First and foremost, a visionary, dedicated, and patriotic leadership is essential for the achievement of the social democratic developmental state in Nigeria. As Habisse (2010, p.1) contends, "the leadership must demonstrate a strong dedication to the development objectives and prioritise national development above personal enrichment and/or short-term political benefits". This is because leaders play a crucial role in the human agency in the development process, by, among other responsibilities, guiding and directing the process.

The second concept is a development ideology, which dictates that the fundamental principles of the state should be focused on development (Mkandawire, 1998, p.2). More precisely, this would involve the strategic planning and clear expression of a vision for the progress and growth of the nation. The stated vision should possess qualities of inspiration, motivation, and challenge (Ilesami, 2011, p.18). An essential component should consist of a precise definition of the development goals and initiatives to be undertaken, the specific targets, the designated

time frame, and the corresponding expenses. Significantly, the vision should accurately represent the realities of an African country, particularly the available resources for financing the development process. Furthermore, a comprehensive and participatory approach should be employed in formulating the vision towards ensuring the involvement of all the key sectors of the state and thus achieving ownership.

Once more, the state would have to be a part of society (Evans, 1995). As was previously mentioned, this would need developing cooperative and collaborative ties with a variety of societal sectors, such as the general public, civil society, other citizen-based organisations, and the commercial sector (Evans, 1995). Embeddedness is important for two main purposes. The first is that it encourages diversity in all the different facets of the process of development. The other is that, by including a wide range of society actors as stakeholders, it creates the groundwork for the legitimacy of the development process. This stands in stark opposition to Nigeria's foreign-dictated development history. Although the Nigerian state has had several development plans, the degree to which these met with the requirements of embeddedness is contentious, as the Plans lacked good governance, broad capacity for implementation, and wider citizen participation. Added to these were issues of weak institutional framework, ineffective regulatory environment, corruption, and lack of transparency and accountability.

In addition, the state ought to be independent. This would mean having the flexibility to decide on and carry out policies without being constrained by the narrow interests of certain social groups. In Nigeria, however, the phenomenon of sectional politics has stripped the state off its theoretical independence, turning it into a committee for managing the affairs and interests of ethno-religious group/region from which the president comes. The point made poignantly by Seddon and Belton-James (1995) is that "policy-makers can respond swiftly and effectively to new circumstances when they are effectively shielded from the immediate pressures of special interests; however, the ability to identify and implement appropriate policies to promote effective medium- and longer-term development requires the maintenance of strategic relations with wider civil society".

The autonomy of the state is closely associated with its hegemony. Thus, the Nigerian state's conceptions of development must prevail in what Antonio Gramsci termed the "war of position" (Hoare & Smith, 1999, p.495). If the state fails to consolidate its dominance, it may result in the spread of development ideologies, particularly those aligned with neo-liberalism,

which prioritise profits above the material welfare of citizens. From the infamous Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) of the 1980s through various forms of deregulations, privatization, trade liberalization to repeated regimes of subsidy removals, the Nigerian state has continued to experiment with neo-liberal policies. Among other issues, these policies have been criticized for leading to increased poverty, unemployment, inequality, and for undermining Nigeria's sovereignty and perpetuating dependency on foreign capital (Menand, 2023; Mbah, 2016). Related to this, the institutional capacity of the state is crucial for the effective operation of the social democratic progressive state. That is because the development process necessitates administrative, managerial, and technological skills. Hence, it is necessary to create a structured public bureaucracy comprising diverse entities that would be engaged in the management of development. In essence, these public institutions should be managed by competent public officials who are selected based on their qualifications and have protected tenure and independence (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). Subsequently, this group of experts would apply their administrative, managerial, and technological knowledge to effectively define and execute the several development initiatives.

The financing of development is a significant additional basic pillar. In this case, the Nigerian government needs to devise methods for producing the money required to finance different development initiatives, particularly the provision of public goods. There are numerous important funding sources. Many different types of taxes, such as those on income, property, and businesses, have the potential to bring in large sums of money. It is imperative, nevertheless, that these taxes be efficiently and consistently collected. Additionally, the state could invest in a range of ventures that generate income. Furthermore, being endowed with natural resources, such as petroleum, natural gas, zinc, iron ore, lime stone, lead, columbite, tin, arable land, etc., careful management of these resources should result in financial gains. Trading in industrial items may also result in financial gain. One potential large revenue source is the capital formation that results from domestic savings. In other words, the Nigerian state would "boost financial market development, and stimulate economic growth" by promoting domestic savings (Hammouda & Osakwe, 2006, p.4). As at 2021, Nigeria's gross domestic savings, calculated as a percentage of the GDP, stood at 32.74% (Trading Economics, 2024). More needs to be done to spike it up.

It is imperative that the Nigerian government collaborate with the business sector in two main areas. On a larger scale, the state ought to establish cooperative and collaborative ties with the

private sector and its constituent companies, particularly domestic ones. The states use a variety of institutional tools, including tax holidays, tax breaks, and concessional loans, to nudge and prod domestic companies to meet productivity targets, organisational and technical capacities, and domestic and international business standards to help empower domestic businesses (Musamba, 2010). Domestic companies may then aid in the development of domestic capital and the creation of jobs. In this regard, the Nigerian National Policy on Public-Private Partnerships of 2013 is a welcome development. The great difficulty, however, is to wean it off such perennial challenges that have confronted and stifled several noble policies in the past.

Ultimately, there is no doubt that Nigerian pessimism has cast a shadow on the ability of the Nigerian state to create a developmental state. This pessimism that verges on cynicism arises from the belief that the degree of institutional damage has been so pervasive that it would take decades for the situation to be ameliorated. However, in agreement with many other analysts like Nwabueze (2023), Effiom and Ubi (2019), Mailafiya (2016), Agbaje (2014), we are much more optimistic that the Nigerian state possesses the inherent potentials to become developmental. By the way, “lessons from other parts of the world clearly suggest that appropriate institutional structures did not always exist, but they could be socially engineered” (Mkandawire, 2001, p.310), even in Nigeria. With a little social structural and institutional engineering, the Nigerian state can:

- impact private producers by utilising a variety of policies, including as trade, investment, monetary, and fiscal measures, to create favourable conditions and incentives;
- assume regulatory roles by establishing the rules of the game and ensuring that private gains are compatible with social objectives;
- mediate disputes between various social actors and interests;
- assume welfare rolls such as wealth redistribution and protection of citizens against the whims of nature and the market;
- engage in direct productive activities by assuming an entrepreneurial role and taking on high-risk or high-capital projects; and
- help resolve a number of coordination problems through planning (Mkandawire, 2010, p.61).

The aforementioned characteristics, undoubtedly, are integral aspects of a developmental state, which emphasises economic growth by formulating and effectively implementing necessary policies (Leftwich, 1995). Consequently, a development state possesses not only autonomy and political authority, but also effective management of the economy as the primary origins of its legitimacy (Castells, 1992; Pronk, 1997). With appropriate policies on social, structural and institutional engineering, none of these is too much for the Nigerian state to attain.

Conclusion

When the cardinal developmental questions of Seer (1969) on “what has been happening to poverty, unemployment, and inequality?” in Nigeria are objectively responded to, the reality of how far the Nigerian state has trailed behind developmentally will stare us in the face. Though some efforts have been made, the persistence of emasculating poverty, growing youth unemployment, galloping inequality, low middle-class income, rudimentary development of the forces of production, violence, diseases, high infant and maternal mortality, low life expectancy, illiteracy, insurgency and insecurity, pathetic and brazen corruption, debilitating state of critical infrastructure, etc. have all conduced to the diminution, indeed, dwarfing of a few sincere developmental efforts of the Nigerian state. It is worthy of note that Nigeria has experimented and still experiments with various abstractions of the notable extremes of economic and political ideologies, including socialism, capitalism and the eclectic mid-path called mixed economy. Regrettably, however, none of these has been able to substantially address the nagging developmental challenges of the Nigerian state.

Upon the realization that the ugly indices have disappeared or substantially diminished in some ASEAN countries that were originally at par with Nigeria, if not worse off, as a result of the transformation of their states into developmental states, this study focused on the prospects of transmuting the rather adamant Nigerian state into a developmental one too. Through such transformation, it is believed that the negative developmental indices highlighted above would be squarely addressed to the eventual pleasure and betterment of the teeming population in squalor. We appreciate that, although Nigeria has missed a critical stage in its history where it could have successfully keyed into the developmental state crusade, there are still features inherent in the Nigerian state that can push and sustain the Nigerian state to the envious pedestal of developmental state status.

Yes, the Nigerian state may not presently have the best of institutions/structures often seen as a necessary condition for the take-off stage and drive to maturity of developmental state status,

“lessons from other parts of the world clearly suggest that appropriate institutional structures did not always exist, but they could be socially engineered” (Mkandawire, 2001, p.310). We see this possibility in Nigeria. As the country warms up for another general election(s) in 2027, it is the belief of this paper that with the emergence of a truly national leader with appropriate policies on social, structural and institutional engineering, coupled with the resources and resilience of the country, the road to the transformation of the country into a developmental state, though not too rosy, is clear, straight and navigable.

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