

ROLE OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND NATIONAL ECONOMY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR AFRICAN NATIONS: A CASE FOR NIGERIA

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Abstract

The pursuit of sustainable development in Nigeria is intricately shaped by the interplay between political ideology and the national economy. This paper explores how political ideologies—ranging from neoliberalism to social democracy—have influenced policy formulation and implementation, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social equity. In addition, the paper assesses the role of Nigeria's economic structure, driven predominantly by oil revenues, in facilitating or hindering sustainable development efforts. The study reveals that inconsistent ideological commitments and economic mismanagement have often led to policy discontinuities, underinvestment in green infrastructure, and weak institutional frameworks. Conversely, pockets of success in sustainable development are shown to align with periods of ideological coherence and economic diversification. The paper concludes by proposing a strategic framework that integrates ideological clarity with sound economic planning to achieve sustainable development. This includes strengthening democratic institutions, promoting inclusive economic policies, and fostering a national consensus on sustainability goals. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the political and economic preconditions necessary for sustainable development in Nigeria and offer insights for other resource-rich developing countries grappling with similar challenges.

Keywords: Sustainable development, political ideology, national economy, Nigeria, policy implementation.

Introduction

The pursuit of sustainable development has emerged as a crucial agenda for African nations, particularly in the wake of persistent socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Sustainable development, involves meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNDP, 2018). This approach emphasizes a balance between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. However, in many African countries, including Nigeria, the realization of sustainable development is intricately linked to the prevailing political ideologies and the nature of their national economies. Political ideologies shape policy directions and governance structures, which in turn influence economic outcomes and the broader development trajectory (Adeleke, 2020). Thus, understanding the interplay between

political ideology and economic policies is essential for addressing the complexities of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Historically, Nigeria's political landscape has been characterized by a spectrum of ideologies ranging from socialism and nationalism during its early post-independence period to neoliberalism and market-oriented reforms in years that are more recent. Each ideological phase has brought about distinct economic policies that have significantly affected the nation's development path. For instance, the shift towards market liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) led to significant economic reforms, including deregulation and privatization, aimed at stimulating economic growth (Okafor, 2019). While these reforms brought about some economic benefits, they also introduced challenges such as increased inequality and reduced social welfare. The ideological underpinnings of such policies reflect the intricate relationship between governance, economic management, and developmental outcomes.

Nigeria's national economy is one of the largest in Africa, predominantly driven by its oil and gas sector. However, despite its renowned wealth, the country faces numerous developmental challenges, including high poverty rates, unemployment, and infrastructural deficits. These issues have been exacerbated by policy inconsistencies and economic mismanagement, often rooted in the fluctuating political ideologies of successive governments. For example, the periods of military rule in Nigeria witnessed a centralization of economic control, which often led to corruption and economic inefficiencies (Nwachukwu & Okoli, 2021). Conversely, the return to civilian government brought promises of democratic ideals and market-driven economic policies. Nonetheless, the struggle to achieve sustainable development continues, as political instability and divergent ideological stances create an environment of policy uncertainty.

In the context of sustainable development, political ideologies play a vital role in shaping economic policies that either foster or hinder progress. The alignment or misalignment of political ideologies with sustainable development goals can have profound implications on how resources are allocated, how inclusive economic growth is pursued, and how environmental sustainability is prioritized. For instance, neoliberal ideologies that favour market-led growth may promote economic expansion but often at the expense of social welfare and environmental protection (Eze, 2019). On the other hand, social-democratic or inclusive political ideologies emphasize equitable wealth distribution and social justice but face challenges in achieving rapid economic growth. Therefore, the ongoing debate around the appropriate ideological and economic frameworks for sustainable development in Nigeria remains a contentious and complex issue.

Given the multiplicity of political ideologies and the evolving nature of Nigeria's economy, it is appropriate to explore the critical role that political ideology and national economy play in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. By examining the historical and contemporary ideological shifts and their corresponding economic policies, and to provide a nuanced understanding of how political ideologies have shaped Nigeria's developmental trajectory. It also seeks to identify the opportunities and constraints posed by these ideologies in the pursuit of sustainable development. In doing so, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the interplay between political governance, economic management, and

sustainable development in Africa, offering insights for policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners (Afolayan & Ayodele, 2022).

An Overview of Nigeria Political Ideology

Despite Nigeria's vast natural and human resources, the nation continues to grapple with significant developmental challenges, including widespread poverty, economic inequality, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation. The promise of sustainable development—a development model that balances economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability—remains largely unfulfilled. At the heart of this issue lies a complex interplay between political ideology and economic management. Successive governments in Nigeria, driven by differing political ideologies, have implemented varied economic policies with mixed results. From the centralised control of the economy during military regimes to the market-oriented reforms of the democratic era, these ideological shifts have often led to policy inconsistencies, economic volatility, and a lack of coherent strategy for sustainable development. The fundamental problem, therefore, is not merely the lack of resources but the misalignment between political ideologies, economic policies, and the principles of sustainable development.

Furthermore, the divergent political ideologies that have shaped Nigeria's governance structures have often resulted in short-term, reactionary policies rather than long-term, strategic planning. This has led to an economic environment marked by instability, policy reversals, and limited focus on inclusive growth and environmental sustainability. In an era where sustainable development is increasingly critical for national progress, the question of how political ideologies and national economic strategies can be harmonized to achieve a sustainable future for Nigeria remains inadequately addressed. This problem is further compounded by the challenges of corruption, weak institutions, and socio-political tensions, which have historically undermined effective policy implementation. Hence the need , this study seeks to critically examine the role of political ideology and national economy in Nigeria's pursuit of sustainable development, exploring how a more integrated and ideologically informed approach can pave way for a more sustainable and equitable future.

Conceptual Analysis

The following are some concepts associated politics and ideology.

Political Ideology

Political ideology refers to a coherent set of beliefs and values that influence the policies and actions of governments and political parties. It shapes the ideological lens through which issues of governance, economy, and social justice are approached. Key political ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, and nationalism have varying implications for economic policies and development strategies. Liberalism advocates for free-market policies, limited government intervention, and individual liberties, promoting economic growth through market forces (Heywood, 2019). In contrast, socialism emphasizes state intervention, wealth redistribution, and collective welfare, seeking to address economic inequalities. Nationalism prioritizes national interests, which can sometimes manifest in protectionist economic policies. In Nigeria, the oscillation between these ideologies has directly influenced the country's economic

policies, from market liberalization to state control, thus affecting the broader development trajectory.

National Economy

The dynamics of national economies, particularly in African countries, are shaped by various factors including historical contexts, governance structures, and global economic pressures. A mix of state-controlled and market-driven elements, resulting in mixed economies where both government intervention and market forces play significant roles (Owusu, 2021), often characterizes African economies. Some African nations have pursued market-oriented reforms, embracing neoliberal policies to attract foreign investment and stimulate economic growth. Conversely, others have maintained state control over key sectors, aiming to protect national interests and ensure resource allocation for public welfare. In Nigeria, the national economy has fluctuated between these economic models, influenced by shifts in political ideology. This fluctuation has led to diverse economic outcomes, ranging from periods of growth and prosperity to challenges of economic mismanagement, poverty, and inequality.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNDP, 2018). It emphasizes a holistic approach that integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encapsulate this interconnectedness, outlining objectives that encompass poverty eradication, quality education, gender equality, and climate action, among others. Sustainable development requires policies that are inclusive, equitable, and environmentally conscious, demanding an intricate balance between economic objectives and social welfare. In the Nigerian context, the pursuit of sustainable development necessitates a re-evaluation of political ideologies and economic strategies to ensure they are aligned with these goals, promoting not just economic growth but also social equity and environmental stewardship.

Historical Overview of Political Ideologies in Nigeria

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has undergone various political and ideological transformations that have significantly affected its development. In the early post-independence era, Nigeria adopted a mixed economic approach influenced by nationalist and socialist ideologies. The First Republic (1963–1966) focused on state-led development and nationalization, especially in key sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. However, the political instability that characterized the post-independence period led to a series of military coups, resulting in prolonged military rule. During the military regimes, particularly under General Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Mohammed, and Olusegun Obasanjo, the state maintained centralized control over the economy with the aim of promoting national unity and economic self-sufficiency (Nwachukwu&Okoli, 2021). The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 1980s, under General Ibrahim Babangida, marked a pivotal ideological shift toward neoliberalism. These reforms aimed at market liberalization, deregulation, and privatization to address economic crises. However, the implementation of SAP led to socio-economic challenges, including increased poverty, inequality, and the erosion of social welfare systems (Afolayan & Ayodele, 2022)

Current Ideological Landscape

In the contemporary political landscape, Nigeria has embraced a complex interplay of ideologies, characterized by a blend of liberal democratic values and elements of state intervention. Since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, the political system has been shaped by the principles of liberal democracy, including political pluralism, free markets, and the rule of law (Adeleke, 2020). The two main political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), have championed policies that combine market-friendly economic reforms with social welfare initiatives. The PDP, during its time in power, implemented policies that reflected a mix of neoliberal and social-democratic ideologies, focusing on privatization, economic liberalization, and poverty reduction. Similarly, the APC has promoted a vision of economic diversification and infrastructural development while simultaneously implementing social investment programmes aimed at reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth (Eze, 2019). This ideological synthesis reflects a pragmatic approach to governance, seeking to balance the demands of free-market economics with the need for social safety nets.

The prevailing political ideologies in Nigeria continue to exert a profound influence on the nation's economic policies. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on market liberalization, privatization, and foreign investment, has remained a central theme in Nigeria's economic strategy. The Buhari administration, for instance, launched the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017-2020), which aimed to revitalize the economy by fostering a market-friendly environment, improving infrastructure, and promoting fiscal discipline (Adeleke, 2020). This plan also emphasized economic diversification, particularly in the non-oil sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. Alongside these market-oriented policies, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the state's role in addressing socio-economic challenges. The implementation of programmes like the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) illustrates an ideological commitment to providing social safety nets, targeting poverty alleviation, and enhancing human capital development (Owusu, 2021). This dual approach reflects the current ideological stance in Nigeria, which seeks to integrate market dynamics with state interventions to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Weaknesses that affect Policy Efficacy and Sustainable Development

Despite efforts to balance these ideological currents, Nigeria faces significant challenges and contradictions that affect policy efficacy and sustainable development. The neoliberal focus on market liberalization is often undermined by systemic issues such as corruption, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and institutional weaknesses, which impede the successful implementation of economic reforms (Nwachukwu & Okoli, 2021). Furthermore, the state's involvement in sectors like oil remains contentious, with ongoing debates over resource control, revenue allocation, and the equitable distribution of wealth. This tension between nationalist ideologies that advocate for state control and liberal ideologies that promote market freedom creates an environment of policy uncertainty and economic instability (Afolayan & Ayodele, 2022). Additionally, efforts to implement social welfare programmes face fiscal constraints, policy inconsistencies, and the pressures of global economic dynamics. These ideological and practical tensions manifest in economic volatility, social unrest, and

persistent development challenges, underscoring the need for a more coherent and integrative ideological framework that aligns with Nigeria's pursuit of sustainable development.

The Interplay between Political Ideology and National Economy

The interplay between political ideology and the national economy in Nigeria is evident in the formulation and implementation of economic policies. Political ideologies have been instrumental in shaping economic decisions, as seen in the adoption of market liberalization policies reflecting neoliberal ideologies. For instance, neoliberal policies like those implemented during the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and subsequent economic reforms aimed at privatizing state-owned enterprises, deregulating markets, and promoting foreign investment have significantly influenced key sectors such as oil, agriculture, and education (Eze, 2019).

In the oil sector, neoliberal policies led to increased foreign participation and investment, yet they also sparked controversies regarding resource control and revenue distribution. Similarly, the emphasis on market-driven agricultural reforms aimed at boosting production and exports has been met with challenges, including inadequate support for small-scale farmers. Education, under market liberalization, has seen the proliferation of private institutions, raising concerns about accessibility and inequality. The outcomes of these ideologically driven policies have been mixed. On one hand, periods of market liberalization have led to spurts of economic growth, infrastructural development, and diversification efforts, particularly during the implementation of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017-2020).

On the other hand, these policies have also been associated with increased economic inequality, widespread corruption, and systemic inefficiencies, contributing to the persistence of poverty and social disparities (Nwachukwu & Okoli, 2021). This duality underscores the complexity of aligning political ideologies with the objectives of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Implications for Sustainable Development

Political ideologies significantly influence the direction and effectiveness of sustainable development policies in Nigeria. For instance, capitalist-oriented regimes often prioritize economic growth and privatization, sometimes at the expense of environmental and social considerations (Akinyemi, 2020). In contrast, socialist-leaning governments may invest more in public services and environmental protection, but could struggle with inefficiency and corruption (Ojo, 2018). The inconsistency in political ideology due to frequent changes in government leads to policy discontinuity, undermining long-term sustainability efforts (Uche & Okonkwo, 2021). Moreover, ideologies affect the allocation of resources and attention to sectors like renewable energy, education, and infrastructure, which are vital for sustainable development (Ahmed, 2019). Politicization of development projects often shifts focus from sustainability to short-term political gains (Eze, 2020). Ultimately, Nigeria's path to sustainable development is deeply intertwined with the prevailing political ideologies and their influence on governance structures and policy priorities.

In addition, Political ideologies in Nigeria have had notable positive impacts on the country's pursuit of sustainable development, particularly through policy frameworks that

emphasize social welfare, economic diversification, and environmental sustainability. For example, the introduction of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) under the Buhari administration reflects a commitment to social welfare, aiming to alleviate poverty and enhance human capital through initiatives such as conditional cash transfers and school feeding programmes (Afolayan & Ayodele, 2022). Additionally, economic diversification efforts, such as those promoted by the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), aim to reduce reliance on oil by investing in sectors like agriculture and technology, fostering a more resilient economy. The focus on environmental sustainability is also evident in policies targeting renewable energy and climate change adaptation, which align with global sustainable development goals and demonstrate the positive influence of ideologies prioritizing long-term environmental stewardship.

However, conflicting political ideologies have presented significant challenges to sustainable development in Nigeria. Policy inconsistencies and frequent reversals, often driven by ideological shifts and political instability, undermine the effectiveness of long-term development strategies. For instance, the implementation of neoliberal policies has been interrupted by subsequent administrations with differing ideological focuses, leading to disruptions in economic reforms and social programmes (Okafor, 2019). Furthermore, the emphasis on short-term gains and political expediency can overshadow the commitment to long-term sustainability, as seen in the prioritization of immediate economic benefits over enduring environmental and social outcomes. These challenges highlight the difficulties in maintaining a coherent development strategy amidst shifting political ideologies and governance practices. Specific case studies illustrate the complex interplay between political ideology and economic policy in influencing sustainable development in Nigeria. One such case is the implementation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) aimed at addressing environmental degradation and socio-economic issues in the oil-rich Niger Delta region. While the NDDC was established to promote sustainable development through infrastructure projects and environmental restoration, its effectiveness has been hampered by issues such as corruption and mismanagement, reflecting the impact of political and ideological conflicts on policy outcomes (Eze, 2019). Conversely, the recent push for renewable energy investments under the Renewable Energy Master Plan demonstrates how ideologies prioritizing environmental sustainability can drive positive changes. These case studies underscore the need for a consistent and integrated approach to policy-making that aligns political ideologies with the principles of sustainable development to achieve lasting and equitable progress.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between political ideology and the national economy has profoundly shaped Nigeria's path toward sustainable development. The review of Nigeria's political ideologies from post-independence to the present reveals a complex landscape where neoliberal, socialist, and nationalist ideologies have influenced economic policies and development strategies. While neoliberal policies have driven market liberalization and economic growth, they have also led to challenges such as increased inequality and corruption. The current ideological blend reflects an effort to balance market-driven growth with social welfare initiatives, yet conflicts and inconsistencies persist. For Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, it is essential to

address these ideological tensions and adopt a coherent approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental objectives.

Suggestions

- i. **Ensure Policy Coherence:** Develop and implement policies that are consistent and aligned with long-term sustainable development goals, regardless of ideological shifts.
- ii. **Promote Inclusive Economic Strategies:** Focus on inclusive economic policies that address socio-economic inequalities and ensure that growth benefits all segments of society.
- iii. **Integrate Sustainable Development Principles:** Embed sustainable development principles into all political ideologies and economic policies to ensure balanced and equitable progress.
- iv. **Enhance Transparency and Accountability:** Strengthen mechanisms for transparency and accountability to combat corruption and improve the effectiveness of development programmes.
- v. **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society to create holistic solutions that address Nigeria's complex development challenges.

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