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Regional Inequalities in the Process of Nigeria's Development: Socio-Political and Administrative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the administrative policies and political actions of the earlier administrators in Nigeria. The account reveals that regional inequalities in the country evolved during the one hundred years 1861-1960 of British Colonial Administration. Nonetheless, the activities of various ethno-linguistic groups and petite bourgeoisie especially after political independence in 1960 reinforced and even aggravated the regional inequality formation. The policy recommendations in this paper call for individual and regional equity based on consensual socio-political and economic policies which are likely to promote a change that is desirable. Such policies include: people-centred development strategies for sustainable growth, distributive measures geared toward employment and income generation, abatement of ethnocentrism and the creation of regional balance through administrative decentralisation.

Introduction

This paper deals with the socio-political and administrative account of regional inequality development in Nigeria. Without this account it is likely that any implementation of recommendations by regional planners and policy makers on the problems of regional disparities in the country is akin to treating the symptoms rather than the causes. The differential rates of operation of colonial administrative, political, and economic development processes seems to have created the regional disparities. In other words, the extant overwhelming regional inequalities are likely to have evolved during the one hundred year colonial period in the country (Nnoli, 1978; Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982). Nonetheless, the politico-economic activities of the few Nigerian elite and petite bourgeoisie who took over the administration of the country after political independence in 1960 undoubtedly perpetuated the development of spatial inequal ities. As a matter of fact, regional distortions are likely to occur in a developing country such as Nigeria with a large land area and many regions *(1)*, a population of 88,9 million people, and an annual population growth rate of percent. Nigeria is inhabited by people who speak different languages and belong to different economic, socio-cultural and religious groups (see Figure 1).

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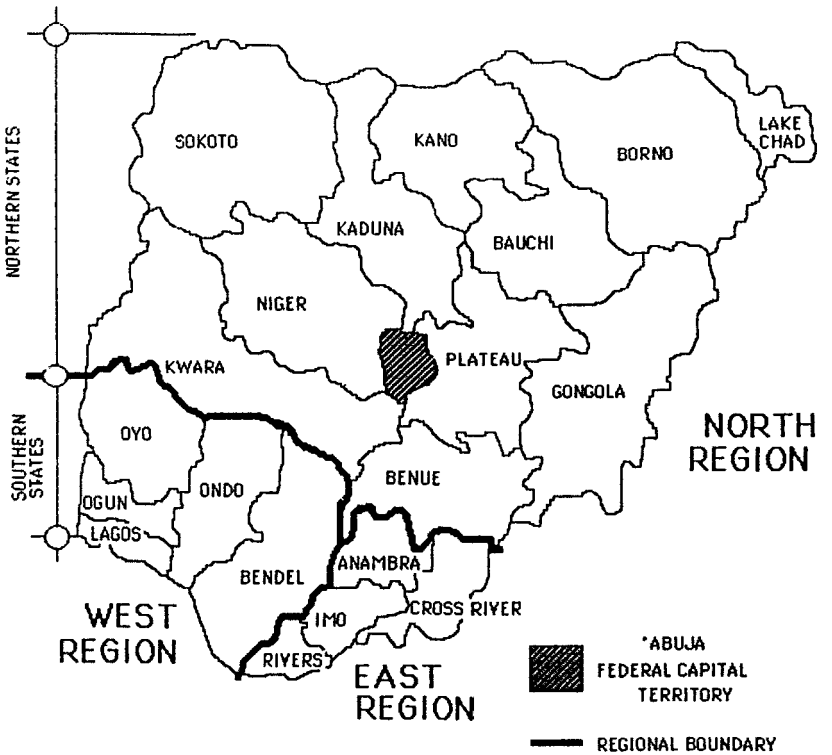
Figure 1. Nigeria: Regions and States



The period, 1861-1960, included the following activities: the time when Lagos Island, which was founded in about seventeenth century by the "Yoruba" Awori settlers, was annexed by Britain and taken from the control of Oba Dosunmu and his successors (Tamuno, 1972); the subsequent colonial administrative penetration of the Nigerian interior; the ethnocentric effect of the British Colonial Administration's constant emphasis on the differences rather than similarities of Nigerian cultures (Nnoli, 1978; Mamdani, 1976); the regionalisation of Nigeria under two different administrative protectorates (Nnoli, 1978; Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982); the problem associated with the partition of Africa in 1885; the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 by Lord Lugard (Crowder, 1973; Nnoli, 1978; Foeken 1982); the trade impact of the British Royal Niger Company and the constant location and relocation of its administrative headquarters (Tamuno, 1972; Crowder, 1973); and the impact of Indirect Rule on different regions in Nigeria (Ayandele, 1979; Nnoli, 1978). In addition, the socio-political and administrative account of regional inequality development in the country will not be complete until the post-independence regional development planning and administration and the subsequent requests for and creation of states are included (Nnoli, 1978; Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982).

The paper begins by reviewing the inequality effects of the location and re-location of the administrative headquarters of the Royal Niger Company and British Colonial Administration in the country; followed by the spatial impact of the concept of regionalism; the spatial impact of the creation of states, the spatial impact of post-independence socioeconomic development; and finally, policy recommendations and conclusions based on the account.

The Theoretical Framework for the Study

The account that follows is based on the primacy theory and concept, as nations undergo socioeconomic and political development and modernisation. For example, the theory indicates that urban primacy, socio-spatial and individual inequalities increase initially then decrease over time as socioeconomic and political development and modernisation progress within a nation or region. Many regional development experts such as Hirschman, 1958; Kuznets, 1963; Mera, 1965; El Shakhs, 1972; Mera, 1975; and Gilbert, 1976 have noted that, in any capitalist (market and mixed) society, regional inequality in all levels of national development (in terms of income, investments, employment, human resources, education, health services, a generally accepted functional political and administrative system, city systems, etc) is inevitable during the early period of socioeconomic growth and political development. The imbalance, they argue, tends to diminish during the more mature and advanced stage of development due to the equilibrating forces of the market.

The above model of development is refuted by Myrdal (1957) and Dicken & Lloyd (1990) who, among others, do not agree that the equilibrating forces of market mechanisms occur during the process of socioeconomic growth and political development. They suggest that the spatial and socioeconomic differences in prosperity and achievement among regions and individuals are exaggerated rather than reduced over time, unless deliberate and consistent countervailing measures are taken to redress the problems. Regional inequality and polarisation of activities, however, have persisted in most developing countries despite their quest over many decades for socioeconomic and political development and modernisation. This condition contributes to serious distributional problems such as hyper-urbanisation, spatial concentration of population and modern activities, unemployment and underemployment, income inequality and poverty, persistent food shortages, deteriorating material conditions of farm populations, and external dependency.

This paper realises the inevitable regional and individual socioeconomic, political, and administrative inequalities during the primordial stage of development and growth. That is, the geographic pattern of regional development is bound to be uneven, exhibiting core-periphery dichotomy. In most developing nations, to which Nigeria belongs, the core is made up of a few dominant central places or enclaves, while the periphery is subordinate and extensive in nature. Both are functionally and dynamically related to each other. Friedman (1973) indicates:

> *"...Core regions are defined as territorially organised subsystems of society which have a high capacity for generating and absorbing innovative change; peripheral regions are subsystems whose development path is determined chiefly by core region institutions with respect to which they stand in a relation of substantial dependency. Core and periphery together constitute a complete spatial system..."*.

Since centre-periphery dichotomy, or lack of regional/national integration, and increasingly regional and personal socioeconomic inequalities were obvious many years ago in Nigeria, the question that is addressed in this paper is how did Nigerian (colonial and post-independence) administrators deal with the issues. Were they active or passive, or even nonchalant in abating the unwanted situation? Did they, by mission or omission, encourage and further regional disparities? That is, did the previous administrators reinforce the forces of regional inequality development? In order words, did they accelerate and exacerbate regional inequality formation? If the previous administrators were nonchalant to these problems, then how can the present administrators cope with and alleviate the prevailing undesirable situation? Since it is doubtful whether the operation of the free market mechanism at the present stage of development in Nigeria can restore a situation of regional

equilibrium or balance, this paper is concerned with the possible impact of the 'visible hand' of government if it is exercised for dealing with regional inequalities. Besides, the 'visible hand' of the government appears to be essential here because the Nigerian economic market is not so well developed that interregional flows of human resources and capital are powerful enough to reduce disparities.

This socio-political and administrative perspective acknowledges that Nigeria, which was created out of European selfish ambitions in West Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is a conglomeration of hundreds of hitherto autonomous ethno-linguistic groups. The 'birth' of Nigeria could be at best termed "artificial," since the boundaries were not born out of physical, cultural, social, religious, economic, and environmental homogeneity, but conceived mainly as a geographical organisation for the administrative convenience of British imperialism (Crowder, 1973; Cookey, 1979). The diverse characteristics of Nigeria might have aided over time to create diverse rates of socioeconomic development, and, ultimately, the regional inequalities.

The Inequality Effects of the Administrations of the Royal Niger Company and British Colonialism

The activities of the British-chartered Royal Niger Company, a commercial enterprise, had some spatial consequences on the socioeconomic and political landscape of Nigeria. The company shifted its headquarters (capitals) from one part of the nation to the other until its charter was revoked in 1899. Its charter as a government lasted from July 10, 1886 to December 31, 1899 (Geary, 1965). The location of these headquarters at different areas in the country originated some important population and activity nodes that created the framework for regional inequalities. Such nodes include, among others, Calabar, Asaba, and Lokoja.

The process of the location and relocation of administrative headquarters at different geographic areas in Nigeria by the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and British Colonial Administration was a special type of administrative decentralisation which created regional inequalities, because:

(1) there were not many administrative headquarters located at different places at the same time to create balanced growth nodes throughout the country;
(2) this colonial period was associated with having limited financial and human resources by the British to run their colonial outposts; and
(3) the relocation process was motivated by administrative convenience of the British colonial powers, and was not continuous, only to be stopped at the turn of 1920s *(2)*.

Administrative decentralisation plays important functions in the redistribution

process during a deliberate national development effort only if the headquarters or capital cities are continuously relocated from one area to the other, or if many of them are created at the same time.

Those acting as growth centres or poles should have a synergistic effect on regional national development and modernisation. For example, some of the advantages adequate for integrated national development include that:

> *"...economically, it is a redistribution of public and government employments; institutionally, it provides an important component of the social infrastructure, local organisational capacity, and nurtures the creation of the demand and supply of local services and amenities; and politically, it fosters the creation of local bureaucratic constituency, and improves the participation rate and the initiative necessary for integrated regional development" (El-Shakhs, 1983:3-5).*

That is, growth and politico-administrative development tend to feed each other during a deliberate national socioeconomic development effort.

However, as was the case with Nigeria where the location was not continuous, and not many of the headquarters were located at different regions at the same time, the negative aspects of spatial inequality were enormous as resources and people were attracted to few areas (Portes, 1976). Inevitably, resource inequalities increase between the headquarter (core) and the region (periphery) reinforcing the development of spatial inequalities. Since headquarters exhibit modernisation influences in their immediate environs through the increased availability of public services provided by municipal and national governments (Booth & Seligson, 1979), the non-availability and non-relocation of the headquarters to the periphery tend to rob the remote areas of some modernisation impulses. Undoubtedly, these headquarters underwent some kind of transformation in the process of acting as administrative centres, trade centres, intercourse centres, and transmission centres for the extraction of primary raw materials from their hinterlands to Britain.

Some physical, socio-political and administrative infrastructures were invested in these centres to facilitate their functions and, at the same time, make them stand out from other important centres *(3)*. However, looking at these centres from the "dependency theory" perspective (Sunkel, 1972; Frank, 1966), they were actually the satellites of the British metropolis as they were linked to British economy and political hegemony. The development of these centres was neither self-generating nor self-perpetuating as they were outward-looking than inward-looking in connection with their hinterlands. Thus, the existence of these centres could be termed independent and at the same time parasitic, rather than generative, in relationship to their hinterlands. These centres and their role in the national system of cities quickened the onset of regional imbalances.

In any case, the location, relocation, and development of these colonial administrative and trade headquarters actually sowed the seeds of lopsided spatial development and structures in Nigeria. These headquarters were and are still strategic locations, such as sea ports, eg, Lagos, Calabar, Asaba, or the confluence of two rivers, eg, Lokoja, or military headquarters, eg, Kaduna and Lagos, or on the transportation nodes such as along the railway lines, eg, Lagos and Kaduna. Thus, one can reasonably surmise that the location of these centres enormously influenced the development of Nigeria's spatial structure.

Regionalism Concept and Regional Inequality Development

In order to allay the fears of most of the major ethnic groups regarding adequate representation in the development process, the concept of regionalism had to be introduced into the administrative framework of Nigeria. The regionalism concept empowered the different regions in the country to be legislatively semi-autonomous. Theoretically, each ethnic group, no matter the size, always strives to see that it is adequately represented in the national/regional decision-making process. In relative terms, the level and extent of development of each ethnic region depends on the extent it is represented in the inter-ethnic struggle for the sharing of the benefits of national development. The concept of regionalism is a major factor in the planning administration of Nigeria, which was entrenched in the administrative framework of the country through a series of Constitutional Developments and Amendments under different British governors and officials *(4)*.

The constitutional developments and amendments were included in the 1946 Richards Constitution; in 1952 in the Macpherson Constitution; and in the 1954 Louis Chick Constitution or Federal Constitution. These Constitutional Developments and Amendments laid the seeds of ethnicity and tribalism, the creation of regions (states), the future unequal development, and the characteristic spatial configuration of Nigeria. Thus, the beginning of the fragmentation and separatist tendencies and regional economic disparities were unwittingly launched in the country. The major outcomes of the constitutional conferences in London (1945, 1953) and in Nigeria (1954) were the recognition of many diversities in Nigeria, and the federation of its three regions: Northern Region with headquarters at Kaduna; Eastern Region with headquarters at Enugu; and Western Region with headquarters at Ibadan. Consequently, different ethno-regional political parties were formed in different regions to struggle for their share of the benefits of development. Such political parties included: Action Group (Western Region), Northern People's Congress (Northern Region); and National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (Eastern Region).

The origin of the idea that one region was different from the other could be traced implicitly from Lugard's policy of Indirect Rule or "Divide and Rule" of the amalgamated Nigeria. Lugard's policy of regionalising his administration under the Lieutenant Governors actually aggravated the increasing differences between the Northern and Southern Regions (Burns, 1964). Administrative standards were set for different regions. For example, in the North, administration was by Indirect Rule through the Emirs and salaried officials and "Sharia court" system of justice. In the South, it was the institution of the British system of justice for a large number of matters, as well as the institution of local administration of District Officers (DO) and Warrant Chiefs *(5)* in the Southeast, and the endowment of exclusive power to the Oba in the Southwest. The uneven administration and preparation of budgets for the two Nigerias resulted in social and economic disparities being created between the two regions by the Colonial Administration, as well as the emergence of confrontational ethnicity. Undoubtedly, economic growth between the two regions became spatially different enough that Lugard went as far as diverting revenues from the South to balance the Northern deficit (Crowder, 1973:233).

As said before, the inevitable consequences of the regionalism concept was the constant inter-ethnic socioeconomic competition for national resources and the highlighting of any existing regional disparities. These consequences, among others, constituted the platform for the agitation for state creation based on cultural and linguistic precepts. The agitation started in earnest after political independence in 1960 and adamantly continues to the present day. Some proponents of state creation contend that unless various ethnic groups have a direct access to decisions about the resources allocated to their population, the national wealth would not be equitably distributed. However, as we should see, the creation of states has not solved the nation's socioeconomic disparities, regional inequalities, inter-ethnic rivalries, and political problems (see also Dudley, 1976:9).

Creation of States and Regional Inequality Development

Agitation for the creation of more states and regional autonomy started to grow as the inequalities of resources of finance, civil service, and judiciary were being highlighted in the country. Other factors which were called up in the agitation for more state creation included:

(l) the use of states for the diffusion of developmental impulses, as they were supposedly going to provide the most appropriate basis for regional planning, administration and development;

(2) the creation of more states was to bring the government nearer to the people of peripheral regions, hitherto neglected due to bad governments and political

reprisals within the regions (Nigeria, 1958). In addition, undemocratic and inefficient state governments were often witnessed perpetrating:

"...arbitrary arrests and internment, flogging of political opponents, paper projects, badly maintained roads, scarcity of essential commodities, embezzlement of public funds, conspicuous official consumption, and utter disregard for the welfare of the underprivileged classes" (Nnoli, 1978:263).

A typical example of political reprisal and inefficient government was the Northern Region's neglect of the Benue-Plateau area prior to the creation of the Benue-Plateau State in 1967. As a matter of fact, Benue-Plateau State was the political opposition stronghold of the political party (NPC) in power in the region (Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982:12).

After political independence in 1960, people from different ethnic regions clamoured for the creation of more regions on the premise that through the recognition of Nigeria's diversity its unity is enhanced. Every ethno-language group is always campaigning for an autonomous state which, if taken to its ultimate conclusion, would further national fragmentation with every language group becoming a state. When things fall apart in this manner the centre may no longer hold. In order to grapple with this fissionable tendency and appease the ethnic regions, a provision in the federal constitution actually conferred extensive executive powers to the regions (states), potentially making the Central Administration 'a toothless bull-dog' – unnecessarily weak and ineffective. Consequently, each region takes little interest in national unity and often wishes to *"... secure its dominance over the whole country, either alone or in partnership with another region" (Barbour et al, 1982:38).* Often the tendency to secede surfaces if a region's requests are not fully met.

In recent years, the arguments relating to balanced development over the whole country as against core-periphery imbalances that threaten the socioeconomic and political stability of the country often call for the creation of more states. Thus, in 1967 twelve more autonomous states were created out of the original four regions. The creation of more states was designed to reduce the size of member states so that the federal government could more effectively control and evenly distribute revenues especially from petroleum export profits.

The creation of a twelve state Nigeria in 1967 was not final since some ethnic politicians remained dissatisfied with that number of states, partly because some states were still many times larger in area and population, and this raised the question of balanced development since some peripheral areas were, arguably, still conspicuously neglected in terms of socioeconomic development. Therefore, between 1967 and 1975 many petitions were sent to state and federal governments concerning the creation of more states. About thirty-one new states were demanded,

out of which seven were actually created on February 3, 1976 based on *"... making for even proportion and balanced development for all" (Ayeni & Mabogunje 1982:15)*. The additional seven new states brought the total number in the country to nineteen. The creation of more states also created eight more urban centres as state capitals. The role of these urban centres are more parasitic than generative since they do not contribute much to the development of their hinterlands or rural areas. The unintended results include: incessant rural migration to the new centres which robs the rural areas of able-bodied and youthful individuals needed for growth and development; and poor terms of trade and economic linkages between the centres and their rural hinterlands.

In the Nigerian socio-cultural and political scene, state agitation is endemic. Thus, by 1983, continued discontent resulted in more than thirty more new states being demanded and were under consideration by President Shagari's administration. The military take-over of the Shagari government on January 1, 1984 put an immediate stop to state demands. Nonetheless, two more states were created in 1987, namely, Akwa Ibom and Katsina, bringing the total number of states in the country to twenty-one. In 1991, the number of states reached thirty-one by the creation of ten new states: Enugu, Abia, Koji, former Gongola State divided into Taraba and Adamawa, Delta, Osun, Yobe, Jigawa, and Kebbi.The basis for creating these new states could not be fairly understood except for ethnicity. Their areas and population sizes are too small relative to the ma jority of other states and in real terms none of them could boast of adequate or sustaining economic bases. Actually, one wonders when state demand and creation should stop in Nigeria since it has more than two hundred ethno-linguistic groups. Many Nigerians, including the former heads of states, have started to mount stiff opposition to the further disintegration of the country (*TELL*, April 26, 1993; *Newswatch*, May 24, 1993).

Despite this tumultuous process, there have been somewhat positive side-effects to state creation in Nigeria:

(I) The new state capitals are new large centres since they have more than their fair share of development activities. According to Adeniyi 1978:401), these state capitals (major urban centres) together command about 77 percent of the total number of industrial establishments in Nigeria, as well as over 86 percent of total industrial employment in 1970. While the new growth points were in the already relatively over-developed areas, state creation did not lead to new growth points in the remote areas or rural areas within the states (Dudley, 1976; Egunjobi, 1990). Egunjobi draws attention to the fact that while these centres have attracted a good deal of investment which has stimulated their development, the spin-off effects on rural hinterlands have been minimal and *"... a substantial proportion of the hinterland is so distant to the state capitals that meaningful urban-rural interaction is hardly feasible" (Baker, 1990:22)*.

(2) Some sense of competition exists among the states in socioeconomic development efforts, although lack of internally-generated funds often pushes them to external borrowing, and the consequent increase in external debts (Nigeria 1984, in **West Africa**, 1984:51-87).

(3) As a unit of planning, and analysis, the states seem to provide an appropriate basis for regional socioeconomic planning, administration and development. For example, revenue allocation in Nigeria by the central government for overall socioeconomic development is based on the principles of derivation, state equality, and need as expressed by population (Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982:21). One unfortunate end-note is that uneven regional growth, regional socioeconomic inequalities, and individual poverty still largely remain unabated in the country.

Post-Independence Socioeconomic Development and Regional Disparity

Nigeria is a nation that is endowed with several mineral, natural and human resources which are not evenly distributed among the states or regions. Thus, the development level of each state depends on its access to the material and non-material resources.

The pursuit of industrial development in Nigeria was accorded an increased attention since the 1970s when Nigeria, for the first time, created its development plan without outside inf luence (see Second National Development Plan, 1970-74). Industrial establishments in the country, in the 1970s and 1980s, showed a great deal of inequality among the regions or states (see Table 1). In Nigeria, the number of industrial manufacturing establishments a state has is often equated to its development level. Table 1 indicates that among the states in the country at the time, the Southern states have low ranks when compared to their Northern counterparts. For example, in 1975, ranks 1 to 4 were all Southern states (Lagos, Anambra, Bendel, and Oyo, respectively), while ranks 19 to 15 were all Northern states (Bauchi, Gongola, Borno, Niger, and Benue, respectively). Although all the regions and states increased their number of establishments in 1985, as reflected in their percent changes, the ranks did not substantially change and Lagos State still maintained its dominance. Some states even became worse-off by 1985, especially in the North, such as Niger, Sokoto, Plateau, and Kaduna, as well as in the East, such as Cross River, Imo, and Rivers. Judging from the absolute numbers and ranks, the Southern states are more developed than their Northern counterparts.

Table 1 – Nigeria: Ranking of Regions and States in Terms of Absolute Number of Industrial Manufacturing Establishments, 1975 and 1985

Region & State	Absolute Number of Industrial Manufacturing Establishments				
	1975	Rank	1985	Rank	% Change (1975-1985)
NORTH	**323**		**978**		**202.8**
Bauchi	8	19	37	18	362.5
Benue	26	15	81	14	211.5
Borno	10	17	38	17	280.0
Gongola	9	18	173	8	1822.2
Kaduna	59	8	99	11	67.8
Kano	89	5	294	3	230.3
Kwara	28	14	103	10	267.9
Niger	16	16	27	19	68.8
Plateau	42	11	74	15	76.2
Sokoto	36	13	52	16	44.4
EAST	**310**		**613**		**97.7**
Anambra	131	2	314	2	139.7
Cross River	66	7	99	11	50.0
Imo	76	6	118	9	55.3
Rivers	37	12	82	13	121.6
WEST	**657**		**2069**		**214.9**
Bendel	108	3	256	4	137.0
Lagos	346	1	1111	1	222.1
Ogun	53	9	227	7	328.3
Ondo	50	10	238	5	376.0
Oyo	100	4	237	6	137.0
NIGERIA	**1290**		**3660**		**183**

Source: (a) Federal Office of Statistics, 1975-78. **Industrial Survey of Nigeria** (Lagos, Nigeria).
(b) The 1985 data was collected by the writer in August 1985 from Federal Office of Statistics (computer print-out), Industrial Survey Section , Lagos, Nigeria.

The top-down, production- or function-centered development strategy that has been carried out in Nigeria for the past three decades has been ineffective in addressing the problems of rural, regional, and national development, as well as individual and regional socioeconomic inequalities. The strategy focuses on national needs or functions, rather than community needs or basic needs, which

tends to externalise people and environment. Instead of the benefits of development trickling down from the top as expected, what was witnessed and observed was trickling up from the bottom, as well as increasing socioeconomic inequalities. Many development experts have stressed an alternative development strategy that should be people-centred or community-centred, sustainable and environmentally conscious. The new strategy calls for empowering of the local people in order to create a self-reliant sustainable development (Korten, 1984).

Apart from the problems of a production-centered paradigm of development mentioned above, the poor performance of the Nigerian economy can partly be attributed to poor management capacity, abject corruption in government and private institutions and political anomie. Since independence, the Nigerian administrative system and political environment have imposed limitations of various kinds on the free development of the human mind and ingenuity and on the environmental conditions for nurturing of human capacity to organise development. Nigeria has been for many years under military administration that has been authoritarian and repressive at times, and abhors and decries freedom of speech and political expression (*TELL*, 1993; *Newswatch*, 1993: 10-15). Presently Nigeria is in dire need of capacity-building to produce top-level policy makers and managers. The aim is to build a management capacity able to carry out socioeconomic analysis and modelling essential in selecting among alternative policy strategies (Okigbo, 1989).

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations address the issue of regional inequalities and overall national development and modernisation in Nigeria. As we saw during the review, regional imbalance has been perpetuated in the country over time. The result has been the prevailing 'unwarranted' uneven distribution of resources and benefits of development. 'Warranted' unevenness is inevitable during the incipient growth and development of any country because of inadequate administrative machinery, lack of clear direction of redistribution mechanisms, non-diversification of the economy and technology and limited employment opportunities for the majority of people. During the early stage of development income development surpluses and even hierarchy of cities are not adequately distributed. However in a country such as Nigeria where development aided by the petro-dollar has proceeded for quite a long time, the perpetual existence of 'unwarranted' inequalities among individuals and regions is unpardonable. Individual and regional equity based on consensual socio-political policies, especially in the form of Acts, is still possible. Attractive socio-political, economic and administrative consensus policy options that are likely to be acceptable to every region and individual will be those which

promote a change that is desirable in its own right: for example, a multicultural policy on ethnocentrism, capacity-building, and sustainable self-reliant people-centered development.

Ethnocentrism has been a major driving force which has fueled and perpetuated regional imbalance in the country over time. For the problems of ethnicity to be ameliorated in the country, a concerted effort by the local, regional and federal governments is needed urgently. The effort will ensure that all references that vilify individuals or incite unwarranted division and unnecessary competition are removed by law from the mass media and other instruments of propaganda (Nnoli, 1978). According to Nnoli the concept of the existing "North/South" and "East/West" that mark the social, cultural, historical and ethno-linguistic divisions and affinities for socio-economic development planning should be applied with caution. At times in Nigeria this creates the notion of "us" versus "them".

A new set of references is needed which explains the country's present socio-economic predicaments. For example the concept of developed and backward or depressed regions stemming from the differences in regional distribution of natural and mineral resources including income, employment and welfare, should replace the "North/South" and "East/West" distinction or dichotomy. Moreover, in order to realise a long-term solution, strategies to accommodate the major ethnic groups in the development process should be pursued. For example, the languages and histories of major ethnic groups should be taught in schools for the understanding and appreciation of each other; information for important social services (public or central services) should be provided in major languages, and the political system and its policy and decision-making apparatus should be representative of multi-ethnic groups in the country, in order to allay the fears of the minorities. Socio-economic planning administration, and management based on the new concepts are likely to enhance socio-economic and political equity if constantly pursued over a long period of time.

A cogent remedy to regional inequality also lies in the creation of a nationally integrated economy rather than on the creation of mushroom states based on ethno-linguistic sentiments for sharing the national wealth. The suggestion here is a gradual shift of emphasis from the existing centre-down, urban-biased, production-centred organisation to a sustainable, self-reliant, people-centred development. What is actually advocated is a bi-modal or dualistic strategy of development where both paradigms are operative. According to Korten (1984:309) if people-centred development is to emerge it will be an offspring of the production-centred industrial era. The new paradigm should focus on rural/regional development based on the community or basic needs approach.

The federal government should use its authority to improve the relative and absolute shares of the poor regions or states because the free market mechanism

does not operate in Nigeria to guarantee the redistribution of the benefits of socio-economic development. The Nigerian market is imperfect, corrupt and not well developed. Distributive measures should be initiated by the government to include: industrial decentralisation by giving priority to lagging regions; job-training programmes as a targeted policy for the poor, the underprivileged and the minorities; and direct income transfers. The aim is to improve on the economic base of those regions, as well as their employment potential and income which will eventually make the local economy richer.

The aim of the people-centred or grass-roots approach to rural and regional development is to create a society that is secure and sustainable. Growth which has occurred so far because of a production-centred approach, has not been accompanied by equivalent increase in employment, thereby resulting in individual and regional poverty as well as socioeconomic inequalities. To create jobs and ensure that all share in the benefits of economic growth, government should make markets more 'people-friendly' by: investing more in basic education and worker retraining; ensuring universal access to markets; redesigning credit systems and fiscal incentives to support small-scale enterprises and informal employment; and using tax breaks to encourage labour-intensive technology and production in rural-towns, agro-towns, or small- and intermediate-sized cities (Collins, 1993:4). The new concept focuses on human security based on environmental sustainability, employment, and provision of basic needs. Perhaps, this is what Strong (1993:5) calls, in both environmental and economic terms, "eco-industrial revolution". Strong goes on to say that for the government to effect economic sustainability, it will require a fundamental reorientation of policies and budgets, redeployment of resources, and reshaping of the system of incentives and penalties that motivate economic behaviour.

In order for the resources to be adequately managed and for long-term economic sustainability to be entrenched in Nigeria, the federal government should embark on capacity-building. This will enhance the existing management capacity of Nigerian public institutions and private economic agents, and also help provide the much needed top-level managers and policy-makers. Capacity-building will achieve little in Nigeria without political development. The Nigerian government must develop a form of governance that permits free expression and full participation in the development process. Participation empowers the local people to take charge of their lives by increasing their potency, as their alternative ideas, social techniques and technologies are released. Political development is likely to create society-wide trust and predictability, and foster a stable political order that is the *sine qua non* for a long economic growth. Without creating more states in Nigeria, which often depends on ethnocentric sentiments, a decentralised administrative structure can be achieved which is capable of providing stability, creativity, and civic

commitment of every Nigerian, and more importantly, capable of reducing regional inequalities.

Regional inequalities can be alleviated through political development, especially in terms of administrative decentralisation. The recently created local government areas throughout the country could be strengthened and employed as a "seeding" agent for local and regional growth, development, and modernisation. There exist today 449 local government areas with their headquarters or capitals. These capitals Egunjobi (1990:22) calls "third-order centres"*(6)*. Administrative decentralisation plays an important function in the redistribution process during a deliberate national development effort, especially by strategically locating the headquarters or capitals for the newly created administrative areas. The local government area capitals should be targeted as development and modernisation diffusion agents, and also as the agro-political units for the provision of basic needs using local materials, manpower, and small-scale enterprises. That is, these capitals can be deliberately employed to act as innovation nodes or poles by which growth and modernisation impulses could diffuse or trickle-down to their tributary areas. In other words, they should provide development stimuli and act as a change agent to their hinterlands or catchment areas.

As a process of national urbanisation, socioeconomic and modernisation strategy, administrative decentralisation should be seen as a means of redistributing public and government employment. As a means of socio-cultural development, it provides an important component of the social infrastructure and local organisational capacity which nurtures the creation, demand, and supply of local services and amenities. Finally, as a means of politico-administrative development, it fosters the creation of a local bureaucratic constituency which improves the participation rate and the initiative necessary for integrated regional development. This paper also suggests that states and local government areas experiment on shifting, from time to time, their administrative headquarters (capitals) from city to city or town to town with the hope of redistributing the benefits of socio-economic development and modernisation (see also Angotti, 1993:102). This is because, in Nigeria, a disproportionate amount of investment and development efforts always goes in favour of the capital cities.

Conclusions

This socio-political and administrative account argues that regional inequality development in Nigeria was as a result of the socio-spatial impact of British colonial activities in the country over the period 1861-1960. It stressed that noticeable spatial enclaves started formally to develop in the country in the late nineteenth century with the activities of the British Royal Niger Company (a

Trading Company entrusted with the political and economic administration of British territories in Nigeria). The location and relocation of the Company's administrative headquarters (capitals) from one area of the country to another created important population and activity nodes that formed the 'foundation' frameworks for the contemporary regional imbalances.

The account further acknowledges that the different political administrations in the North and South Regions of Nigeria by the British, especially through the colonial policy of 'indirect rule' (divide and rule), was a factor in the formation of regional inequalities. In Nnoli's words, *"...indirect rule widened the social distance among the communal groups in Nigeria, thereby reinforcing the ethnocentric factor in the emergence of ethnicity"* (Nnoli 1978: 113). Undoubtedly, the differences between the North and South had generated some ethno-regional sentiments that are vividly reflected in the interethnic socioeconomic competition and the evident inefficiency, such as duplication or 'me-tooism' in the utilisation of available resources in the country. For example, the question of state agitations by many ethnic groups and the subsequent creations which have minimal substantive basis other than ethnocentrism and a means of sharing the national wealth. Also the entrenchment of the "regionalism concept" in the administrative framework of the country by Richard's Constitution in 1946 had spatial implications. One noticeable consequence of the above events was that each region had different rates of socio-economic, administrative and political development which resulted over time in generating uneven regional development in the country.

The production-centred (top-down) development strategy of post-independence Nigeria has also generated a great deal of socioeconomic inequalities that a majority of Nigerians are fed up with. Today, a new development strategy that is self-reliant, sustainable, and people-centred is advocated. A people-centred development strategy means empowering the putative beneficiaries through the grass-roots or bottom-up approach rather than the centre-down approach.

A review of regional inequality formation in Nigeria is necessary in order to understand the underlying causes of the existing regional disparities. It provides the policy makers, who often rely on regional analysts, among others, with adequate information on the spatial attributes of the Nigerias socioeconomic, administrative and political development. The policy makers need the information to be able to arrive at rational decisions, as well as formulate the policies that have the much-needed impacts.

Notes

(1) In 1987 two more states, Akwa Ibom in the Southeast bordering Cross River, Imo, and Rivers states, and Katsina in the Northwest between Sokoto and Kano states, were added

to the existing nineteen states, thereby bringing the total number of states in Nigeria to twenty-one. In 1991, the number of states reached thirty-one by the creation of ten new states: Enugu, Abia, Koli, Taraba, Adamawa, Delta, Osun, Yobe, Jigawa, and Kebbi.

(2) For example, in many cases in the United States of America, the states' capital cities (headquarters) have been relocated from one city (area) to another over time. The major reasons may hinge on the political and economic factors such as the redistribution of public and government employments, as well as providing an important component of social infrastructure. In Nigeria, the relocation of headquarters which was mainly for administrative convenience came to an end at the turn of 1920s, thereby creating almost a permanent spatial configuration. The colonial headquarters are the present day major growth centres in Nigeria that have a disproportionate share in their favour of the benefits of national development.

(3) For example, some of the administrative headquarters were either along the railways or along the coast with harbour facilities. Most had conspicuous administrative buildings with club houses. When the Royal Niger Company (RNC) lost its charter over its territories in Nigeria it was fully compensated for the loss of its administrative buildings to the sum of about 900,000 naira (Crowder, 1973:211). (Note: one naira = one US dollar in January 1986).

(4) The proposal of Sir Arthur Richards' (the Colonial Governor of Nigeria) constitution started in March, 1945 but was effected on January 1, 1947. The features of the constitution included among others (Crowder, 1973:273): (a) the creation of regional councils with a Central Council in Lagos to which the results of the regional deliberations would be referred (Bourdillion, 1946; Ayeni & Mabogunje, 1982; (b) to provide adequately within the Nigerian unity for the diverse elements which make up the country; and (c) the inclusion of the North in the Central Legislature as it was hitherto excluded from participation in national politics because of its traditional form of government that had largely been preserved and had little opportunity for Western-style politics. Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution of Nigeria: Cmd. 6599 (1945), p 6]. Some Nigerian scholars such as Dike (1957) and Ezera (1960) indicated that the Richards Constitution established the basis of a very unwieldy federation. The constitution is seen as being the foundation of tribalism in Nigerian politics which is capable of arresting regional unificaton. It created the politico-administrative and economic atmosphere that nurtured and perpetuated regional inequalities over time.

(5) As Lugard was unable to establish adequately Indirect Rule in the East Region as it (East) was still resisting British penetration of its interior, he used some individuals with some apparent authorities in the form of "Warrant Chiefs" (Whitemen's Chiefs) to keep law and order.

(6) First order centres are the three regional capitals in 1963, and second order centres are the more recent state capitals which reached 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, and a total of 31 in 1991.

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