POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHALLENGES TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA (1999-2019)

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Abstract
Political accountability is a process through which the politically-elected/appointed public officials are expected to give reports of their stewardship to the electorate as well as deliver on their electoral promises to the citizens. After two decades (1999 -2019) of relatively stable Nigerian democratic governance, the political class does not appear to have been able to deliver on their electoral promises. This lack of accountability has been traced to prebendalism, long period of military rule, corruption, centralization of administration, docility on the part of the citizens, and poverty. The paper reveals that lack of political accountability has resulted in an increase in the level of insecurity which has affected the political and socio-economic development of the country. The paper concludes that the political class has not been accountable to the electorate and this has brought serious challenges to the socio-economic development of the country.

Keywords: Politics, Accountability, Political Accountability, Development, Challenges.

Introduction
The period 1999 to 2019 marks the unbroken democratic period in the history of Nigeria. After independence on 1st October 1960, there was a stint of democracy until January 15, 1966 when the first coup d’etat which ushered in the military rule took place. This brought into power the late Major General Aguiyi Ironsi. Though his administration was short-lived having been overthrown in July 1966, the military still continued to rule till 1983 when there was another chance of democratic rule headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Before completing his first term, Shagari’s government was abruptly stalled by another military takeover in 1987. Between 1987 and 1999, the military was in control. By 1999, Nigeria again experienced democracy and this democratic rule has since been on ground. It is, at least, assumed that democracy, which brings in civilian political actors, would translate into development. This is so because the politicians are expected to come up with their manifestos especially as regards their plans to bring development to the nation. This is where political accountability comes in.

However, observation has shown that there is lack of political accountability on the part of the political gladiators and this has posed some challenges to the development of the nation. This paper focuses on political accountability as it affects the socio-economic development in...
Nigeria which is partly determined by the ability of government to fulfill its electoral promises through the provision of public goods to the citizens. These public goods include education, health, security, physical infrastructure and employment. This study examines the concept of political accountability, causes of lack of political accountability in Nigeria, and the effects of this lack on the nation’s socio-economic development. It is assumed here that without politics, there can be no political accountability. The military government, for instance, does not engage in election promises since it is not democratic in nature. It comes on board through the barrels of gun. However, in a democratic setting, politics is involved; hence the need to look into the concept of politics while relating it to the delivery of dividends of democracy to the electorate. This therefore will lead us into the examination of the concept of politics.

**Politics**

Politics, in theory as well as in practice, is faced with pressing issues and decisions. In the Introduction to *Comparative Politics (Post Behavioural Era, 1988)*, edited by Louis J Cantori & Andrew H. Ziegler Jn., it is stated that politics encompasses both the societal purpose of human beings and the allocation of resources and opportunities available to individuals in a society. By this definition, societal purpose of human beings is taken as the expectations of the citizens from the government and equity in the distribution of national wealth.

Politics is a particular social science involving the resolution of conflicts and the activity of government. It is viewed as the authoritative allocation of values such as making decision on who gets what. Harold Lasswell (1936) conceives politics as who gets what, when, and how? This is in agreement with the view of David Easton (1965), which sees politics from the perspective of the process of authoritative allocation of scarce values which may be in the form of services, goods and money, or in terms of the formulation of policies on different areas of governance such as health, education, and security, among others. According to Lasswell and Kaplan (1950:1-5), politics “is the process of making and executing governmental decisions or policies”.

On the other hand, Khan (1997) views politics as activities revolving around the decision-making organs of the state which involves the concepts of power, authority, command, and control. Appadorai (2004) refers to the concept of politics to mean a clearly organized body of people saddled with the purpose of responsibility for governance. Akeke (2008) describes the concept as activities dealing with efficient organization and judicious administration of the collective affairs of an organized human community. Anifowose and Enemuo (2015) view politics as a process of resolution of conflict through discussion, bargaining and compromise. Adamolekun (2004) perceives the concept of politics as the process by which power and influence are acquired and exercised.

While Lasswell’s definition of politics appears to be all embracing taking place in all spheres of human life that of Khan views it from the narrow spheres of decision-making organ in the state. Whether as a policy maker, or as one who has the authority to allocate resources and to whom, the fact remains that politicians or their agents are greatly involved.

Other scholars have also attempted to define politics in terms of conflict resolution. According to Awopeju, (2010:116), whenever we have more than one man, there is politics because
politics can be found in a church, in a family, in a trade union, school, community and state, among others. Politics will exist when two or more people are competing for societal values to one another’s advantage. Such interaction will breed conflict which can be resolved through politics. It seems certain that there will always be conflict where interactions exist. Kolawole (1997:7), in his own opinion, defines politics as “the aggregation of the inter-relationship of man, his environment and the management of any conflict arising from such association”. Also, Igbo (2006), apart from seeing politics as involving conflicts and their resolution, also sees it from the perspective of formulation and management of policies. This also conforms to Khan’s views.

From the above definitions as given by various scholars, three things come out distinctly about the concept of politics, as follows:

(a) Conflict and its resolution;
(b) Allocation of resources; and
(c) Formulation and management of policies.

The three areas will surely involve politicians or their agents. It is clear that political accountability has a great role to play for development to take place in any country.

Development
The definition of development depends on the perspective from which it is being considered, as it means different things to different people in different contexts. From one perspective, a nation is considered developed when it succeeds in the delivery of social services to its people. Makinde (2013) views the concept of development as a process of positive change that is crucial to any developed nations and a nation is considered developed when it succeeds in the delivery of social services to its people. Nigeria is yet to provide all that constitutes development to her people as expected.

Oguonu (2014) describes the concept of development as a broad-based and dynamic over-all improvement in people’s quality of life, capacity and socio-economic and political power as well as the existence of physical infrastructure, social amenities and conducive environment for a continuous improvement of quality of life of the people. From another perspective, economic growth is seen as development but this is not always the case because there can be economic growth without necessarily translating into development. For example, there was economic growth in Nigeria during the regime of General Gowon which did not translate into meaningful development.

For the purpose of this paper, development shall be discussed from the perspective of a society where there is food, security, employment, gender equality, good education, good healthcare, as well as sustainable development and peace, among others. Some of the indices of development are human growth, income, and access to social amenities which can be summed up as human development. Human development, by the United Nations Document (1996), emphasizes the “measurement of human development by life expectancy, adult literacy, access to all three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary, as well as people’s average income, which is a necessary condition for their freedom of choice”. Human
development incorporates all aspects of a person’s well-being, ranging from health status to his economic and political freedom.

Development may be seen in relative terms. However, whatever may be our value judgment; it is undeniable that development in any country, Nigeria inclusive, involves improvement in the standard of living of the people. Some scholars have argued that development is not synonymous with progress. Arguing along this line, Thomas (2000) claimed that “progress implies continual development reaching higher and higher levels, perhaps, without limit, whereas development, as an analogy from the development of living organisms, implies moving towards the fulfillment of a potential”. Mabogunje (1995) views it from the perspective of wealth creation, while Agagu (citing Thomas, 2000:5) defines development as “escape from underdevelopment. Michael Todaro (2003) conceptualizes development not as a purely economic phenomenon but rather as a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. To Todaro, development means improvement to the quality of all human lives. He identifies three basic core values that will enhance the practical guideline for understanding the inner meaning of development, namely: sustenance, self-esteem and freedom.

Sustenance is the ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health care and protection (security). Self-esteem has to do with a sense of worth and self-respect such as dignity, honor and recognition while freedom is an expanded range of choices for societies which include freedom from oppression, material wants as well as greater protection from environmental disasters. Arthur Lewis (1978) stressed the relationship between economic growth and freedom from servitude when he concluded that “the advantage of economic growth is not that wealth increases happiness, but that it increases the range of human choice”. Wealth can enable a person to gain greater control over nature and his physical environment than they would have if they remained poor. The concept of human freedom encompasses various components of political freedom, freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity.

Development in this paper is viewed from the perspective of what Todaro (2003) identifies as the three basic core values that will enhance the practical guideline for understanding the inner meaning of development, as discussed earlier. These values, as identified by Todaro, are expected to be the responsibilities of government, which means that government has a big role to play through the provision of social amenities and infrastructural development in order to ensure sustenance, self-esteem and freedom for the people. For the effective provision of these social services that will result in Todaro’s values, there is the need for political accountability.

Political Accountability
Robertson (1993) defines accountability as the process through which the people exercising power must be able to show that they have exercised their powers and discharged their duties properly. Osakwe (2011) sees accountability as implying that the government is accountable to her citizens. According to him, accountability is noticed more by its absence, meaning that accountability is noticed when the government or its agents fail to discharge official trust as given. Martin (1997) defines accountability as “the process in which “A” answers to “B”
(where Z has been prescribed by A and accepted by B)”. According to him accountability has to do with responsiveness and being answerable to somebody or the people. Accountability has also been described as a process of making someone, a group of people, organization, or government answerable to their actions and inactions. Awotokun (2014) views accountability as the various mechanisms put in place to ensure the answerability of all those placed in position to control and disburse the public fund or oversee the affair of people.

Political accountability is a process-making through which the politically-elected/appointed members give reports of activities to their constituencies from time to time to keep them in line with the dictate of their communities. In Nigeria, political unaccountability appears to have replaced political accountability. Among the reasons for this are: corruption, bad leadership, lack of commensurate punishment for offenders, as well as ignorance on the part of the citizens of their rights.

Lack of accountability manifests itself in a number of ways, namely, uncompleted projects which deface physical environment, poor quality of jobs executed and issuance of certificate of completion without the job being completed. Others are political antagonism/vendetta, and discrimination. The identified manifestations are very serious breaches of accountability that could lead to poverty, suffering and a depressed economy. Adamolekun (1986) identified five paths of public accountability as being political, legal, financial, social and ethical. However, the concern of this paper is political accountability.

In order to conceptualize political accountability, this paper relies on the US Legal Inc. adopted by Imoukhuede Benedict Kayode (2016) which refers to political accountability as the responsibility or obligation of government officials to act in the best interests of society or face the consequences. By implication, public officials (elected or appointed) at all levels should be answerable for their actions when holding positions of authority.

Political accountability can be synonymous to accountability to the electorate. When politicians are able to fulfill their election promises, it is taken as political accountability. When elected or appointed government officials are able to be accountable in the performance of their functions, it is political accountability. Political accountability may also have to do with the relationship between what citizens want and what government officials do. Some definitions also focus on government processes, government actions as well as policy outcomes. Given the above definitions, accountability to the electorate will involve the way government is run (process), what governments do (action) and whether the outcomes of their outputs measure up to their electoral promises (policy outcomes). It is observed that during electioneering campaigns, politicians make various promises including promises of judicious spending of resources as well as provision of essential public goods which include adequate security. However, most of their promises are not fulfilled and this amounts to lack of accountability to the electorate. Such failure on the part of the politicians to fulfill electoral campaign promises poses a great challenge to development.

Where there is accountability on the part of the politicians and government officials, there will be efficient and effective allocation of resources needed to provide the necessary services which can culminate into development. These include provision of both public goods and the
private goods. Public goods are those commodities or services that are provided without profit to all members of a society, either by the government or by a private individual or organization. Examples of public goods are fresh unpolluted air, education, health facilities, defence/security, street lighting, sewer systems and potable water. A public good is a product that one individual can consume without reducing its availability to others and from which no one is deprived. On the other hand, a private good is a product or service produced by a privately owned business and purchased to increase the utility, or satisfaction, of the buyer. Enjoying such a private good will be determined by the ability of the intending user to pay for it. Examples of private goods include food, clothing, and most other goods that can be purchased in a store. It should be noted here, however, that some goods may be both public and private depending on the provider. For instance, there are public schools (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) and public hospitals (General Hospital, Osogbo), as well as private schools (Adeleke University, Ede) and private hospitals (Eko Hospital, Lagos.)

In addition to the provision of resources by government for public goods, the officials working to ensure that these goods go round must be accountable, meaning that there should be no corruption of any type such as nepotism, financial mismanagement, bribery and fraud, among others. Unfortunately, however, it appears that there is lack of political accountability in Nigeria as shown by the numerous cases of corruption among officials - appointed and elected - as reported in many of the Nigerian newspapers. For example, Al Mustapha (2017) reported that physical corruption has become a persistent phenomenon in Nigeria. While speaking on BCC Hausa Radio Programme he condemned and criticized the selective fight of corruption and fake integrity of President Buhari. He referred to Buhari as a mere noise maker who is as corrupt as Abacha. He further submitted that Buhari was not even a saint when he served as Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) Chairman under Abacha’s regime in 1994.

It is expedient at this point to examine causes of lack of political accountability in Nigeria. The under-listed are some of the causes of lack of political accountability in Nigeria:
- Prebendalism
- Corruption
- Long period of military rule
- Centralization of administration
- Docility on the part of the citizens
- Poverty

Prebendalism can be referred to as a system of political patronage which enables elected officials and government workers to believe that they have the right to utilize government revenues and resources to benefit their supporters, members of their ethnic group, as well as members of their religious group. Where this exists, political accountability cannot manifest because prebendalism aids and supports financial recklessness justified by ethnic or religious considerations. This is why politicians from the north or those from the south always attempt to use the national resources for their regions. For example, dredging a pipeline from the oil producing region in South-South to the North for refining can be viewed from the perspective of prebendalism. The reason is that the cost of such an exercise will be borne by the country, while the dredging will be to the advantage of the North, where the President comes from.
One would wander why the crude oil could not be refined in the area that produces it. This, of course, affects political accountability in the country. 

**Corruption** refers to unlawful, illegitimate and fraudulent acquisition of status, goods, services, and positions in a way that contravenes the laws of the land. It means abuse of official trust for selfish and illegitimate personal, group or party gain. Corruption is a negation of the accountability ethic of the public service. A situation whereby rules are circumvented or double standards are applied with the intention of achieving power, position or privilege is corruption.

Makinde (2017) observes that Transparency International ranked Nigeria 136th of the 179 countries measured for corruption in 2016. As at 2019, Nigeria has dropped farther to 146 out of 180 countries. Ayegbula (2020) confirms that corruption has taken a new dimension in Nigeria. According to her, there are situations in Nigeria where there is self-kidnap as in the case of a Methodist Pastor in Ado-Ekiti (Adewuyi Adegoke) who, in June 2019, colluded with his family to negotiate a 3-million naira ransom while in a hideout (saharareporters.com). Unfortunately for him, he was caught while trying to collect the ransom. Fighting corruption in Nigeria has become a big challenge especially when the man at the helm of affairs of EFCC, is himself being investigated for corruption. He has been accused of re-looting the previously stolen funds running into billions of naira (http://nairametrics.com).

**Long period of military rule** is another cause of lack of political accountability. Nigeria became independent on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, that is almost 60 years ago. Out of this number of years, the military ruled for almost half of the period: 1966-1979 (13 years), 1984-1999 (15yrs) totaling 28yrs. With democratic governance coming up in 1999, the political actors have imbibed military style of administration, that is, centralization, instead of true federalism. In addition, rather than the use of persuasion, they adopt the use of force. Although the Constitution of the country is not suspended, it is violated with impunity. Those in authority attempt to force programmes down the throat of citizens. A good example is the attempt by the Federal Government to force the implementation of the policy called “Rural Grazing Area (RUGA)” settlement on all the States in the federation. The RUGA policy is a controversial Nigerian policy introduced by President Buhari which aimed at settling the constant clashes between nomadic Fulani herders and the sedentary farmers. This policy was found to be a way of creating land for Fulani herders to practice their trade which is personal. People wondered why government did not create similar opportunities for other people like fishermen, pig rearers and other animal farmers in the country. The RUGA case is a clear manifestation of the militarization of governance in Nigeria whereby politicians behave as if the country is under a military dispensation. By so doing, political accountability is sacrificed on the altar of military mentality.

Apart from the RUGA case, court orders are flouted with impunity as in the case of Ibraheem El-Zakzaky the leader of Shiite movement who was denied the bail as granted by the court. A similar case is that of Omoyele Sowore who was also denied bail despite court order to that effect. In his comment on the refusal of the federal government to obey court order on Sowore, Sani Shehu in *The Sahara Reporters* of September 26, 2019 stated that “this type of disrespect to the law is tantamount to desecration of the Constitution that legitimized its existence”. It is observed that flouting of court orders is more prominent during the current dispensation...
(Buhari’s regime). This may not be unconnected with the fact that Buhari is a retired military General.

Centralization of Administration: This refers to the concentration of authority at the top. Bhagwan and Bhushan (2010) view the concept of centralization as the process of transferring administrative authority from bottom/lower to top/higher level of administration. Although Nigeria operates a federal system which does not allow for centralization, the influence of the long reign of the military governments on the political actors has inadvertently brought in centralization into the administration of Nigeria. Even though the Constitution is not suspended as is the practice under the military but its contents, especially the one stressing the federal system of Nigeria is flouted at will. How does one explain the problem of the minimum wage? Under true federalism, states should be allowed to determine how much they can pay their workers. States like Lagos and Rivers, perhaps, would be able to pay even more than N30,000 whereas states that depend solely on monthly allocations from the federation account may not be able to pay the stipulated N30,000. With centralization of administration, it may be difficult to provide necessary social services that might have been promised by the politicians. This is because many states would barely be able to pay salaries of workers while other areas of development are neglected.

Docility on the part of the citizens: In an article by Nnannan Ijomah (2017), Nigerians are seen as not only being sheepish and docile but are also seen to be whiners and cowards. This docile attitude has made Nigerians to be tolerant of whatever maltreatment/mistreatment the leaders at all levels mete out to them. The Nigerians of today are scared to bring about real change as the people continue to elect and re-elect those who are seen to have impoverished the people as a result of stealing what belongs to the commonwealth of the people. The citizens are very scared to speak out, perhaps for fear of being incarcerated. They have been traumatized during the military era and they appear to have decided to just sit down and look. Rather than fight the ills through their votes, they prefer to just collect whatever they can from politicians and return same corrupt politicians to power. Unfortunately, docility is a democratic vice (Zakaras, 2009). Docility implies inadequate participation of citizens in governance, leading to the political actors doing whatever they like. They do not have to be accountable because they know that the people will keep quiet. The few who are able to attempt to revolt are sometimes cautioned by the citizens themselves saying that they should give peace a chance. However, there can be no peace where there is no justice.

The revolt which took place in Mali in August 2020 whereby the President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, was forced out of office was a way of the people saying ‘enough is enough’. The Malians, unlike the Nigerians, were not docile. Where citizens are docile, the government does whatever it feels like doing even when it is apparent that their action was not pleasing to the people.

Poverty
When there is poverty, the politician will be bombarded by his relations and others for financial assistance. In some cases, the requests may be too much for him to handle as they may even surpass what the politician earns. In an attempt to please his families and people from his constituency, he may need to steal money meant for the provision of social amenities to the state or local government or the nation, as promised. Because of poverty, the politician
is likely going to try getting some things for himself while the position lasts. Some may quickly put up a building or two and buy cars in order for him not to go back to poverty when he quits the political position. This may lead to inefficient and ineffective management of resources thereby resulting in failure to provide public goods as expected by the people. Unfortunately, the electorate may not even be able to ask questions because some of them have contributed to the inability of the political official to be accountable, that is, to deliver on their campaign promises.

Challenges Brought About By Lack of Political Accountability on the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

Where political accountability is absent, there will likely be security challenges which can lead to other challenges – political, social and economic. Security is a dynamic condition involving the relative ability of a nation to counter threats to its core values and interests (Omede, 20011:92). The concept of security connotes different meanings to many people, organizations, groups and individuals. According to Onunwa (2014) the concept refers to a state of being safe or protected against danger/risk. It also has to do with freedom from danger or with threat to a nation’s ability to protect and develop itself.

In Nigeria, there appears to be insecurity in all nooks and crannies. There is Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsman crisis, banditry, armed robbery, rape and other criminal acts across the country. All over the country, especially in the North, there is high rate of robbery, kidnapping, accompanied with robust ransom. For example, there is high level of insecurity to lives and properties in the Southern Kaduna area. Unfortunately, the problem is gradually spreading to other parts of the country, especially the southern part, south west, to be precise. In fact, the Vanguard of April 9, 2019 (p.6) reported the shooting to death of a Police Inspector and 6 others in Ondo bank robbery. The increase in the level of insecurity has led various ethnic groups to begin to organize some form of security outfits to defend their people. The establishment of the Amotekun Outfit in the south-west region is one of such efforts.

In the political sphere, the problem of insecurity has scared away some people who would have been better leaders from participating in politics, thus denying the country of the opportunity of having good and effective leadership which would have propelled development in the country. The fear of being killed or kidnapped is the beginning of wisdom for this category of people who choose to run away from politics. In the 2019 presidential elections, a number of people were killed while properties were destroyed as a result of violence that erupted in many of the voting stations. The political violence characterized by ballot snatching, burning of ballot papers as well as killing of political opponents were widely reported during the 2019 presidential elections. According to Omolegbe (2019) “The post-electoral violence recorded during the general election is one of the most violent in the history of democratic dispensation in the country.

On the economic side, the level of insecurity has made many foreigners unwilling to invest in the country. This has badly affected the economy of the nation especially because of the bad image which Nigeria has internationally. Security challenges have increased the cost of governance because security votes have to be increased to make room for those gadgets that have to be provided for the security operatives for them to carry out their jobs effectively
The effect of the increase in the cost of governance has resulted in the inability of government to provide for other social services such as electricity, education, and health, among others. Many Nigerian business entrepreneurs have had to relocate their business outside the country because of inadequate supply of electricity and high level of insecurity. Such action can only result in more jobs being lost and, by implication, increased level of unemployment. Increased unemployment has resulted in the number of criminal activities among the youth. A teenage suspect confessed that “kidnapping is the quickest way to make money” (New Telegraph, May 20, 2019, p.9). Some of these youth would not have engaged in kidnapping if the economic situation in the country has not been badly affected by the level of insecurity arising from lack of political accountability of both our elective and appointed public officials.

Conclusion
This paper has attempted to look into the problem arising from the inability of politicians in Nigeria to be accountable to the electorate. While the paper examined the basic concepts – politics, accountability, development and political accountability, it focused on causes of lack of accountability among our politicians. The causes were identified as prebendalism, corruption, long period of military rule, centralization of administration, poverty, and docility on the part of the citizens. The consequences of lack of accountability were also discussed especially on socio-economic development in the country. It was found that insecurity is the major consequence of lack of accountability. Unfortunately, insecurity has a way of bringing problems to every segment of the national development - political, social and economic. The paper therefore concludes that the politicians in Nigeria have failed in being accountable to the electorate and have therefore brought about high level of insecurity to the country resulting in increase in crime rates and the inability of the politicians from fulfilling their electoral promises, thereby failing to be accountable to the electorate. With the various problems highlighted in this paper, which have arisen from political unaccountability, the socio-economic development of Nigeria has been negatively affected, especially between 1999 and 2019.

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