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Dependent Economy, Corruption and Mismanagement of Covid-19 Pandemic: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic exposed Nigerian miserable healthcare architecture; inequality in access to education, health and other infrastructural facilities; corruption; and low institutional capacity that can provide structures for social welfare and good governance. The paper explored how the above Nigerian dynamics engendered the mismanagement of corona virus experience. This reflects in the inability of the economy to fund the COVID-19 therapeutic measures; the opaqueness in the distribution of palliatives and economic stimulus packages. These views were espoused within the framework of political economy. The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design through the exploration of secondary data. The data were subjected to rigorous content analysis for validity and reliability. The findings showed that the nature of the Nigerian state, the Nigerian economy; and the Nigerian institutions have combined to undermine a robust response to COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The way forward lay in creating an economy that can provide buffers against the shocks of COVID-19 as well as creating a post COVID-19 stable self sustaining socio-economic and political society that is contingent on: equitable, and just society; a self-reliant economy; a patriotic ruling class and strong institutions that can withstand the pressures of political desperados from the society.

Keywords: COVID-19, Nigerian State, Corruption, Palliatives, Economy

Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced basic contradictions with wide ramifications in the other spectrums within the world global system. The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis; it is affecting societies and the economies at their core. While the impacts of the pandemic varied from country to country, it increased poverty and inequalities at a global scale (Gutterens, 2020). No doubt the pandemic worsened the already bad situation of the world poor countries, because being at the fringes of the global capitalist system constricts their capacity to withstand the obvious shocks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Soludo, 2020).

To begin with, the pandemic brought to the fore the glaring limitations of the global health architecture. The concentration on COVID-19 health emergencies overstretched health infrastructure around the world (Lambert, Grupt & Fletcher, 2020). This exacerbated the already existing unevenness in access to health services. This manifests in the fact that most of the COVID-19 confirmed cases and fatalities in the advanced capitalist countries occur among the very low income groups, the working class and the racially segregated or the people of colour (Bremen, 2020). The low income and the people of colour face structural conditions that diminish their capacity to observe the protocols that immune people from the virus. The unevenness in the economies of the countries and regions of the world has become significantly obvious such that the medical, non pharmaceutical, other infrastructural facilities as well as the COVID-19 vaccines have been appropriated by the developed countries of the North to the chagrin of the less developed countries of the South.

The efforts to control the spread of the corona virus and enforce the non pharmaceutical measures led to a sudden re-emergence of total state with the concomitant invasion of people's privacy and eroding of their cherished freedom (Yuval, 2020). The wave of protests around the world against new covid-19 engendered clampdown has reinforced peoples' consciousness against the derailment of their cherished freedom and democracy.

Again, COVID-19 put enormous strain on world economy. The global economy walked a tight rope. The Bretton wood institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) painted a gloomy picture of the world economy, warning of dire stress for emerging and developing countries. The global clampdown on international travels, tourism and cross border businesses constricted world economy such that global recession that seemed distant possibility became a reality. The global GDP for instance which slowed to 2.9% in 2019 dropped further down to 2.4% in 2020 (OECD, 2020). With the advanced economies facing problems, there is no doubt that developing countries that depend on them for aids and loans, patronage for their commodities, and remittances from their migrant citizens working in the advanced economies would face serious economic and social challenges (World Bank, 2020).

The plummeting fortunes of the global economy put a significant strain on the infrastructural facilities around the world. Nearly one billion people are said to live and work in informal, under-serviced and precarious urban conditions worldwide, while billions more rely on patchy and unreliable piped water, electricity and healthcare access in cities with deteriorating infrastructures (Lambert, et al, 2020). Education faced unprecedented crises globally. Most

governments around the world had to temporarily shut schools in an effort to enforce social distance and slow viral transmission. The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) estimates that 60% of the world's students population have been affected, with 1.9 billion learners out of school across 150 countries (UNESCO, 2020).

The Nigerian situation calls for a more worrisome concern. The Nigeria socio-economic dynamics has produced a nation in which abject poverty in the midst of enormous resources have become dominant; the state of basic infrastructure and utilities not only become comatose but for most Nigerians it has become a pipe dream; high level of political instability with ethnic and religious schism deepening the conflagrations of centrifugal forces. Unfortunately, this unsavoury structural Nigerian situation became exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The paper examines the roles played by the nature of the Nigerian economy, the Nigerian institutions, the structure of Nigerian state and the character of the Nigerian ruling class (political leadership) as well as the attendant corruption in undermining the robust response to the health and socio-economic challenge engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Concept Clarification

Nigerian COVID-19 situation

Nigeria woke up to the reality of COVID-19 when an index case emerged in Lagos on February 27, 2020 through an Italian resident in Ogun State. The initial spread of the virus in Nigeria resulted from the behaviour of the ruling class. It is the Nigerian bourgeoisie and their families that have the resources and the where withal to criss-cross the globe for economic, social and pleasure engagements. Thus the first set of COVID-19 confirmed cases and even fatalities were recorded among members of the high socio-economic class. The rapid spread of corona virus in Nigeria was therefore a matter of time as there was no well thought out programme of action to deal with the pandemic. From Lagos, the virus spread rapidly such that Nigeria as at December, 2020 has recorded 84,414 confirmed cases and 1,254 fatalities. By May 2021, Nigeria has recorded 166, 285 confirmed cases with 156, 557 discharged from treatment centre and 2,071 fatalities (NCDC, 2021). Records of the confirmed cases and even fatalities are not reliable, for the main reason that the testing capacity is very low and the difficulty in determining which deaths in Nigeria is COVID-19 related and deaths which causes were not.

Dependent Economy

The first visible response of Nigeria to the COVID-19 pandemic came with the inauguration of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 and COVID-19 Economic Stabilisation Committee. The Nigerian federal and state governments took lock down measures as well as set up various COVID-19 machineries to check the spread of the virus. COVID-19 lockdown engendered economic, social, psychological and political consequences on the citizens. The government both at the Federal and state levels provided palliatives and economic stimulus packages. However, the state of the infrastructure, the parlous nature of the economy and opaqueness in the implementation of the palliatives undermined the government's ability to sustain the COVID-19 protocols and fund the palliative and economic stimulus packages (Abati, 2020).

The new wave of the corona virus that spiked the Nigerian confirmed cases just as the cases around the globe has only elicited panicky containment measures from the Nigerian State without any adequate strategies and the political will for enforcement. Even the vaccines that have been produced for the virus have been secured by the Nigerian State in the quantity that is very infinitesimal compared to the Nigerian population. The implication is that the Nigerian state has not been able to mobilise Nigerians against the pandemic. That the disease has not been as devastating in Nigeria as in other countries is more a providential benevolence than it is the conscious strategy of the ruling class.

More than a year down the line, how has Nigeria fared in the management of COVID-19? What are the implications of a depressed economy, a state under pressure, a compromised leadership, an endemic corruption and a weak institution on the COVID-19 situation in Nigeria? What would have been the consequences on Nigeria, if the corona virus has been as virulent as in the other continents, considering the despondent nature of the health and infrastructure architecture? Are there lessons to be learnt by Nigeria from the pandemic that would be leveraged for a rewarding post COVID-19 opportunity?

Dependent Economy

Nigerian economy is neo-colonial, dependent and pseudo-capitalist. A dependent economy is an economy whose development alternatives are defined and limited by its integration into and function within the world market (Payne & Nasser, 2003). The foundation of Nigerian economy was laid over the centuries through the creation of a relationship of asymmetrical partnership between the western societies and Third World countries. The dependent nature of these economies is such that they must make decisions within the confines or the hegemonic

dictates of international capital (Amin, 2003; Wellenstein, 2011). Nigerian economy therefore became constricted into pseudo capitalist economy that is based on a mono-cultural commodity production. The economy today is dictated by the vagaries and whims of global oil market, just as the agricultural cash crop commodity which was the basis of Nigerian economy was dictated by international commodity capital in the 1950s and 1960s (Anikpo, 1995). The implication is that the Nigerian goods are not internationally competitive.

Again, the Nigerian economy is not a productive economy but a consumptive economy. Part of the goods consumed by the Nigerian population is directly or vicariously produced from the Nigerian natural resources by international companies. This makes Nigeria a rentier economy. A rentier economy is an economy that derives all or substantial portion of its national revenues from the rent paid by foreign individuals, concerns or governments. A very good illustration of this scenario is the way the Nigerian state collects rents from the multinational companies that exploit the resources of the Nigerian environment. The nature of Nigerian economy is typified by the Nigerian oil industry. Through different exploitative mechanisms, the International Oil Companies (IOC) exploit the Nigerian oil and simply pays the rents to the Nigerian ruling class (Abutudu & Garuba, 2011).

The unproductive and the primitive accumulation mentality of the Nigerian bourgeoisie has deprived it of the requisite capital, the necessary technology and the organisational capacity to develop an authentic economy that can match the competitiveness of international capital. Rather, Nigeria became simply a country that exports raw materials and import value added products. The situation is exacerbated when infrastructures established to address the fundamental developmental issues are deliberately undermined to achieve other mundane interests of the bourgeois class. For instance, Nigeria still imports petroleum products even with the establishment of the refineries and the huge appropriation for their maintenance every year. Also the massive investment in the power and steel infrastructure has been stalled by bourgeois petulance thereby denying the nation the revolution the sectors bring to bear in the emergence of national industrialization. The structure of the Nigerian economy has structurally limited its expansion. With a GDP of 448.10 billion dollars in a population of over 200,000,000, the Nigerian per capita is a paltry 2, 149 dollars as at 2019 (NBS, 2020).

Table 1 shows a comparative analysis of the GDP of selected countries with Nigeria.

Country	GDP (\$)	Population(Million)	Per-capita (\$)
USA	21,433,226	328.2	63,051
UK	2,829,108	66.5	39,229
France	2,715, 518	67.6	39,125
Denmark	350,104.33	5.8	58,439
Netherlands	709,050.86	17.28	51,290
Brazil	1,839, 758.04	211.2	6,450
South Korea	1,646, 739.22	51.7	30,644
Saudi Arabia	792, 966.84	34.27	19,587
South Africa	351, 431.65	58.6	4,736
Egypt	303,092.25	100.4	3,561
Nigeria	448. 10	201.1	2,149

Source: World Bank Group: <https://worldbank.org>

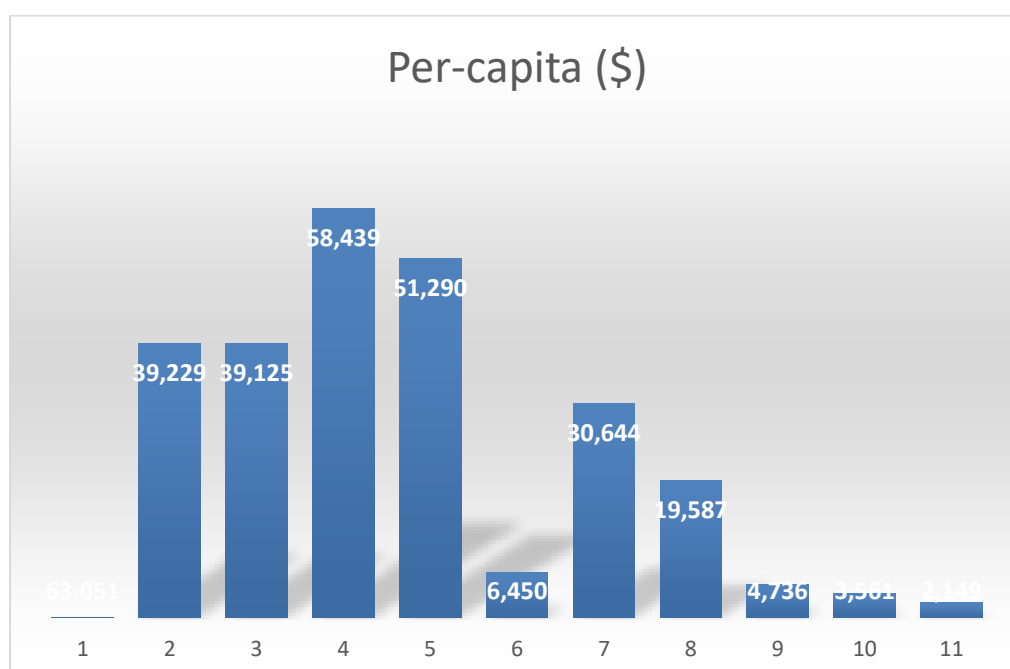


Fig 1: showing the per capital of the eleven countries

The numbers arranged horizontally represents the countries as arranged in table 1 above

The table shows that Nigeria by the size of her GDP is not a rich country; but indeed a poor country with one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Nigeria is positioned at 139 out of 187 countries in terms of level of per-capita incomes. The Nigerian economic situation is even worsened by the glaring level of inequality that has put over 80% of the country`s wealth in the hands of less than 10% of the population, while 90% of the population wallow in poverty with less than 20% of the nation`s resources (Soludo, 2020). With this nature of economic resources, Nigeria will be hard placed to embark on budgeting that will cater for the well being of her large population.

The dependence of the Nigerian economy on the Bretton Woods institutions on the direction of the economy has stalled self-reliant autochthonous development for Nigeria. One of the consequences of the Nigerian economic dependence on the Bretton woods institutions is the increasing debt crisis. Nigerian foreign debt now stands at N32.3 trillion (\$86.3 billion) as at February, 2021(NBS, 2021). The Nigerian economy suffers today from serious debilitating debt overhang which has distorted her budgeting process and stunted socio-economic growth and development.

The Nigerian economy is thus incapable of generating enough resources to guarantee basic necessities of life for the people; create employment and provide critical infrastructure for people's welfare and entrepreneurial drive. The consequences of the crises generated by the economic problems have had devastating effects on the people and the Nations. The manifestations of these effects include: unprecedented poverty; rising unemployment; high level of inequality and low rating on Human Development Index (NBS, 2018). As petroleum ceases to be a major player in international arena in the next few decades, because of enhanced technologically driven alternative energy sources, Nigerian economy that is dependent on oil will face bleak future. With two economic recessions in five years, Nigerian incapacity in providing the requisite buffers that can withstand the shocks such as the COVID-19 has been brought to the fore.

Corruption

Corruption can be defined as the abuse of public trust for private gain (Transparency International, 2009). In societies where corruption has become systemic, endemic, structural and institutionalized, it has posed most formidable obstacle to economic development, social equality and political stability. Corruption is inevitable in a capitalist society or any society with clear cut social class cleavages and in which the state panders to the whimsical interests of the ruling class. In Nigeria, corruption has become so dominant that her rankings in the yearly Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by the Transparency International in the past two decades have been very unsavoury. This reflects in the table below showing TI ranking between 2015 and 2020.

Table 2 showing TI global ranking from 2015 to 2020

Year	Ranking	Number of countries	CPI Score
2015	138	117	26
2016	136	176	28
2017	148	179	27
2018	148	178	27
2019	146	180	26
2020	149	179	27

Transparency International (2021)

The indication from the table showed that the Nigerian poverty situation worsened over the years. The 2020 CPI ranking which placed Nigeria in the 149th position with 25 points is the worst in the past ten years. The report shows that Nigeria failed woefully in the areas of management of COVID-19 pandemic, official appointments and promotions, legal framework and internal security system as well as lack of commitment to the implementation of report of cases of corruption among the officials of government (The Guardian, 2021).

The proclivity of the Nigerian political class to unmitigated corruption is a reflection of the dynamics of the nature of Nigerian economy and the dialectics of pseudo-capitalist state. It is imperative to state here that the humongous corruption that has stalled the Nigerian development has been indulged only by the Nigerian ruling class. The ruling class does not only have access to the common wealth by their position in the political economy; but it also has the where withal to perpetrate such monstrous impudence (Achebe, 2013).

Fighting corruption in a dependent pseudo-capitalist society engenders structural encumberances because of lack of institutionalized capacity and poor political will inherent in the system. Corruption flourishes where there are few institutional checks on power, where decision making is obscured, where civil society is weak, and where poverty is widespread (Eyisi, Peter-Side & Eke, 2018).

The deleterious effects of corruption in Nigeria have been unprecedented. Corruption has stalled investment in human welfare, exacerbated extreme poverty and rendered very deplorable the Nigerian rating on Human Development Index (HDI). This is manifested in the squalid housing condition, poor health standards, substandard education, youth unemployment and generally declining living standards. The 2020 Human Development Index (HDI) report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Nigeria among the least developed countries of the world; and 23 in Sub-Saharan Africa (lower than Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cameroun, Uganda, Benin Republic etc) on the Human Development Index (HDI) on the basis of life expectancy, literacy level, and GDP (UNDP, 2020). The

Nigerian lack of the political will and institutional sagacity to fight corruption has weakened her capacity to build a strong socio-economic society that can withstand the shocks created by such vagaries as the corona virus impact.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will be guided by the insights provided by the political economy paradigm in the elucidation of social reality. The political economy approach roots its interpretation on the fundamental processes of production and distribution from which structural conditions of social, economic and political relations emanate (Anikpo, 1996). COVID-19 pandemic though a health related phenomenon reflects economic situation in decisions on the containment of the pandemic. In other words, Nation-States all over the world put economic consideration as a priority beyond the health situation in trying to decide whether to impose lockdown or relax same.

The epidemiological structure of COVID-19 pandemic in both the infection and fatality rates manifests glaring socio-economic class cleavages in the society. More than 70% of infections and fatalities occur among the blacks in the United States of America and United Kingdom (Bremman, 2020). The working class families in Nigeria and other Third World countries are barely at subsistence level; they live in overcrowded squalid and decrepit housing conditions, lack basic infrastructure and reside under a serious constricted space. The poor proletariat were the first to lose their jobs, while the *lumpen* proletariat (the artisans, drivers, panel beaters, vulcanizes and petty traders) were the first to lose their means of livelihood under COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

The question arises; why are the low income groups the most affected in epidemic situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic? The question is answered not by recourse to the moral bounds of the leaders or abstract sentimental disposition, but rather through a dialectical interrogation of the institutional contradictions embedded in the structure of the capitalist or any society imbued with class inequalities and exploitative relations. The responsibility of the social scientist is to probe into the character and fundamentals of the society as they impact on the most structurally vulnerable (Ritzer and Stephinisky, 2014).

Method

This study made use of secondary data. The nature of the study which is purely theoretical and qualitative recommends the need for the data to be sourced from secondary sources. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2008), secondary sources of data include the following: official statistics, historical sources, life documents, mass media and internet sources. We obtained our data from the academic journals, mass media and internet sources. Our data were also procured from records from the Ministries, departments and agencies of government. We equally procured data from local and international agencies and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

In using data from the secondary sources, the researchers are conscious of their authenticity and validity, particularly where the data are from the government official statistics. However, we ensured the integrity of the data by subjecting same to rigorous research scrutiny and authentication through content analysis.

Findings

The human angle in the management of COVID-19 by the Nigerian state

The Nigerian State response to the COVID-19 pandemic was not unexpected because it followed the practice around the world. However, the management of the lock down by the Nigerian state left much to be desired. No doubt, the COVID-19 lockdown infringed on the fundamental human rights and privacies of individuals around the world. This has generated a wave of protests around the world. However, in the case of the states in the western democracies the protest has been against the infringement on the privacy and the right to association, movements and right to congregate. In Nigeria, the state denied the citizens all the rights including economic, educational and right to health.

The reaction of the state to the response of Nigerians to the economic, psychological and social deleterious effect of COVID-19 lockdown on them can only be described as repressive, repugnant and reprehensible. The Nigerian citizens` resistance to lockdown because of the excruciating conditions it engendered was met with clamp down, unlawful detention, extortion, torture and isolation. COVID-19 lockdown revealed the fangs of the state in its most brutal forms in Nigeria. This unwittingly generated high incidences of human right abuses, extra-judicial killings and homicide cases and criminality. For instance, Nigerian Human Rights Commission (NHRC) report of 20th August, 2020 dedicated to COVID-19 lockdown showed

that over 321 reports of killing, torture, abuses, extortion, including 26 extra-judicial killings were received against the police and other law enforcement agencies (kola, 2020).

Again the executive order enforcing lockdown in some states exacerbated the suffering of the people through extortion from the law enforcement agents and task forces set up to enforce the lockdown, destruction of properties and businesses, detentions, forced quarantine and extrajudicial killings. In Rivers State for instance, two hotels were destroyed in Eleme for flouting the lock down order; two people were killed including a police woman and many people were summarily detained and forcibly isolated in the isolation centres even when there are no evidence of COVID-19 status on them (Adeshokan, 2020). The state therefore rather than being used to mitigate the COVID-19 induced sufferings on the citizens, became an instrument wittingly or unwittingly of unimaginable human right abuse and deprivation by the ruling class in Nigeria.

The State, Trust Deficit and COVID-19

A major problem of African societies is the glaring desideratum of trust for the ruling class. The erosion of trust has stultified institutions, truncated social equilibrium, and discouraged patriotism. The state has become so alienated from the people that they cannot instil the needed patriotic and nationalistic ideals that are ingredients for nation building and national development. The result is that the average citizen cannot defend the cause of the nationhood. Today, the Nigerian citizens, among which are the very educated have found it difficult to come to terms with the existence of COVID-19 pandemic, not to talk of obeying the COVID-19 health protocols. This is not surprising because the Nigerian state has failed to establish the true position of corona virus in the country due to lack of testing capacity, inconsistency in data upkeep and incompetence in managing the lockdown outcomes (Scott, 2020). Again, the COVID-19 pandemic health protocols have been obeyed in breach by the very ruling class (who in the first place made the laws), at the airports, political rallies and at social engagements involving or organised by them. Worse still is the humongous corruption that has heralded all aspects of the COVID-19 management in the country. Convincing the people on lockdown as a measure of curbing the pandemic has been an uphill task for the Nigerian State. Obedience to the corona virus lockdown orders by the people have been secured with the trepidation of the state coercive instruments rather than consciousness on COVID-19 health concerns.

Nigerian Economy and COVID-19

The Nigerian economy is unstable, unsustainable and given to dependence on the vagaries of international dynamics. Nigeria therefore lack the necessary buffers required for fiscal relief in times of crises such as COVID-19. Nigerian situation worsened under COVID-19 pandemic experience. The 2020 Nigerian budget of 10.9 trillion was reviewed downwards by 25%. The 2020 budget was based on \$57/barrel benchmark and 1.7 million barrels per day production output was reduced to \$30/barrel benchmark because of the plummeting oil price and OPEC enforced production cuts. Nigeria therefore does not have the necessary savings and requisite economic diversification to sustain the COVID-19 lockdown pandemic without external and internal contributions. Nigerian budget for the economic stimulus and palliatives is a far cry when compared with the COVID-19 budget of the developed countries. For instance, USA, Japan and Britain budgeted \$2 trillion, \$ 1 trillion and \$750 billion economic stimulus packages and palliatives respectively to address the COVID-19 pandemic (Deloitte, 2020). USA in addition appropriated another \$1.9 trillion dollars to boost COVID-19 economic stimulus and recovery packages (The Guardian, 2020). Most African countries cannot afford such funds. Nigeria for instance budgeted less than \$4.2 billion in economic stimulus packages and palliatives to address COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Even with donations from the international and national organisations and agencies, Nigeria still faces uphill task in mitigating the consequences of lockdown.

The World Bank Group (2020) projected that the Nigeria poverty rate in 2020 is likely to increase to 40.2, from 40.1 in 2019, (accounting for additional 2.3 million people falling into poverty). Nonetheless, with the present recession (largely caused by the pandemic), a projected 42.5% increase in the rate of poverty is perhaps anticipated in Nigeria. These among other factors are projected to push more 4.9 million Nigerian populations into poverty in 2020. Indeed, the recent report from World Bank showed that 7 million Nigerians slipped into abject poverty in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020).

The COVID-19 driven economic structure looks bleak. IMF Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 report showed -1.6% economic growth rate for Africa which was a record of downward revision of 5.2% points compared to 2019 growth rate (IMF, 2020). The World Bank 2020 report also showed a sharp fall in Sub-Saharan African GDP from 2.5% in 2019 to -2.1% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). The worsening economic situation has been aggravated by the sharp falls in the Diaspora remittances that support millions of African and Nigerian families and informal businesses as well as the declining Foreign Direct Investment

as a result of global economic recession induced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Lancert et al, 2020). Again, Nigerian economy dependence status reflect in the fact that almost all the COVID-19 pandemic non-pharmaceutical materials were imported, thus depleting further Nigerian foreign exchange reserve. Even the various vaccines that have been in use were manufactured in different countries, some with Nigerians medical personnel. The aftermath of the COVID-19 induced economic crises reflects in the spiralling inflation, the surge in unemployment, increasing poverty rate, the collapse of education and health infrastructure and decadence in social, cultural and political life of the Nigerian state.

Corruption and COVID-19 in Nigeria

In a pseudo-capitalist society like Nigeria corruption is not only inexorable but simply hegemonic because of tendency for primitive accumulation. The institutionalisation of corruption in Nigeria has been an inevitable part of governmental activities and nobody pretends about it. This is why COVID-19 in Nigeria became the bet for primitive accumulation in all facets of governmental activities. Apart from the evidences of massive embezzlement in all the agencies that handled COVID-19 activities, other ministries, parastatals, community heads, religious heads and even pseudo NGOs that were not part of the management of virus found ways of capitalising on the pandemic for personal aggrandisement. In Nigeria, COVID-19 thus became one of the avenues, for bourgeois manipulation and graft. The hoarding of COVID-19 palliative as discovered by the ENDSARS protesters shows the level of insensitivity and depravity of the ruling class (Orijinma, 2000). Below is a selected list of allegations of corruption against members of the ruling class associated with corona virus in Nigeria:

- SERAP questions how 36 billion was spent on COVID-19 in Nigeria (Vanguard, September 6, 2020);
- Femi Falana files for information through the Freedom of Information Act on how 338 billion naira CBN COVID-19 was disbursed (Channels News at 10pm, August 27, 2020);
- Nigerians task the minister of Disaster and Humanitarian Affairs on how 2.67 billion naira of so called school feeding was found in personal account of individuals (Channels News at 10pm, September 28, 2020);

- Expenditure of 1.6 billion naira on COVID-19 spent by NDDC on COVID-19 palliative;
- Lack of data on the cash transfer of N20,000.00 to 3.6 million indigent Nigerians (Actionaid, 2020);
- Nigerians raise questions on the expenditure of 9 billion naira on the feeding of school children who were at home during lock down (Onwuzoo, 2020);
- Questions on the Kaduna State expenditure of N400,000.00 on treatment of one COVID-19 patient (El- Rufai, 2020);
- Questions also raised on the disbursement of 1 billion naira to 32 states for ramping up COVID-19 tests at a time when tests are dwindling (AIT News at 8pm, September 21, 2020);
- Peoples` Democratic Party (PDP) tackles minister over diversion of funds for COVID-19 palliatives and the looting of the palliatives (The Nation, November 2, 2020);
- Diversion of 6.25 billion naira NDDC COVID-19 palliative (Legit, August 17, 2020);
- The management of the palliative lack transparency and credibility. Political consideration, corruption, cronyism and nepotism beclouded the whole essence of the COVID-19 pandemic palliative and economic stimulus packages in Nigeria (Njoku, 2020);
- 400 billion naira spent on COVID-19 pandemic vaccine even when the entire budget of 2020/21 budget for health is a paltry 150 billion naira. This also runs against the advice of Bill Gates and some Nigerians like Peter Obi that the money can be deployed to improve on the health infrastructure.

Conclusion (Policy Implication)

The paper has shown that the incapacity of the Nigerian nation to offer a robust social, economic and political response to the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic reflects an underdeveloped nation-state. We have also articulated the implications of underdevelopment as manifesting in the nature of the economy that is dependent, unsustainable and vulnerable to vagaries of international capital; the nature of the Nigerian state that cannot tame the excesses and impunity of the bourgeois class; the character of the ruling class that is not only very narcissist and easily manipulable by international capital but has shown glaring incapacity in the of the affairs of the state; weak socio-political institutions that can easily be rendered

comatose due to the manipulations of the ruling class; and unprecedented corruption in the system.

The Nigerian social structure therefore urgently needs structural transformation that will deliver a leadership that is not only nationalistic and patriotic, but will be strategically positioned to ensure a sustainable path that can guarantee buffers against shocks such as the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic. Such leadership can enunciate policies that can utilize opportunities provided by the COVID-19 pandemic to re-evaluate development strategies in line with the new global realities. Specifically, such leadership will address such areas of national life that include health, education, housing, economy, unemployment, poverty, inequality and state-civil society relations. These areas worsened for Nigerians because of the peculiar circumstances of COVID-19, and resulting from the palpable incapacity of the Nigerian state to rise to the challenges posed by the new virus. No doubt, Nigerians faced unimaginable economic deprivations, education and health alienation, human right abuses, extra-judicial killings, social exclusion and psychological trauma that are tangential to forced restriction in a decrepit habitation during the COVID-19 lockdown. Addressing these issues require policies that will strategically emphasise the following:

- Institutionalisation of structures that will not only address unemployment and poverty, but that will provide social security scheme that will ensure lives for the very vulnerable in the society;
- Create structures for a self-reliant, diversified economy that can be insulated from the control and exploitation of international capital, as well as capable of creating buffers against shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Enhance institutional capacity that can address human right violations, particularly in periods of emergencies such as the corona virus pandemic; as well as tame corruption and excesses within the bourgeois ruling class;
- Investment in critical infrastructure has become more imperative to create enabling environment for economic activities and national development;
- The stark revelation of the deficiencies of the Nigerian state in the critical areas of health, education, housing and Information Communication and Technology (ICT) has reinvigorated the urgent need for a new dimension in budget appropriation in the critical areas to meet international standards; and to enhance human development index. For instance, the Nigerian State can start with raising budgetary allocation to health from

present 4.5% to the African Union minimum recommendation of 15% and education from the current 7%, to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommended minimum standard of 26%. For much of the time, the allocation to these human sectors is not only grossly inadequate, but also has been mismanaged, misapplied, misappropriated or outright embezzled.

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