

## DEVELOPMENT ALBATROSS: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING EXPERIENCE, 1960 – 2015

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### ABSTRACT

Many keep asking why Nigeria despite its abounding resources and potentials is yet to develop sustainably. Opinions are varied on the possible reasons, with fingers pointing at the country's weak and inefficient economic planning model. Planning in Nigeria is essentially ad hoc and short-term, while majority of the plans are hardly implemented. Using historical methodology, the paper analyses Nigeria's economic planning models since 1960, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each plan and the level of implementation. Findings show that rapidity in the turnover of administrations impacted negatively on economic planning, as each administration strived to introduce new plans, even as the strength and quality of each plan depended on the quality of leadership at the time. The paper further compared Nigeria's situation with some rapidly developing economies of Southeast Asia and the Middle East. It also found that these countries have relied mainly on long-term economic plans or visions, which are supported by reliable data and demographic statistics. Based on this, the paper recommends that Nigeria should tow this line considering that the long-term model aggregates a country's development vision with well-defined short and medium-term strategies for implementation. It concludes that given the critical nature of economic planning, it should never be left to the whims and caprices of politicians rather it should be institutionalized and protected with enabling legislation so as to guarantee uninterrupted implementation.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Development Planning, Vision Statement, Economic History, Development Studies, Public Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's considerable resource endowment and in particular its strategic location on the Gulf of Guinea should have guaranteed its sustainable economic development. But this has not happened. This may not be unconnected with the country's years of maladministration, erratic and distorted policies, large scale corruption and uncontrolled rent seeking behaviours mainly by public officials. Nigeria's poor

economic position, which is depicted by high incidences of poverty and unemployment rates, poor/collapsed infrastructure and social amenities, wrong values and poor attitudinal practices, as well as widespread insecurity and crime (Ayodele et al, 2013), have combined to make life and living unimaginable for its citizens. Perhaps, the situation might have been different, had the country's leaders harnessed its resources by embracing genuine long-term economic planning encapsulated in vision statements.

Economic planning are processes and actions taken to drive economic outcomes to expected levels essentially to fast track growth and development. Nigeria for several decades have adopted mainly ad hoc economic development planning as a means of speeding up the growth rate of the economy and improving the living standards of its peoples (Ukah, 2007). These programmes have been initiated to facilitate economic, social, political and technological growth and geared towards improving the living conditions of its citizens. However, despite the nobility of these plans, it is evident that they have largely failed to achieve the desired results as poverty has remained pervasive in Nigeria, social infrastructures are decrepit, health care is still poor, while public power supply is still erratic. What this indicates is that Nigeria's several development plans since independence have not transformed its economy to sustainable development neither have, they, improved the lots of its citizens.

The reason for planning is that it defines in advance, what one intends to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who should do it. It is also the exercise of forethought in an attempt to select the best means of securing specified ends. Hence, a development plan details the overall strategy of a government for the proper planning and sustainable development of its people. It consists of written statements with accompanying maps, showing the broad aims of the government for specific sectors, e.g. housing, education, infrastructure and social services, which are reinforced by more detailed policies and objectives. Following from this, a country's National Development Plan therefore analyzes its objectives and priorities in relation to the various sectors and in response to well-identified national needs. It proposes and justifies overall plans in which the role of individual sectors is properly defined in context.

Plans help countries to allocate scarce resources given that they relate the scope and timetable of projects to the resources available including the benefits that will accrue. National Development Plans also enables realistic and achievable decisions to be taken considering that they provide evidence within which positive decisions are made. They also provide required information for international development banks and donor agencies to either advance loans or provide technical assistance to selected national projects with a clear understanding of the benefits, being assured of the government's own wholehearted commitment. They also enable these organizations to avoid wasteful overlap and competition by coordinating their respective programmes.

Planning generally is critical to every nation's development. However, whereas long-term plans are key to the prosperity of nations, short and medium-term plans are equally relevant especially when situated within the context of long-term frameworks. Available evidence suggests that majority of the countries that have achieved high income growth and sustained socio-economic prosperity are those that have implemented long-term plans with some level of consistency and conversely the economies that have largely struggled with development are those that have adopted mainly short-term economic plans.

The literature on Nigeria's economic development planning is fairly strong. It can be divided into three. The first group are scholars that have concentrated mainly on its history (Amah, 2014; Iheanacho, 2008; Ibietan and Ekhosuehi, 2013; Osabouhien et al, 2012; Bashiru et al, 2006). In the second group are commentators, who have focused on specific plans (Eneh, 2011; Asaju and Yarie, 2013; Waziri and Bala, 2014; Ayodele et al, 2013; Nwagbara, 2011; Ukah, 2014; Mensah, 1993; Ukah, 2007), while the last group comprises of scholars that have concentrated on the reasons for the perceived failure of some of these plans (Sanusi, 2012; Ojo, 2012). The present effort however posits that at the base of Nigeria's poor development experience is its consistent recourse to short and medium-term economic planning models, often devoid of proper coordination and in most cases hardly implemented. Based on this, and relying on the experience of some rapidly developing economies of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, the paper recommends that Nigeria should adopt the long-term planning model encapsulated in vision statements, considering that it is usually the outcome of extensive consultations, thus representing the wishes and aspirations of the various stakeholders in the economy.

## **NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

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Nigeria's experience with economic development planning spans the colonial period through independence to the post-independence period. It has witnessed continuity and change, being largely influenced by events in the polity. Some of these plans will be discussed below.

### **Colonial Development Plans**

Nigeria's economic planning experience could be traced to the colonial period. Indeed, planning in Nigeria commenced in 1944 with the request by the Secretary of State for the Colonies for all British colonies to formulate plans for the economic and social development of their territories. The Colonial administration in Nigeria responded to this by cataloguing a list of projects it intended to execute over a ten-year period. The outcome was the 'Ten-year Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria', which was an ad hoc list of selected projects without a common framework. The Plan, envisaged a total expenditure of about N110. 00 million for a period of ten years from 1 April 1946 to 31 March 1956. Of this planned expenditure, N46m was to be met with funds provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, while the focus was to build infrastructure with little provision made for

industrial development. The Plan also made provisions for agricultural development using a limited range of crops including Cocoa, Cotton, Palm produce, Groundnut and Timber. It would be difficult to strictly attribute the ten-year plan as a development plan since it comprised mainly of a list of projects to be executed by the colonial government (Ukah, 2007). The plan has also been criticized for its limited financial resources, while Nigerians were not consulted before its introduction.

Somehow, the Ten-year plan, which should have been in operation until 1956 was cut short in 1951 following the constitutional changes of that year, which introduced the federal system of government. With this development, each of the four Regions (West, East, North and Southern Cameroons) now introduced its own 5-year development plans spanning the periods 1951 – 1956 and 1956 – 1962. Indeed, it was these plans that laid the foundation for Nigeria's post-independence first National Development Plan (1962 – 1968). It is important to note however, that these pre-independence plans were prepared mainly by the colonial government officials. Moreover, similar to the case of the Ten-Year Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria, the people were also never consulted in the preparation of these plans. Little wonder why they all recorded minimal successes. It is equally argued that the plans did not have definite objectives relevant to the country's needs, even as the machinery for implementation was lacking (Ojo, 2012). In spite of these obvious weaknesses, the fact still remains that it was the colonial development plans that laid the foundation for Nigeria's future economic development planning.

### **Post-Independence Planning Up to 1985**

Nigeria kickstarted its post-independence development planning in 1962, with the introduction of the 1st National Development Plan (1962 – 1968). This plan had a total investment expenditure of N2, 132 million, comprising N1, 352.3 million from the public sector and N780 million from the private sector. It also set a target growth rate of 4% per annum for the economy. The plan targeted strategic developments in agriculture, manpower, industry and transportation. It also aimed to achieve and maintain the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living of the people, with a targeted saving of about 15% of the GDP by 1975 and an annual investment of 15% of the GDP within the period. The implementation of this plan was however affected by the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 as government efforts were diverted to prosecuting the war. However, available evidence indicate that the first National development plan accomplished a number projects including the building of the Port Harcourt Oil Refinery; Paper Mill, Sugar Mill and the Niger Dam (in Jebba and Bacita respectively); construction of the Niger Bridge; Ports' extension projects; as well as the construction of a number of "Trunk A" roads. It was also in this period that the country's first- generation Universities: The University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos (both owned by the Federal Government), Ahmadu Bello University (Northern Region), University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Eastern Region) and the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University (Western Region) were established. These significant developments were possible because, the annual capital budget was operated within the development plan framework. They were

thus employed as the main instrument of control and allocation of development resources and this was made possible by the existence of a development plan, which provided guidelines for meaningful and co-coordinated development during the plan period despite the political crises (Bashiru et al, 2006).

Next followed the 2nd National Development Plan (1970 – 1974), which is regarded by many as the ‘oil boom plan’ considering that it was in this period that Nigeria recorded its first significant boom in price from its crude oil resources. Considering that this plan was essentially a post-war plan, its focus was therefore on the reconstruction of the war-battered economy as well as the promotion of economic and social development in the new Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the Plan included among others: the reconstruction of facilities damaged by the war or fallen in despair; rehabilitation and resettlement of persons displaced by the war and demobilized armed forces personnel; establishment of an efficient administrative service, and an appropriate economic infrastructure, especially in the new states; and, rapid improvement in the level and quality of social services provided for the welfare of the people (Jibietan & Ekhoehi, 2013). All these were encapsulated in the general principles of the plan, which included the building of a united, strong and self-reliant nation; great and dynamic economy; just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and, a free and democratic society. Overall, the plan involved a capital expenditure of N3.2 billion and an anticipated overall growth rate of 7% per annum. Resulting from the profligacy that characterized the oil-boom period, the initial plan budget of N3.2 billion was revised upwards to N5.3 billion (Jibietan & Ekhoehi, 2013). Furthermore, the plan anticipated a public sector investment of N3.3 b while the private sector was expected come up with an investment of N1.6 billion. In terms of targets, it was expected that the above investment would amount to increased growth in the gross output of the economy from a level of N3.028b in 1969/1970 to N3.987b, by the end of the plan period, although, the economy was expected to grow at an average rate of 6.3% per annum in the period. However, actual estimates showed that the GDP at 1974/1975 factor cost rose from N9. 442b in 1970/1971 to N14.410b in 1974/1975 indicating an average growth rate of about 11% per annum (Uka, 2007).

The 2nd National Development Plan is credited with a lot of milestones including the construction of several federal roads across the country. It was also under this plan that the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme was introduced, mainly as a unifying policy for Nigeria’s youths; and the federal scholarship and loan schemes also for Nigerian students. The plan was later to be extended by one year (until 1975) owing to issues bothering on its implementation.

The main objectives of the 3rd National Development Plan (1975 – 1980) were to increase per capita income; achieve even distribution of income; reduce the level of unemployment; increase supply of high-level manpower; achieve diversification of the economy and balanced development as well as indigenization of economic activities. This was yet another plan that was introduced during the years of oil boom and it also affected its implementation. Hence, the initial total expenditure for the

plan, which was N30 billion over the five years, was to be later adjusted to N60 billion in 1980. Remarkably, the plan was credited with realizing a GDP growth average rate of 5% per annum with the manufacturing sector recording the fastest growth rate of an average of 18.1% per annum. Building and construction grew at 13.9%, government services leaped to 17.7%, while other services grew at 15.7%. However, the agricultural sector recorded a negative growth of 2.1% per annum. This was not surprising given that agriculture and social development schemes (education, housing, health, welfare etc.), which have direct bearing on the living conditions of the rural population, received only 5% and 11.5% respectively of the financial allocations contained in the plan. These lean financial allocations to key priority areas reflected an obvious lack of focus by its planners (Jibietan & Ekhusuehi, 2013). Unfortunately, the implementation of the 3rd National Development Plan was adversely affected by the change in government of July 1975, barely three months after it was introduced. This led to a reappraisal of some of the cardinal objectives of the plan. For instance, the emphasis of government now shifted to those projects, which were thought to have direct effect on the living standards of the people including agriculture, water supply, housing and health (Bashiru et al, 2006).

The 4th National Development Plan (1981 – 1985) was introduced by the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who was then the President of Nigeria following the return of government to the civilians by the military. It is suggested that of all the development plans so far introduced, this plan was the most ambitious in terms of size of the anticipated investment programme. Its broad objectives include: to increase real income for all Nigerians; reduce unemployment; enhance power generation and supply; increase food production and raw material to meet the needs of the growing population; and increase or strengthen the country's foreign exchange earnings. On industry, the plan sought to promote export-oriented industries; enhance local value-addition through the development of small and medium scale industries; encourage local sourcing of inputs; improve efficiency of government owned enterprises as well as the acquisition of technological skills. The total investment envisaged under this plan was N82 billion with the public sector accounting for N70.5 billion, while the private sector was to source N11.5 billion. The planned investment was expected to generate an annual GDP growth of 7.2%, while the manufacturing sector had a projected average growth rate of 15% for the plan period (Jibietan & Ekhusuehi, 2013).

Implementation of the 4th National Development Plan was frustrated, first by the forceful takeover of government again by the military in 1983 and 1985, which was to be followed more seriously by the collapse of oil prices in the international market. Furthermore, oil output fell by 43.5% (1.3m bpd) as against the estimated 2.3m bpd., while oil price fell by 25% to \$30pb instead of the plan estimate of US \$40pb. As a result, there was a fall of 25% in foreign exchange earnings. Consequently, there was huge increase in the number of abandoned and uncompleted projects all over the country. To worsen matters, Nigeria's external debt liability increased from an estimated N3.7bn in 1981 to N17.3bn at the end of 1985 resulting in a rise in debt

service ratio from 4.7% in 1981 to 31.7% in 1985. Similarly, by 1985 Nigeria's external reserves had run close to a level that could hardly finance more than one and half month import bills, while domestic debt outstanding more than doubled from N11.4bn in 1981 to N28. 0bn in 1985 (Ukah, 2007). Despite these challenges, it is on record that it was under this plan that the Oku-Iboku Newsprint Paper Mill was built. Other landmark achievements recorded under this plan included the building of the Egbin Power Station; construction of the Akure Airport; construction of 87 telephone exchanges across the country; construction of thousands of kilometres of federal highways and rehabilitation/reconstruction of state roads; and, the implementation of Agricultural Development Programme (ADPs) in seventeen out of the nineteen states of the federation (Jibietan & Ekhosuehi, 2013).

### Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)

Following the change of government in 1985, which resulted from yet another military coup, General Ibrahim Babangida became the country's Head of State. The period was characterized by deplorable state of the economy, as indicated by a general fall in revenue sources, weak currency, high interest rates and huge external debt. Hence, the challenge of government now shifted to how to tackle these issues on a sustainable basis. It was to address these issues that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced in September 1986. SAP was originally planned to cover the period 1986 - 1988, but it was later extended to provide the basis for the successive 3-year National Rolling Plans, which the country adopted from 1990. The aim of SAP was to restructure and diversify the productive base of Nigeria's economy especially to reduce over dependence on the oil sector and on imports; achieve fiscal and balance of payments viability over the period; lay the basis for sustainable non-inflationary growth; and, reduce the dominance of unproductive investments in the public sector by improving public sector efficiency and enhance the growth potential of the private sector. Government's implementation of SAP of course, signified a change in the country's conventional planning model. This was as a result of the huge short fall in expected earnings from oil, which adversely affected the performance of the 1981 - 1985 development plan. It therefore became evident that the country could no longer rely on the fixed term 5-year plans given that the economy had become subject to the vagaries of the international oil market (Ukah, 2007). SAP was anchored on several pillars among which were: deregulation of the value of the naira, which was then believed to be over-valued; deregulation of interest rate, which at SAP's inception was below 10 percent; and, removal of subsidies on government-provided goods and services.

The philosophy underlying SAP was that the free play of market forces with minimal or no participation by government in economic activities may help Third World countries out of their numerous economic problems. The strategies that have been adopted for the implementation of SAP, which included restricted growth rate of money supply; floating interest and exchange rates; reduction in budget deficits; elimination of government subsidies and privatization and commercialization of public enterprises; showed that the idea of SAP was based on the aggregate demand

management thesis of the Monetarist School. A basic assumption of this school is that markets are developed to an extent that permits reliance on market forces for efficient allocation and co-ordination of resources and economic activities. This means that prevailing prices of resources and commodities that reflect their scarcity rating - exchange rates, interest rates (including rents), wages, profits and commodity prices will all be determined in the respective markets (Mensah, 1993).

A review of the implementation of SAP in Nigeria showed that initially, the programme seemed to have achieved its goals as efforts were made to eliminate the corrupt import licensing system, which almost crippled the manufacturing sector to a reduced performance of 25%. This aside, government's initial efforts stimulated some rise in industrial production, even as the period witnessed minimal starts in the exportation of agricultural produce (Jibietan & Ekhosuehi, 2013). However, over time, things took a turn for the worse beginning with the currency, which took a major plunge. From a parity of one Dollar to one Naira in early 1986, the currency crashed to N9.50k to one dollar in March 1992, further depreciating by almost 100 percent to N18.60k to the dollar later that year. In fact, by early 1993, a dollar was trading at N43.00 in the parallel market. Furthermore, with the deregulation of interest rates, a regime of high interest rates was ushered into the economy, grossly affecting the sourcing of loans and in fact doing business in general especially with financial institutions. Overtime, manufacturing and other sectors could not survive, the economy also began to wobble even as unemployment and poverty rates increased (Jibietan & Ekhosuehi, 2013).

### **National Rolling Plans**

The adoption of SAP as we earlier noted introduced a structural change in Nigeria's economic policy framework, as the five-year planning model was eventually replaced with the three-year National Rolling Plan, which was to be operated along with a twelve to twenty-year perspective plan anchored on annual National Budgets. This policy became operational with the 1989 budget, which provided the foundation for the three-year national rolling plan (1989 - 1991). The idea of the rolling plans was considered to be more suitable for an economy facing uncertainty and rapid change. These plans were to be revised at the end of each year, at which point, estimates, targets and projects were added for an additional year. In effect, whereas the plan was to be reviewed at the end of each year, the number of years of its operation remained the same as the plan rolled forward. Essentially, the objectives of the rolling plan were to reduce inflation and exchange rate instability, maintain infrastructure, achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, and reduce the burden of structural adjustment on the most vulnerable groups (Bashiru et al, 2006).

It is suggested that Nigeria may have adopted the Rolling Plan system considering that it appeared to be more down to earth as it tried to avoid some of the pitfalls of the 5-year plan, which tended to stray away from reality. Moreover, the Rolling Plans tried to correct the inadequacies of the one-year budget, which failed to capture projects with invariably more than one-year completion periods; and, possessed the



adopted effect of raising the level of consciousness for accurate data and regular supervision by project management units (Ukah, 2007). On the whole, the national rolling plans were targeted to achieve: higher economic growth rates; build strong foundation for self-reliant industrial development; create employment; and, increase food production and food security. However, the success of the rolling plan model was minimal as the average economic growth rate for the period was less than 3% against the minimum of 7.5% that was envisaged.

It was anticipated that the implementation of the rolling plan would infuse the desired medium-term perspective to the government's capital expenditure programme and improve efficiency of public resources allocation. Thus, the plans stipulated the screening and prioritizing of projects and payments based on the extent of implementation (Osabuohien et al, 2012). Nevertheless, several projects were to be included in the government's capital expenditure programmes that did not undergo the inspection of the rolling plan process. This resulted in high inefficiency and wasteful expenditure, which were some of the pitfalls that prevented the rolling plan model from delivering the expected outcomes. Moreover, fiscal indiscipline in the implementation process also contributed to the ineffectiveness of the plans. Of course, this should not be surprising given that the rolling plans were initiated and implemented under the military regime (Osabuohien et al, 2012).

### **Vision 2010**

Following the frustration and unfulfilled expectations of the medium-term plans, including the various development plans, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the three-year National Rolling Plans, the thinking in government circles gradually began to change in preference of the adoption of the long-term economic planning model. This seems to have been borne out of the conviction that the short and medium-term plans had failed to address the nation's fundamental development issues, ranging from a more equitable income distribution, technological advancement, economic self-reliance, balanced development, gainful employment for all Nigerians to environmental quality. It was also argued that the policies and programmes of the successive annual budgets and the rolling plans were based on short-term visions not derived from the desirable long-term trajectory for the economy and society. Scholars are also of the opinion that most of the programmes and projects had failed to deliver the expected economic prosperity and sustainable growth. Thus, the premise for a new approach to development planning finally seemed to have been laid (Ayodele, 2013).

Proponents of the long-term planning model posit that several countries (developed and developing), had undertaken national visioning exercises aimed at enabling them to control their destinies as well as cope with the variety of changes and uncertainties that usually came with the future. These exercises whether in Asia, Middle-East, Europe or Africa were meant to assist nations in building an inspiring and truly shared national vision for the future. The results of the visioning exercises

were also meant to provide guiding frameworks for national development including guiding the actions of both the private sector and civil society. Furthermore, national visioning projects are seen as learning processes for both the 'governed' and the 'leaders', indeed an educational process in which the citizens learn about themselves and about the challenges and opportunities of the future (Adesida & Oteh, 1998).

It was against this background that General Sani Abacha, who was Nigeria's leader at the time, on September 18, 1996 launched the Vision 2010 Programme. This was the outcome of the effort of an elaborate committee set up for the purpose and chaired by corporate group Chief Ernest Shonekan. The document contained a roadmap for the development of several sectors of the economy. Essentially, Vision 2010 targeted the transforming of Nigeria by 2010 into 'a united, industrious, caring and God-fearing democratic society, committed to making the basic needs of life affordable for everyone, and creating Africa's leading economy'. The vision was to be achieved using multi-tier medium term plans that were anchored on a fifteen-year perspective plan. Vision 2010 called for an urgent developmental paradigm shift and placed a duty on Nigerians attitudinally, in order to realize the targets goals (Jibietan & Ekhosuehi, 2013).

Unfortunately, General Abacha, who was also the prime mover of Vision 2010 suddenly died in 1998. His demise affected the implementation of the Vision 2010 blueprint, as those who took over from him were not favourably disposed to the economic blueprint. Nevertheless, although Vision 2010 was never implemented, it succeeded in highlighting the important role of the private sector as the engine of growth of the economy. In fact, one fundamental difference between the perspective plans (1997- 2010) and the Vision 2010 document was that while the former placed emphasis on the role of government in achieving identified objectives, the latter projected the private sector as the engine of economic growth. Similarly, while the perspective plans tended to be inward looking in their approach to development, Vision 2010 appeared to be more concerned with Nigeria's global positioning and international competitiveness (Ayodele et al, 2013).

### **Vision 20-2020**

It is often suggested that following the non-implementation of the Vision 2010, Nigeria lost an important effort at long-term development planning, which perhaps could have transformed its economy on the path of sustainability. As expected, the country once more reverted to its traditional planning system, characterized by annual national budgets. However, this did not last long before its leaders again began to push for the introduction of yet another vision programme. The motivating push in this period (2005) may have been the publishing of the Goldman Sachs (a New York based Investment Banking Group) Report, which suggested amongst other things that if current reforms in Nigeria were maintained, the country had the potentials to emerge as the strongest economy in Africa, with the possibility of even surpassing both South Africa and Egypt. The Report in fact, projected that by 2020 Nigeria could become one of the 25 biggest world economies and by 2025 could

indeed become the 20th largest economy in the world. It further indicated that Nigeria's economy had the potentials to grow by 2050 to become the 12th largest in the world ahead of countries like Italy, Canada and Korea. It is important to note that Nigeria's economy in this period, was the 41st largest in the world. The Goldman Sachs Report instantly became a point of reference for both people in government and the private sector, who began to push for the introduction of yet another long-term economic vision capable of propelling Nigeria at least to actualize the Goldman Sachs projection. This was the background to the introduction of the Vision 20-2020 programme.

Arising from the work of a committee representing different stakeholders over two years of elaborate work, the Vision 20-2020 blueprint was eventually introduced in 2007 by the outgoing administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo. With only one year left in the administration's tenure, nothing serious was done in terms of implementation of the programme. It was rather the incoming President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua that gave Vision 20-2020 an impetus by adopting it as one of its cardinal policies. The idea then was to harmonize it with the Nigerian Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS II) and the administrations Seven-point Agenda (Power and Energy; Food, Security and Agriculture; Wealth Creation and Employment; Mass Transportation; Land Reform; Security and the Niger Delta; as well as Qualitative and Functional Education).

Vision 20-2020 was targeted at making Nigeria one of the top twenty economies in the world by the year 2020, with an overarching growth target of not less than \$900 billion in GDP and a per capita income of not less than \$4000 per annum (National Planning Commission, 2009). The vision's target was for Nigeria to 'have a large, strong, diversified, competitive and technologically enabled economy that effectively harnesses the talents and energy of its people and responsibly exploits its national endowments to guarantee a high standard of living and quality of life for its citizens' (National Planning Commission, 2009). A remarkable feature of the Vision 20-2020 blueprint was that it promoted a sectoral economic development strategy.

However, Vision 20-2020 is also criticized for being largely elitist. It is said that the masses were not carried along in its formulation considering that it was largely packaged by an elite group using consultants, neither did the political class also buy into it. Little wonder, it was never really implemented. It was not surprising therefore that President Yar'Adua, who had initially showed interest in it, ended up abandoning it for his 7-point Agenda. Even his successor, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, also concentrated on his "Transformational Agenda", while Alhaji Muhammadu Buhari, who succeeded Dr. Jonathan also introduced yet another economic blueprint called "Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)".

It is rather regrettable that Nigeria has on several occasions spent huge resources to develop economic policies and programmes but always lacked the political will to implement them. The problem is the penchant of the country's political class to always abandon economic policies that did not originate from them. Once they were

out of power, the succeeding administration would yet come up with fresh policies and programmes. Of course, it is the country that loses in the long run as most of these policies are never implemented or often abandoned half way.

#### **ABSENCE OF LONG-TERM VISION – NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT ALBATROSS**

A major issue that has come out of the preceding discussions is the fact that issues relating to economic planning in Nigeria over the years have either not been taken seriously or may not have been properly coordinated. Hence, that the country has not developed sustainably should therefore not surprise anybody. Just as a recap, Nigeria inherited the 5-year National Development Plan from the British Colonial Government at independence, which was later replaced by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). SAP was also discarded in preference for the National Rolling Plan from the late-1980s. The National Rolling Plans equally suffered the same fate as it was abandoned in place of the annual national budgets, which seems to have become the toast of successive leaders of the country. Along the line, the country tried twice albeit unsuccessfully to introduce long-term economic planning through the Vision 2010 and Vision 20-2020 programmes, both of which were never implemented. A recurring trend over the period is an abounding evidence that suggests that most of these policies were either not properly thought through or perhaps, might not have been thoroughly implemented.

Arising from the above, this paper argues that it is primarily due to the absence of long-term economic development planning model in Nigeria, that economic planning generally has been exposed to the manipulations of people in government. The examples of several developed economies suggest that majority of them adopted long-term economic planning models with well-defined strategies for attainment in their development processes. These plans were usually insulated from the day-to-day activities of politicians. Hence, no matter the government or party in power, the core of the plan is held sacrosanct. Such long-term plans or visions were usually implemented using short and medium-term planning interventions largely as a means to an end. This also makes the implementation of the overall plan easier given that the goals and direction of the plan are already well known.

Unfortunately, this is not the case with Nigeria. Planning in Nigeria has been ad hoc and short-term and often left to the whims and caprices of career politicians, who come into office solely to satisfy the interest of a select few. As would be expected, every change in administration, brings with it, a change in governance structures, policies and institutions with very little regard for continuity. The obvious outcome, of course, is the multiplicity of government policies and programmes and the spate of abandoned projects that presently litters the country.

The importance of the long-term economic planning model for national development cannot be overemphasized. It enables a country to envision over the long-term, the nature of the economy and society it intends to build and defines specific targets and

measures to actualize it. For instance, if the long-term vision is to evolve a comprehensive healthcare system, which will promote medical tourism, the short and medium-term plans will then focus on the means to realize it, in terms of the number of first-class hospitals that should be built, number of doctors required (with different specialization etc.). In planning therefore, funds would be allocated to the sector on an annual basis to ensure that these goals are realized. The examples of several emerging economies especially from the Southeast Asia and the Middle East also suggests that majority of them adopted the long-term economic planning model in their development processes. These nations at various times introduced long-term economic visions and created institutions to translate such visions into action.

A vision statement, thus becomes a prerequisite for sustainable development given that it aggregates the major goals of a nation, identifies its priorities and maps out methods for realizing such shared vision ([www.documents.worldbank.org](http://www.documents.worldbank.org)). This is in cognizance of the fact that such shared plans/vision are usually the outcome of participation by the different stakeholders in the polity. Of course, without the buy-in and support of various stakeholders in the polity, ownership and implementation will be difficult. Available evidence suggests that the long-term economic planning model is indeed at the root of the economic development of several Southeast Asian economies. Malaysia for instance started its post-independence economic planning with the country's New Economic Policy (1971 – 1990). This was followed by the Vision 2020, and only recently the country introduced its National Transformation 2050 (Transformasi Nasional 2050). Indonesia, on the other hand, implemented its National Long-term Development Plan 2005 – 2025 (RPJPN 2005 – 2025), using 5-year Medium term plans for its implementation. In 2019, the country introduced its Vision of Indonesia 2045 (Visi Indonesia or Wawasan Indonesia 2045), whose aim is to make Indonesia a sovereign, advanced, fair and prosperous nation by its centennial in 2045. Likewise, Thailand is implementing its National Strategy (2017 – 2036), which it hopes would raise the country to developed status by 2037.

However, it is not only the Southeast Asian economies that have found strength in the long-term economic planning model. The model is also popular among the Middle Eastern countries and in fact seems to be the secret behind their rapid economic transformation. From the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which in 2016 introduced its Vision 2030: Saudi Arabia Beyond Oil to Abu Dhabi, which also introduced Vision 2030, as a set of strategic policies for the development of the Emirate, the story is the same. Likewise, Qatar in 2008 introduced its Vision 2030, which it hopes would transform it into an advanced society capable of achieving sustainable development, while the New Kuwait Vision 2035, introduced in 2017 is essentially focused on transforming Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial hub for the Northern Gulf.

Thus far, it would be interesting to find out, what constitutes Nigeria's short, medium and long-term goals; and, what strategies the country has put in place to ensure that

these goals and strategies are realized. As was earlier noted, a country's vision is usually for the long-term given that it emanates from the wishes and aspirations of its citizens. It also represents where the country aspires to be over a stipulated period. Of course, such vision statements are usually insulated from the day-to-day party politics of the country, even as their implementation is not usually tied to any particular administration. Furthermore, the fact that governance is a continuum also makes it imperative for any administration in power to key into the implementation of the national vision. I dare say that Nigeria's long-term goals and aspiration are mainly the products of specific administrations in power at any given time. Each administration defines its goals, targets and strategies and further strives to implement them during its tenure. No doubt, it is the lack of a well-defined long-term economic vision for Nigeria that has left matters of economic planning in the hands of career politicians and unprepared and mostly unqualified administrators, who know little or nothing about economic policy and management. It is also because of this that despite Nigeria's enormous resources and potentials, the country is still struggling with underdevelopment challenges, including massive poverty, unemployment, malnutrition etc.

An economic vision for Nigeria as was the case with Vision 2010 and Vision 20-2020 that were never implemented, should ordinarily map the country's development direction, define the targets for each sector, and embody strategies for implementation. However, this is where Nigeria has a problem. For one to plan effectively, two things are necessary - availability of a reliable database on different subjects and sectors as well as credible population and demographic statistics. It is evident that Nigeria's economy operates on a weak or at best estimated database. A country that has never conducted an acceptable and reliable population census may never succeed with development planning, as forecasts may often be based on grossly inadequate information, thereby, resulting to distorted growth (Ojo, 2012). Can Nigeria's economic planners say for certain, how many primary and Secondary Schools or even Universities, the number of Medical Doctors, Engineers and Policemen, for instance, that the country may require over the next five, ten or twenty years? Given that the country has a youthful population, are government policies and programmes planned with this in mind? Nobody seems to be interested in data in Nigeria and where it does exist, they are largely unreliable. Are you surprised that up till now, there is yet no strict enforcement of birth and death registrations across Nigeria? And closely related to this, is the fact that for almost ten years now, Nigeria has been struggling to establish a database of its citizens, through a national identity registration exercise. The basic fact is that nobody seems to be interested in long-term planning in Nigeria, and this is because the country is yet to get its priorities right. It is also the reason why Nigeria may never be able to develop sustainably.

But what is the problem? Why is Nigeria not able to plan for the long-term? Why are the country's leaders only interested in short-term planning? Several reasons account

for this, but only a few would be highlighted here. First and perhaps most important, is Nigeria's lingering nationhood challenge. It is rather unfortunate that given the way the country was put together in 1914 by the British Colonial Officials, and more than a hundred years after, several nationalities within the country are yet to accept Nigeria as one indivisible and indissoluble entity. It is in fact, the cantankerous nature of politics among the different regions and ethnic nationalities that has made the realization of a common development agenda impossible. Many of the country's ethnic nationalities operate with the mindset that the country will eventually be divided. It is this presumption therefore that often puts the country's leaders under pressure, forcing them to mostly plan for the short-term. In the absence of a common shared long-term plan or vision, leadership is thus, interpreted from the prism of one's region or ethnic nationality. Any leader in power, therefore focuses attention on developing mainly his/her region or ethnic nationality. The implication of this is that government policies and programmes are always skewed to favour some people or group with the unfortunate chance of being dropped or abandoned once that tenure ends.

Secondly, the manner in which government policies and programmes are introduced in Nigeria equally leaves much to be desired. Taking into consideration the country's nationhood challenge as earlier highlighted, it becomes a real problem, when only the few in government are saddled with the responsibility of designing government policies and programmes. It is because most of these policies lack the peoples buy-in and support both at the design and implementation stages that they have never been implemented successfully. Again, because the peoples buy-in was never taken into consideration, issues of monitoring and evaluation especially on the part of the citizens, which should ensure successful implementation are also absent. Technocratic approach to planning is undemocratic and is based on the myopic and false premise that the 'average person' cannot make a valuable contribution to a debate about his own future. It is obvious that the people are usually the best experts when it comes to articulating their own aspirations for the future (Adesida & Oteh, 1998). Regarding Nigeria's Vision 20-2020 for instance, it has been argued that although efforts were made to involve different groups in the formulation of the blueprint, the level of participation was not widespread and deep, as this was restricted to experts. The development of any country in fact requires public ownership of the process of development of the strategy and this cannot be said for the blueprint (Igbuzor, 2010). This is considering that a vision is a multifaceted process building on the participation and active commitment of its leading stakeholders and the viability of a country's development strategy increases in proportion to the participation and commitment of all its social and political stakeholders ([www.documents.worldbank.org](http://www.documents.worldbank.org)).

Third is the almost total lack of quality leadership at all levels. Nigeria has not in fact, been lucky with people who ab initio could be said to have been prepared, mentally and psychologically for leadership. At best, what the country has had were

“accidental leaders”, who were hurriedly drafted into public office by powerful individuals, power brokers “godfathers” or interest groups “cabals” to do their bidding. And because they were never prepared for such offices, these individuals end up relying on the services of either consultants or an assembled few, for their policies and programmes. Unfortunately, governance in Nigeria has also become quite important given its population and position in Africa to be left in the hands of political jobbers and charlatans. With the lack of a national vision, which should have guided development, and given the scenario painted above, it is the country that ultimately suffers since nothing is done. The bane of leadership in Nigeria could be classified into the following:

*Prevalence of executive/legislative/judicial lawlessness and corruption within the body polity as the personal interests of many leaders override collective goals. The frenzied quest for wealth over and above all other considerations have rendered leadership most ineffective; abuse and manipulation of ethnic relationship by leaders in authority by way of nepotism, tribalism, favouritism and religious bigotry; lack of leadership education and skills to discharge expected roles and perform leadership duties effectively; and, inadequate motivation of subordinates and followers leading to disconnect in leadership and followership relationship (Sanusi, 2012).*

And finally, is the critical issue of non-implementation of plans and programmes by people in government arising mainly from issues already highlighted above and the greater challenge of political instability. Indeed, the real challenge in planning is how to translate plans into realities given that the implementation of a plan is by far more important than the plan itself. For Nigeria’s leaders, the political will to implement is not always there. Would it surprise anybody that no government annual budget in Nigeria since 1999, has been implemented beyond 70%? The problem usually ranges from inadequate resources being committed to projects in terms of personnel and funding, lack of experts required to effectively and continuously monitor and evaluate programmes, identifying various problems and needs to ensure speedy execution of projects, to capital releases not being timely to ensure cost effectiveness in projects execution (Ukah, 2007). The issue of non-implementation is further compounded by the rapid turnover of administrations especially during the years of military rule. The multiplicity of administrations especially in the period before 1999, made it almost impossible for any reasonable policies to be implemented. In the absence of a long-term plan and considering that every administration always wanted to be identified with certain projects, it was not surprising therefore to see the multiplicity of plans and projects that further made the implementation rather difficult.



## CONCLUSION

Nigeria since 1960 has experimented with several models of economic development planning ranging from the five-year National Development Plan, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), National Rolling Plans to the Annual National Budgets. Most of these plans were ad hoc in nature and targeted at addressing mainly short-term specific issues. It is needless to say that majority of them also suffered from lack of implementation. Unfortunately, the two efforts made to introduce the long-term planning model through the Vision 2010 and Vision 20-2020 programmes were not successful as both were not implemented.

The reasons for the non-adoption of the long-term planning model as highlighted above include the country's unsettled nationhood challenge, poor leadership, lack of implementation and high turnover of administration etc. This paper therefore concludes that governance is such an important thing to be left in the hands of unserious and unprepared people. Nigeria may never be able to attain sustainable development until it started planning for the long-term and to ensure that its plans are protected with relevant legislations even as appropriate institutions are established to supervise implementation.

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