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The Governance of Nigeria's Social Protection: The Burdens of Developmental Welfarism?

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Abstract: Empirical findings on the implementation of neoliberal social policies in the global south has presented them as mostly political economy failures. In several studies, their messy interactions with politics and a myriad of implementation bottlenecks were highlighted. Social protection and social programmes, as an example of social policies have unfortunately become politicised used as instruments by political leaders striving to win political capital in environments of unbridled, and complex bureaucratic procedures. This article analyses challenges of social development or 'developmental welfarism' in the Nigerian context through interrogation of the territorial governance of Nigerian social protection. The issues addressed by this article relates to the orientation of Nigerian social policy dynamics and the exploration of these challenges, were described as the 'burdens of developmental welfarism' which relates to the broader issues of the so-called Nigerian 'developmental' state. The analysis of Nigerian social policy dynamics through a political economy lens, highlighted the ramifications of the complex interactions of different stakeholders (international, local and non-state actors) as well as processes and mechanisms that shaped the territorial governance of Nigerian social policy programmes. The article unpacked the issues and challenges of Nigerian social protection and offered some policy recommendations for 'unburdening' Nigerian social policy.

Keywords: Nigeria; social protection; social policy dynamics; territorial governance; policymaking

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1. Introduction

Over the past three decades neoliberal social policies were implemented with the assistance of the IMF and the World Bank in many developing countries. Unfortunately, the majority of these policies were obscured with politics and implementation bottlenecks. Even policies formulated singlehandedly by African politicians aimed at attaining radical and progressive improvement in their economies following several decades of colonial rule were tainted somewhat by neoliberal thinking [1]. The resultant politicisation of social programmes in Africa (evidenced by the design of overambitious programmes in many post-colonial countries) by political leaders striving to win political capital in environments of unbridled and complex bureaucratic procedures, have, unfortunately, also failed. An example is Nigeria's Social Protection Policy, which was re-launched with fanfare in January 2019 under the current administration of President Buhari, in power since 2015. This article examines the governance of Nigerian social protection by questioning its orientation and debating what it calls the 'burdens of developmental welfarism', which, though a contested concept, is fuzzy and opaque with regards to the Nigerian 'developmental' state.

Interrogating social policy dynamics through a political economy lens, dissecting the ramifications of the interactions by international, local, and non-state actors and the processes and mechanisms in the territorial governance of Nigerian social protection is one of the objectives of this article [2]. By unpacking who does what, how, and why, this article presented issues and challenges plaguing social protection in Nigeria. Some useful insights drawn from the findings of an independent doctoral research into Nigerian social protection are proffered [3]. The article is structured as follows: the first part outlines the concepts employed in the paper and their treatment in the literature. This discussion proceeds to the operationalisation of the welfare regime theory to the Nigerian context. The next section discusses the evolutionary paths of the 'emergent Nigerian welfare state' through an analysis of its particular nuances, and its emerging 'developmental welfarism' or 'redistribution regime' [3,4]. The conclusion anchors the argument on challenges to the evolution and sustainability of the Nigerian nascent welfare regime.

2. Social Protection as a Compelling Social Policy Tool

Annually, hundreds of billions of dollars are spent on social protection programmes [5]. The importance of these programmes increased dramatically in the past year due to the coronavirus pandemic. In 2020, global extreme poverty increased for the first time in two decades, and most countries expanded their social protection programmes, with more than 1.1 billion new recipients receiving government-led social assistance payments [6]. That social protection policies were framed as a pro-poor all-inclusive policy designed to alleviate poverty in many countries is not surprising given the ongoing uncertainties in the global economy. Indeed, the pandemic has underscored the necessity for social protection programmes (SP) to shield and safeguard the underprivileged. Importantly, SP has become a compelling poverty alleviation policy tool for building resilience and enhancing human capital, making it a top-priority agenda of virtually all international and multi-lateral global organisations. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations, Unite Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) unanimously agree that SP delivers positive outcomes in areas such as education, healthcare, and well-being amongst others [5–7]. SP is fairly (presumably) easy to grasp particularly when linked to improving citizens' welfare and wellbeing. However, it is highly contested, not helped by the fact that various definitions exist in the literature.

3. Conceptualising Social Protection

The definition by Samson and Taylor [8,9], employed in this article, defines social protection as "a broad range of public, and sometimes private, instruments to tackle the challenges of poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion". Whilst this definition summarises what SP represents, it failed to sufficiently capture the entirety of the concept in its broad sense. Therefore, other definitions, proffered by UNDP [7], and The Food Agriculture Organisation [FAO] [9], and UNRISD [10], are used. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development [10] defines social protection as: "policies and programmes concerned with preventing, managing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's wellbeing". Similarly, both UNDP [7] and FAO [9] define social protection as an umbrella term, connoting "a set of public policies, actions, instruments enacted by a state (formal) or in some cases non-state (informal) actors within a country or a territory to help address poverty and vulnerability experienced by citizens".

Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler [11], however, introduced the transformative dimension to SP and provided two definitions: conceptual and operational. These definitions were extensively employed by scholars and development practitioners. The conceptual definition describes SP as comprising, "all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups". The operational definition defines SP as "the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide, social assistance in extremely poor individuals and households, social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination and abuse" [11].

4. Defining Developmental Welfarism and Developmental State

Originally conceived by Chalmers Johnson in 1982, developmental state (DS) theory was used to characterise East Asian growth economies of Japan, China, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Taiwan, particularly the active intervention of the State in national economic management; preferentially promoting industrialisation through bureaucracies, with the ultimate goal of achieving superlative economic growth [12]. DS, as an explanatory term, conceptualised the 'plan-rational interventional state' [12] as a 'third model' of state differentiated from the 'market-rational regulatory state' found in Western countries and the 'plan-ideological state' of (former) socialist countries. According to Johnson [12,13], the developmental state elevates economic development as a priority objective; intervening in the economy not only by means of regulation, but also by friendly coercion. The DS operates through a highly skilled public bureaucracy, assigned executive powers to implement strategic industrial and economic policies. In a developmental state, the control of economic, financial, and statutory powers lies with the executive arm, but these powers are deployed to pursue industrial and economic development with a determined focus. Evans [14] distinguished two features of the modern developmental state: bureaucratic capacity, and 'embeddedness' (reflecting the fusion of public bureaucracy with the business and professional communities in a given country). Thus, in the view of Johnson and Evans, a true developmental state empowers, strengthens, and enables the bureaucrats to exercise influential roles in the strategic direction of the national economy, which should reasonably permit accelerated growth without diminishing the role and influence of industrial entrepreneurs and businesspeople. In real terms, DS represents a departure from a neoliberal economic ideology and a drift towards state interventionism, although this interventionism is not designed to handicap socio-economic development (as was the case in socialist countries), but to support developmental trajectory [15].

So, whilst the classic definition of DS found in most East Asian countries featured elements outlined by both Johnson [12] and Evans [14], these attributes are lacking in most African countries. In the case of Nigeria, going by the classic definition of DS, clearly the country cannot be classified as a 'conventional' developmental state; however, it is possible to detect some elements of DS in the manner Nigeria has prosecuted its welfarist or social welfare agenda. The mode in which Nigeria has fashioned the provisioning of social investment programmes bears all the hallmarks of DS. However, this parochial approach to DS [16,17] has resulted in what this paper characterises as the 'burdens' of developmental welfarism.

5. Contesting Developmental Welfarism and Reimagining Its Logic

Developmental welfarism (deliberately employed in this article) owes its origins to the concept of developmental social welfare. Developmental social welfare (DSW) is a deliberate, pro-poor social policy approach espousing the supremacy or primacy of the economy in meeting the welfare needs of the people. As a core tenet of social development principles, DSW emphasises the promotion of social investment programmes as an economic policy that affords the social inclusion of the poor. Midgley [18] defines social development as "a process of planned change designed to promote people's welfare in conjunction with a comprehensive process of economic development". Hence, economic development is actualised through social investment programmes as part of a broader developmental social welfare (DSW) orientation. Patel [19] described DSW as a 'pro-poor approach', . . . seeking to mobilise the collective strengths, assets, and capacities of the poor towards their proactive participation in the productive sectors of the economy [20]. Inherent in the DSW philosophy is the notion that without a strong, vibrant economic performance and growth, a nation cannot meaningfully provide expenditure for social development. The logic of DSW, that national governments should preferentially allocate resources to economic and industrial policies, playing a pivotal role in the process of national development, aligns with the principles of DS of subordinating social policies to economic policies.

This logic finds expression in the 'fragmentation of social policy', which is a prominent feature of a development welfare state. Fragmentation of social policy is marked by a combination of mismatches that diminishes welfare provisioning and exacerbates social need and tension. This situation, characterised by inexpedient governance and maladministration, is heightened by unstable external forces [21]. The result is a residual social protection regime that does not have the stamina to confront systemic inequalities nor challenge market outcomes or address multidimensional poverty. Consequently, what emerges is a 'burdened' developmental welfare system that is straining for survival; fractured by its redistributive chauvinism and patterned to function on the basis of individualist or corporatist agenda for perpetuating a clientelist and corrupt system that continually reinforces unfair and irrational benefits to beneficiaries/recipients. A 'burdened DSW' reinforces residual social welfare, represses citizenship and social rights (sometimes proscribes them), and reproduces inefficiencies and exacerbates the discontinuities with the original model. Therefore, DSW must be recalibrated to embrace the elements of universality, unity, rationality, sustainability, and equity. This recalibration cannot occur even when the gains and improvements are modest or skimpy. In other words, a recalibrated DWS can still accommodate complexities, contradictions, and controversies whilst it is evolving to become a much-improved version of itself. A burden DWS does no good to the state, the elites, or the citizens. It is a self-imposed, self-sabotaging monster that will always yield less provision, stricter conditions, more confusion, dubious validity, and 'dribs and drabs' of social justice [22].

6. Nigeria: A Muddled Site of Social Policy Failures or an Experiment in Burdened DSW?

Adewale [23] described Nigeria as a complex conglomeration of nation-states with multifarious identities and interpretations. This is a reference to how the uniquely diverse, culturally distinct, and geopolitically complex nation has struggled with the challenges of nation building since gaining independence from Britain in 1960 [24]. Operating as a federation was one of the ways the architects of modern Nigeria attempted to resolve the complexities of governance in a multi-ethnic country of over 250 tribal groups (Figure 1). Paden [25] analysed the 'promise of Nigeria', and argued that her inherent complexities make it unique: a country imbued with strong political resilience and an in-built mechanism for resolving complicated ethnolinguistic and religious diversity. In other words, Nigeria has the potential to become a distinctive model for inter-ethnic and inter-religious political adaption and a bridging power in global politics between the Western and the Islamic world. Coupled with her abundant natural resources and superior levels of diaspora human capital, Nigeria can become a superpower. Unfortunately, the realities are stark: classified as a low-middle income, mixed economy with an emerging and flourishing services industry (financial and telecommunications for instance), the Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues, which constitutes 19% of its GDP having averaged slightly over 10% since 2014 [26–31]. Based on the rebased GDP figures (see Figures 2–8), the Nigerian economy is the largest in Africa and the 26th largest economy in the world calculated on nominal GDP [32]. As the most populated African country, with over 210 million citizens [33], the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) projected growth rate of 2.2% will see the population jump to 230 million in 2025 and 300 million in 2050 making the country the 6th largest in the world [Figure 7] [34].

Source: Maps-Nigeria.com (accessed on 20 October 2020)

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria.

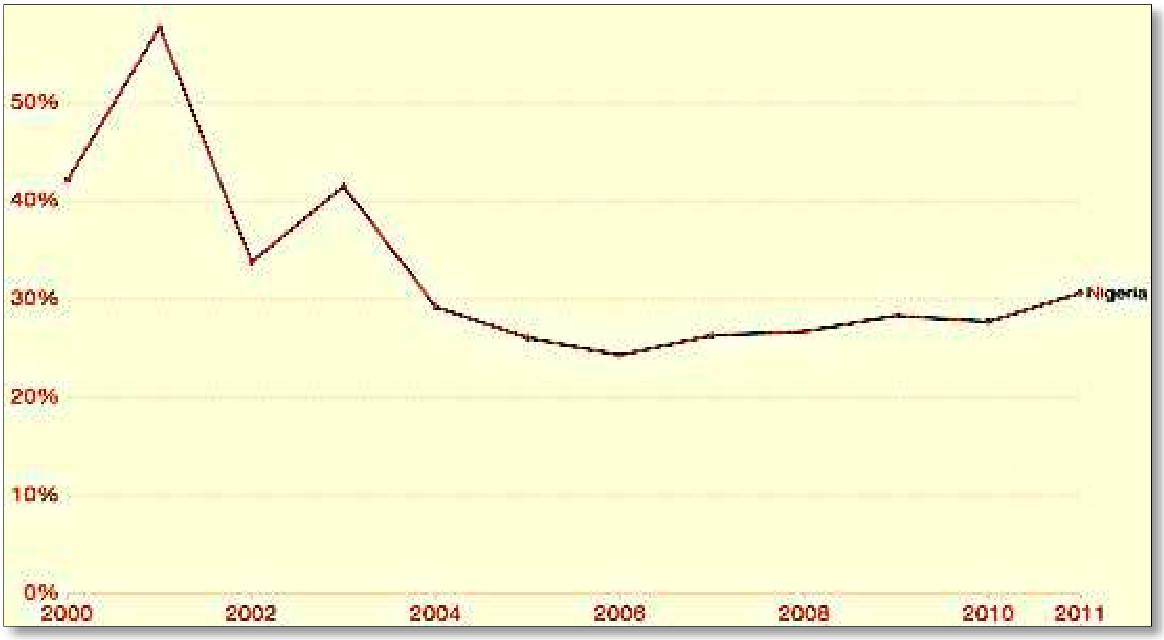

Figure 2. Nigeria's Government Social Spending between 2000 and 2011 represented as a share of the GDP. Source: Author.

With a thriving formal and an expansive informal sector currently employing over 60% of the working population [5], Nigeria's economic prospects appear bright. However, she is beleaguered with chronic economic and political mismanagement, attested to by the failures of erstwhile economic reforms. Despite her unique complexities as a developing country, Nigeria's economy's remarkable growth is puzzling. Annual growth levels averaged 7% (from 2002 onwards) and 12.7% (2012) [26,35,36], peaking in 2015 at 14% (see Figures 5 and 6) [30]. These results were, however, necessarily not because of sound economic management on the part of government, especially given that the Nigerian economy is still mainly agrarian [37]; the explanatory factor could be attributed to developments in the extractive sector (oil and gas exploration), which as the mainstay of the economy accounted for over 70% of government revenues and over 40% of GDP [38]. As the leading African oil and gas producer, Nigeria also has Africa's largest oil and gas reserves and is the world's fifth biggest net exporter of LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) [29]. However, persistent political economy issues (multidimensional poverty, inequality, extreme deprivation, class divisions, and political uncertainties), have hampered Nigeria's economic progress. Since 2015, Nigeria's current political leadership have similarly struggled to improve the social contract and appeared inept at addressing societal challenges.

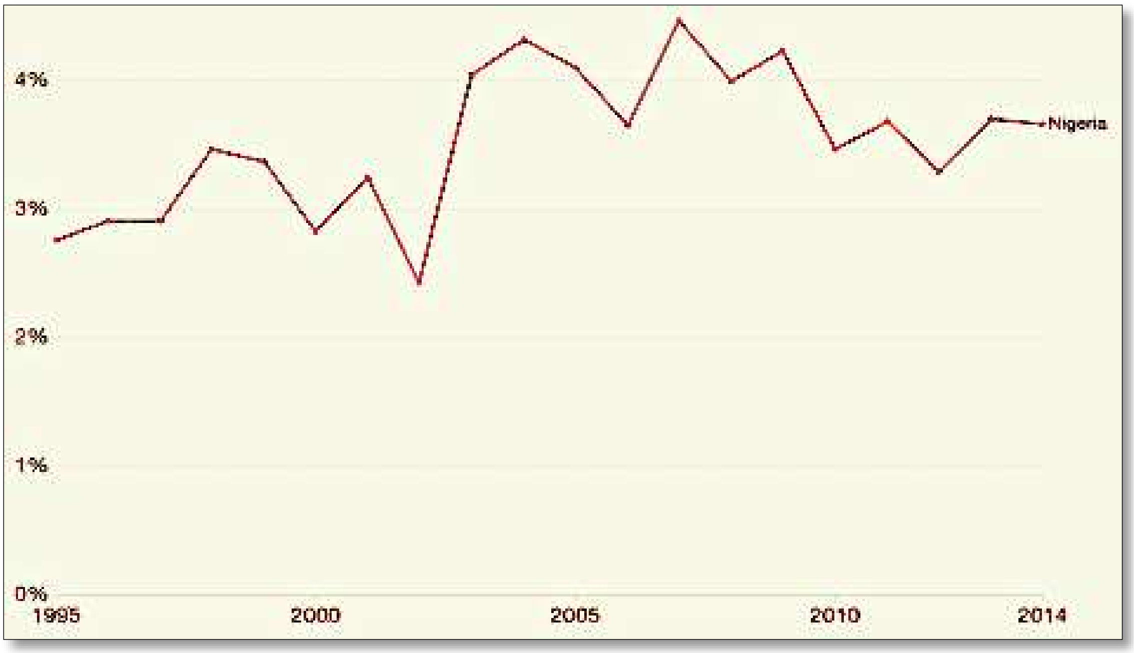

Figure 3. Nigeria's Government Healthcare Expenditure between 1995 and 2014 as a component of social spending. Source: Author.

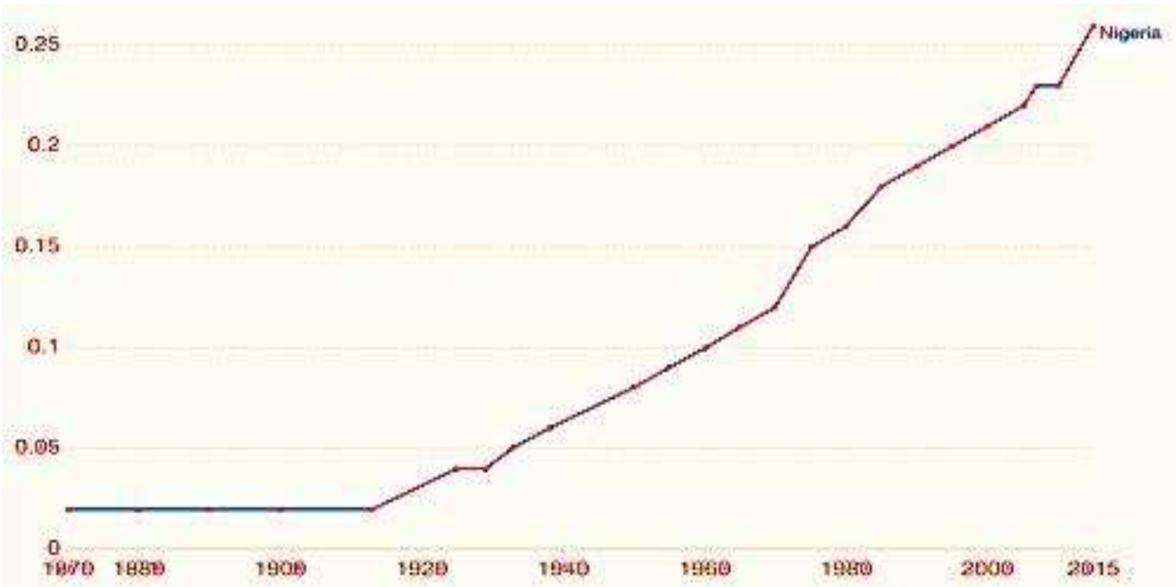

Figure 4. Nigeria's Human Development Index [Historical Index 1870 to 2015]. Source: Author.

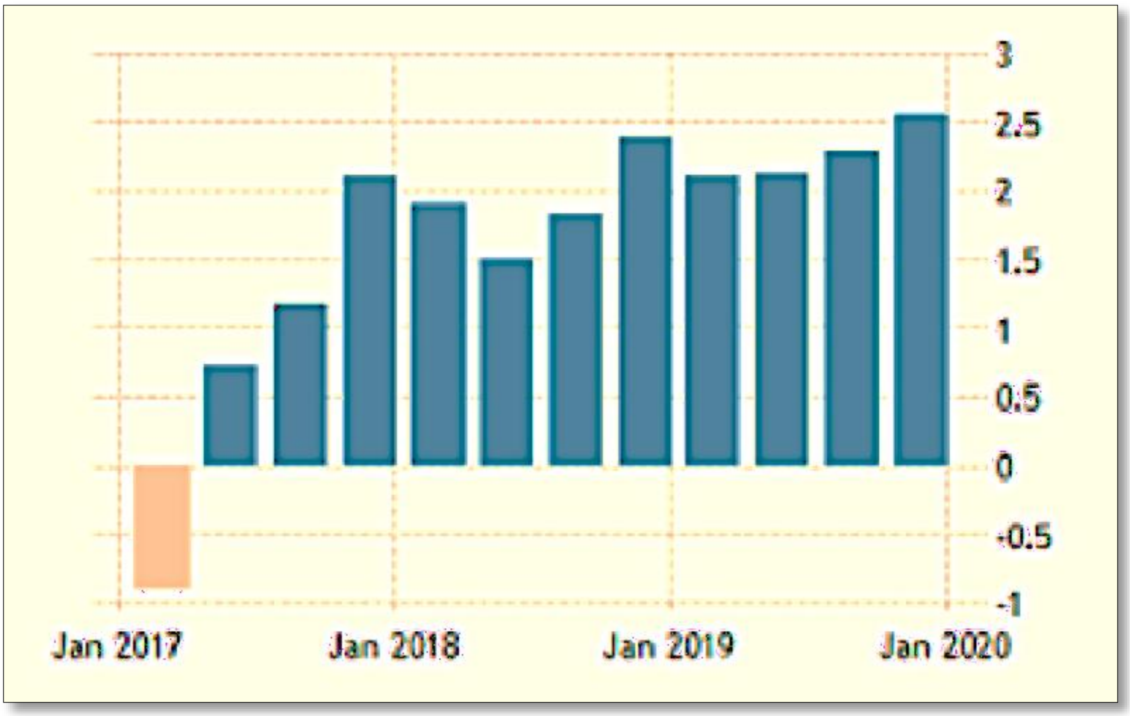

Figure 5. Nigeria's GDP Growth Rate [January 2017 to January 2020]. Source: Trading Economics, 2020.

Figure 6. Nigeria's GDP Per Capita [2010–2020] [US dollars].

In mapping Nigerian social policy failures, one key feature is the truncation (and retrenchment) of social policy expenditures by successive administrations all of which negatively impacted social development outcomes. At Independence, Nigeria committed strongly to social developmental policies, however a toxic combination of fiscal resource constraints, conflicting political interests, sectarian (religious) interests, and terrorist threats to national security by insurgents (Boko Haram, Niger-Delta militants) decelerated social development. Moreover, policymakers and politicians grappled with a historical relic of institutional and structural problems and a colonial mindset that exacerbated social unrest, instability, violence, and even a costly civil war (1967–1970). Mixed with untold hardship compounded by botched political experimentations, unproductive and misappropriated policies, maladministration in government, rent seeking, corruption, destitution, diminishing revenue, inflation, insecurity, social and economic inequalities, and ethnic contestations, it not surprising that Nigeria has struggled with development [39].

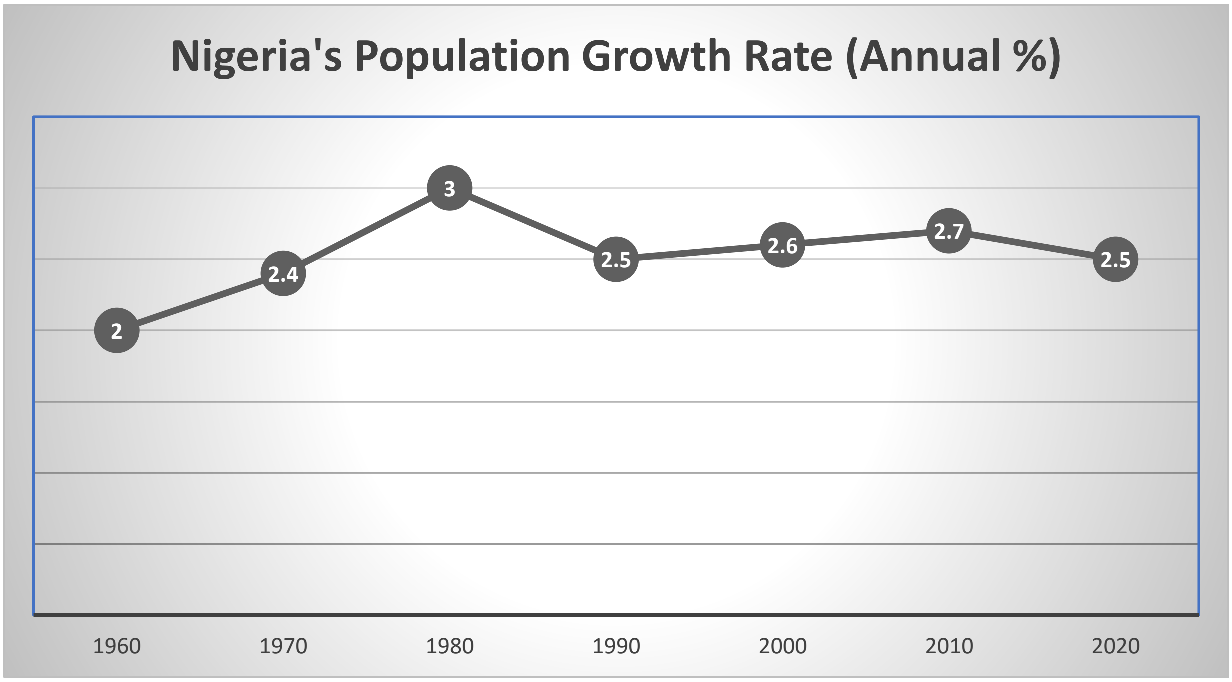

Figure 7. Nigeria's Population Growth Rate (up to 2020). Source: Author.

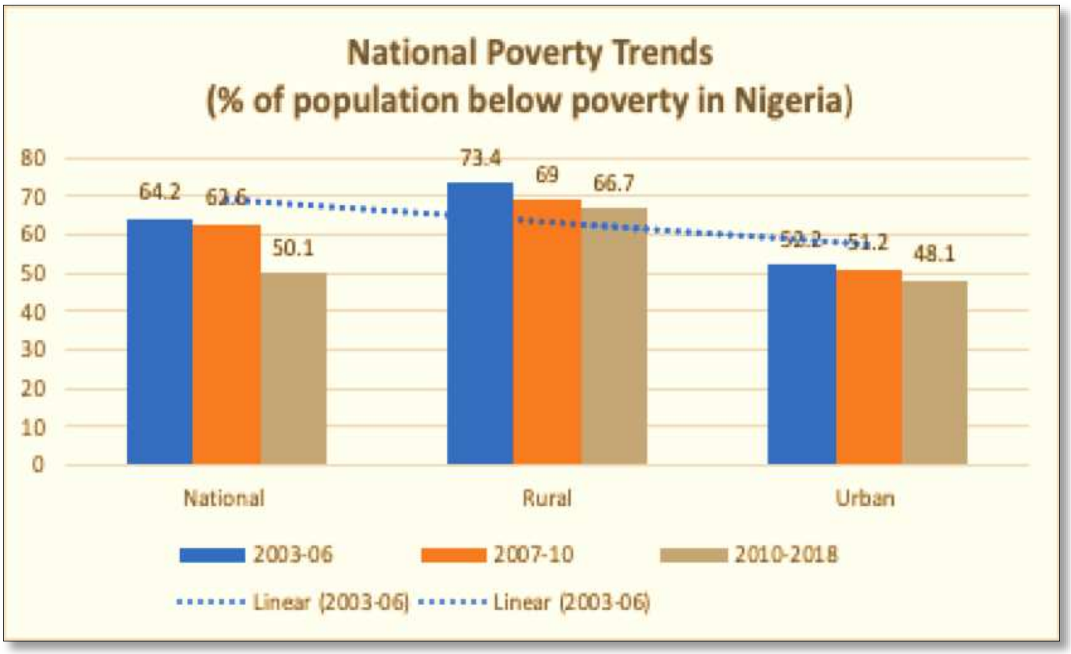

Figure 8. Nigerian National Poverty Trends showing % of population living below line (between 2003 and 2018). Source: Author.

In this chequered context, social policy dynamics cannot evidently thrive. Persistent heavy reliance on oil revenue, coupled with unpredictability in the international oil market, affected fiscal allocation to social sectors, resulting in major retrenchment in welfare provision and spending. Holmes et al. [40] recommended allocating resources to scale up SP programmes. A systematic analysis of the 2014–2017 national budgets revealed declines in government spending on social welfare by at least 1.52% compared to the year

2010–2013 fiscal year [41]. Considering that a welfare state is shaped by its expenditure, the amount of social spending in Nigeria was very low. In the last fifteen years, recurrent expenditure has been a larger component of Nigeria's annual budget, averaging about 70% of aggregate expenditure; the implication is that capital expenditure, at about 30% of the national budget, is largely inadequate to finance social protection and infrastructure. Besides, Nigeria's expenditure has been worse than Ghana and South Africa in two key areas of education and healthcare [26]. While the government recognised the need for more investment in education and healthcare (as underscored by programmes like the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1975, followed by Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) in 2000; the National Primary Healthcare Programme in 1990, augmented by the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in 2004), what is problematic is that budget making (policy process) and implementation has been ineffective mainly due to lack of coherence and coordination. Even the introduction of disparate pilot SP programmes in 2007 (COPE—In Care of the Poor; and SURE-P—Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme) failed to achieve their intended objectives because of inadequate coverage and ineffective programmatic responses that failed to meet actual SP needs of local population [40,42,43]. It would seem, however, that social policy failures are mostly due to lack of political will, as not enough material resources have been devoted to social policy (Figure 2).

To delve deeper into the failures of social policy inevitably raises the question about Nigeria's capability to create the fiscal space to finance and sustain a basic level of social welfare for its vulnerable citizens. Given that policymaking involves trade-offs and allocative efficiency of budget allocations to ensure that the poorest are reached [44,45], the insufficiency of Nigerian budgetary allocations reflects considerably on poverty reduction targets. Simson [46] demonstrated the critical roles played by supply-side and demand-side governance factors in the Nigerian policymaking process and their influence on the practical and allocative effectiveness of investments and consequences of poverty reduction. Furthermore, Amakom [47,48] demonstrated that investments in primary education and healthcare were more pro-poor in absolute terms than tertiary education and education, but with allocation bias in benefits from public spending in both sectors (Figure 4). A UNESCO study [49] confirmed shortages of trained teachers affected disadvantaged areas of the Northern region: Kano, Katsina, and Borno states. Others have argued about technical inefficiencies [37,50,51]. To be sure, governance issues, including inefficiencies have perennially plagued progress in socio-economic development in Nigeria and these arguments are part of earlier studies suggesting that variations in social policy outcomes: historical-institutional legacies; the degree of working-class mobilisation; and the extent of cross-class conditions—all form part of the established narrative that has come to define social policy trajectory in Nigeria. Rasual and Rogger [52] demonstrated how flawed management practices by public officials in Nigeria impacted on the quantity, quality, and overall delivery of public services. Thus, the initial, but problematic, conclusion suggested by these findings seemingly validate claims by critics (mostly from the left) that these measures were palliative, motivated by the elites' desire to suppress social unrest, and repel demands for alternative economic models or radical political reforms [44]. However, the issue that has not been thoroughly researched is how the decentralised nature of the Nigerian political system and the contested issue of 'fiscal federalism' continue to aggravate tensions in the polity. Furthermore, the nation's historical legacy meant that state expenditure on pro-poor activities were frequently subjected to political will; reinforced by the fixation of the political elites with rent-seeking, which, unfortunately, 'turned the rest of society into a prey' [41,53–55].

The 1999 Nigerian Federal Constitution clearly outlines the responsibilities of government to citizens: directing government to focus 'public (social) policy on actions that will enhance happiness and promote welfare' [56]. The constitution also stipulates that governance must be conducted in a fashion that promotes 'welfare-enhancing' outcomes for all Nigerians. Specifically, the government was directed to provide public goods for the citizens via access to qualitative education, healthcare, food, suitable and adequate housing, reasonable basic minimum wage, social insurance, old age care and pensions, equitable access to opportunities, basic amenities of life, security, and social protection for the sick and disabled, among others. At the very least, the Nigerian constitution assumed government's capacity to deliver these services. This assumption is not misplaced though, as constitutions generally tend to paint a utopian ideal. However, this 'assumption of capacity' of the State to provide 'public goods' and 'social welfare' in Nigeria is flawed given that governments in developing countries, including Nigeria, often lack 'knowledge of how to execute development projects as policies are often ineffective, flawed and do not make meaningful impact' [57].

Nigerian social policy has traversed 'troughs and peaks' within the last five decades. Considering the nuanced debates about the determinants of social welfare underdevelopment, which suggests that historical, socio-economic, political, and context-specific variables defines a country's ability to efficiently deliver public goods (health, education, social welfare etc.), it is contended that Nigeria's unique social welfare has historical and cultural roots steeped in informal welfare arrangements, which mediates communal, kinship, local, and family welfare arrangements. The informal welfare economy significantly accounts for and contributes to a mixed welfare production involving state, family, communal, and non-state actors. Unfortunately, this form of welfare production has been largely untapped in social policymaking resulting in what Tang [58] refers to as the 'marginalisation of social welfare'; a common feature in developing countries denoting the inability of a government to translate into actionable programmes the intrinsic penchant of citizenry for quasi-welfare/caring arrangements and for extensive informal arrangements. The failure of the Nigerian state to achieve sustained social welfare provisions for the majority of its citizens has persistently undermined the state's authority and legitimacy [4,59–65]. The stunted growth of social welfare production and social policy in Nigeria is compounded by an extensive informal economy, which also weakens state and (public) institutional capacity, and aggravates 'elite capture', leading to incoherent, ineffective, state-funded social policy and social welfare arrangements. The issue of 'false starts' in the formulation stages of many public policies in Africa attracted some attention in the literature [39]. With false starts inevitably come formidable challenges at the execution stages creating difficulty in addressing serious issues. Nigeria formulated several public policies to tackle problems and numerous challenges since independence in 1960, of which many fell short of their targets. However, as Gboyega et al. [39] argued, the political class were more interested in amassing power and furthering their economic interests. Ulriksen [66], on the other hand, contended that while peasants and informal economy workers and public workers were key advocates of welfare policy expansion, it was the policy interests of the budding middle-class that provided the impetus for the direction of welfare policy development. This argument, predicated on the power resource approach, has been utilised to validate and rationalise the pattern of welfare policy development that evolved in certain developing nations. However, putting the policy interests of the different classes in society above the collective agenda of the masses misses the point [67–69].

This article suggests that the issue of state failure conforms to a pattern, which is invariably an extension of the hegemonic culture of the ruling class, whereby public and social policies were formulated in accordance with the parochial political interests of the elites, often at a great expense to the 'Nigerian project'. The effect of this failure is palpable in the deplorable conditions of most Nigerians, earning her a dismal 158th position on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) [Figure 4] [7]. Whilst the reasons the ruling elites have not been able to transform Nigeria into a haven of prosperity is debatable and may never be known, the historical impoverished state of many vulnerable Nigerians attests to aggravated failures to implement social policies that could improve wellbeing and entrench prosperity. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, this is not about failure of policy making per se: it is also about the entrenchment and perpetuation of a culture that promotes the interests of the elites.

Iversen [70] argued that scholars of the developmental welfare states grapple with understanding them as the intersection of democracy and capitalism. However, this argument misses the point, especially where democracy in a polity is non-existent and where welfare capitalism is retarded. Unfortunately, the reality of citizens in these contexts demonstrate they have to function under far more 'constrained burdensome conditions' of institutional welfare choice, and contexts where the government can scarcely be trusted at all, even in a hegemonic sense, for simple law and order as a precondition for private decisions about wellbeing and security [71]. In a broader sense, resorting to informal welfare and social security becomes the norm in these 'insecure', 'fragile states' with 'imperfect well-being regimes' [72]. Putting this in perspective also entails understanding how social welfare functions in developing contexts and acknowledging how welfare arrangements remain critical in these contexts, especially when viewed against the utilitarian backdrop of how the different ethnic groups and communities have been preserved together for generations and have kept the tenuous relationships between the state and citizens together despite many challenges. Regrettably, however, these arrangements are now uncertain in many countries, including Nigeria. As is happening elsewhere, internal social welfare arrangements, including social policy agenda in Nigeria, is undergoing significant speedy changes, which shape policy processes, dynamics, and outcomes [73]. The Nigerian social policy arena has been progressing in the direction that is arguably distinctive, informed by its unique local dynamics and ideas. Unlike in the analysis of advanced welfare economies where the commanding role of state in social policy dynamics is strong and critical, in Nigeria, as in many developing countries, there is limited, almost detached, involvement of the state in welfare provisions.

This, perhaps, is the reason to imagine that the Nigerian social policy model, with her social welfare arrangements built around extensive, largely informal, social security mechanisms, does not fit with western typologies of welfare regimes or aligns with the East Asian DS model. Based on the empirical findings of the doctoral research [3], the Nigeria social policy represents a hybrid, albeit unique, model, which appears to fit in between and within a much 'broader welfare model', now distinctive of welfare systems in Latin America and East Asia, what has been variously classified as 'informal security regimes' and 'developmental state welfare models' [72,74]. Conceptually, the Nigerian 'welfare state' can be described to be in a 'state of development' and is presently positioned between a neoliberal market economy and a federalist, dualistic, but minimalistic, immersion in welfare planning involving the national government and the federating states. This model is characterised by minimal public expenditure on social policy, strong residualist elements in welfare arrangements, a predominant role for the family, heavy reliance on female labour, a regulatory and enabling role for the state, and a narrow commitment to the idea of welfare as a right of citizenship [15,74–76]. To a large extent, this welfare regime, given its developmental orientation, also appears to be somewhat 'productivist' [77], where social policy is restrained by the prevailing economic policy goal of growth, and usually presented as an auxiliary to 'boost' the economy in attaining its overarching objective.

Therefore, from the foregoing, this article contends that, in purely evolutionary terms, Nigeria is a 'late starter' to social protection, although there were programmes undertaken by successive administrations to tackle poverty prior to the current National Social Investment Programme, which effectively began in 2015 when the current Buhari regime assumed office.

7. Interrogating the Governance of Nigerian Social Protection (2016 to Date)

Nigeria's federal configuration permits social programmes to vary notably amongst sub-national entities, (state governments were encouraged to introduce customised versions of social welfare programmes that accords with their territorial nuances and populations). Thus, the probable consumption of national-level requirements is constrained by state-level variations in the intensities of supply-side support. Two extinct social protection programmes: In Care of the Poor (COPE) and the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empower

Programme (SURE-P), initiated by the World Bank in 2007 encountered monumental implementation challenges as highlighted by Shadare [3] and Akinola [78], which also underscored the influence of transnational institutions as major actors in Nigeria's social protection landscape. The World Bank also supported federal and state governments with loans to implement different programmes in the past decade. However, when the Nigerian federal government launched another national CCT programme (The Household Uplifting Programme) in 2016 with a $500 million loan from the World Bank, the previous programmes, with all of their infrastructures and personnel, were disbanded. That singular act, as demonstrated by Shadare [3], fundamentally caused a 'territorial conundrum' in the governance of Nigeria's social protection. The fact that some of the borrowed funds were used to establish agencies such as the National Social Safety Net Coordination Office (NASSCO), which oversees social investment programmes and the National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO), which coordinates cash transfer grants to beneficiaries, whilst a progression of the governance nature of social protection, did not fundamentally alter the dynamics of Nigerian social policy [79].

The World Bank also supported the establishment of the National Social Register (NSR) to manage the database of beneficiaries of social protection [80]. Although another milestone in Nigerian SP governance, this act has only tangentially altered social policy dynamics [3,80]. Whilst NSR is currently working to expand the database of beneficiaries of social protection programmes in Nigeria, its operation has encountered several challenges, which negates some of the fundamental ethos of a developmental state, namely a vibrant, highly skilled, and efficient bureaucracy [15,81–83]. Tellingly, unlike other international development stakeholders, such as the United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNICEF etc.) and bilateral donors, such as the Department for International Development [DFID] (now Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office—FCDO), that utilise human rights frameworks in their social programmes in Nigeria, the World Bank mainly promotes a residualised version anchored in the social risk management (SRM) framework, which mainly emphasises a social investment orientation [84–88]. Although social investment has grown in social practice, many critics have contended that its agenda of responding to new social risks through a labour market activation approach that emphasises investments in human capital, education, and making work pay, is not suitable for developing countries given that there is an excessive reliance and focus on expenditure data [84,89], which disproportionately disadvantage developing markets where obtaining accurate data is problematic. Furthermore, as ideas matters to the study of policy changes, the salience of ideational content of policies has been highlighted as an explanatory factor for the nature and type of national welfare regime that evolves in a specific context [90]. Thus, it is the conjecture of this article that given the span of Nigeria's policy development over many years and over a broad swathe of ideas, the evolving Nigerian welfarism must be studied and analysed by its distinctive, contextual, and institutional orientations and by the role of all the diverse actors that have shaped its social development.

To further demonstrate the role of actors in Nigerian SP governance, and how the different ideas of these institutions have shaped social policy dynamics, the role of UN agencies, such as UNICEF, which is a major actor in Nigeria's social protection landscape, marks a sharp contrast to the role of the World Bank. Aside from operating pilot CCT programmes, mostly in the northern parts of Nigeria, which were mainly aimed at encouraging girl's education, UNICEF was instrumental in the formulation of Nigeria's National Social Protection Policy launched in 2017. While not as influential as the World Bank, particularly with respect to providing funds for social protection programmes, the work of UNICEF in Nigeria's social protection territoriality pinpoints their partnerships with other UN and non-UN agencies and state governments across the Nigerian federation. UN agencies openly promoted a human/social rights approach, which resolutely differs from the World Bank's approach. Although less successful than projected objectives, these programmes are more deeply impactful than the World Bank's programmes, due largely to the absence of highly nonjusticiable policies and non-existence of a legal framework to anchor programme sustainability. This scenario has thus created a discordant, dissonant, and irreconcilable ideological orientation that has negatively impacted and unintentionally 'burdened' the growth of Nigerian social protection.

Although the federal government of Nigeria recently re-tweaked the regulation of, and further invested in, social protection, the many years of dependence on donor funding, coupled with the enduringly weak social infrastructure upon which the architecture of Nigeria's social protection sits, coupled with the emerging contestations about the nature of Nigerian social politics, inevitably suggest a dire need for a vigorous re-altering and reconfiguration of social policy in Nigeria. This reconfiguration must go beyond the current tokenistic improvements to fundamentally reposition the trajectory of Nigerian social protection and social policy. The federal government of Nigeria, by taking initiatives to reducing rampant poverty levels in the country, must, however, reappraise its ideological position. Although maintaining strategic partnerships with the international community is crucial, the present government of President Buhari, which came to power with a firm promise of enhancing social protection for the people, must work assiduously to re-invigorate its social contract with the citizens. The government launched a number of social protection programmes and committed some funds to them. However, just as many developing countries, mostly African, have developed their social protection programmes and systems in the last two decades [91–93], Nigeria's social protection landscape has only recently become active with the creation of four social investment programmes in 2016 and the launch of a National Social Protection Policy in 2019 by the Buhari government. The four social investment programmes are: the Household Uplifting Conditional Cash Transfer (HuCCT) for poor and vulnerable households; N-Power employment scheme for unemployed youths; the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) for children enrolled in public primary schools; and the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) that provides interest free loans to petty traders. Hoping to avoid the coordination, implementation, and lack of sustainability-related problems associated with previous social programmes, the government established the National Social Investment Office (NSIO) and created the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development in August 2019 to oversee the four programmes across the federation. According to the NASSCO and NSIO, as of March 2021, a total of 12,069,153 poor and vulnerable households (PVHHs) and 32,682,171 individuals or direct beneficiaries have been reached through these four programmes across the Nigerian federation [80]. As the government seeks to properly articulate its own vision of social protection (based upon the social investment paradigm as opposed to social protection anchored upon a rights-based paradigm), it should actively bring all divergent ideas together to properly articulate and refine its SP agenda. Though the government appears ensconced in a battle of ideologies, and is presently vacillating between two competing social policy frameworks promoted by the World Bank and UNICEF/ILO, it should look inward to fashion a model that works for its citizens. While it is not impossible for Nigeria to embrace a social rights and social investment approach, the influence of the World Bank and neoliberalism remains strong. The next section discusses the challenges of having multiple actors influencing the territorial governance of Nigerian social protection.

8. Addressing Governance Challenges and Reconfiguring Nigerian Social Protection

Having established that Nigeria's social protection programmes are perennially plagued by a plethora of problems, the focus now turns to the administration of Nigerian social protection. Considering that Nigeria is relatively new to social protection in comparison to other African countries, it is unhelpful avoiding the inherent flaws in the current social protection programmes (mostly based on restrictive targeting, segmenting, and stratifying beneficiaries according to specific markers). However, to address these problems, a clear policy outlining a roadmap to universal (or near universal) coverage should be the main focus for state and non-state actors. However, this issue is compounded by the challenge of fragmentation in the implementation mechanics due to lack of clear governance structure. Fragmentation of social programmes coupled with the absence of clear governance structure is a common problem for SP administration in many developing countries, and Nigeria is no exception [91,92]. Despite this, separate government ministries, departments, and agencies continue to perform social protection functions, often without coordination with one another. While the government's effort to address this problem through the creation of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development in 2019 was intended to pull programmes together under one ministry, there is still significant fragmentation and gaps in the governance of social protection in Nigeria.

Notably, a major challenge concerns the domiciliation, or the quartering, of all extant social protection programmes, including the new social investment programmes, within the newly created ministry, which has the concomitant, but really overwhelming, responsibilities for not just social protection but also humanitarian affairs, disaster management, and social development. These are all interrelated, but with distinct orientations and jurisdictions; their responsibilities being placed under one federal government ministry and under a single solitary, substantive federal government minister, does not do justice to the organising principles of DS's logic, which is: creating a dedicated department that has singular focus and attention and having the capacity for marshalling momentum for effective performance. This failure affirms this article's central argument about the 'burdening' dimension of Nigeria's SP governance, which, unfortunately, also casts developmental issues of social welfare as always secondary to other issues (such as trade), and further demonstrated the lack of political will and capital to unbundle the State and its gargantuan resources for impactful social policy growth. As a policy recommendation, and without tinkering excessively with the state of affairs in the ministry, it would be highly beneficial to appoint a Minister of State (or Junior Minister) to focus specifically on social protection programmes while the substantive federal minister coordinates the humanitarian and disaster-related responsibilities. To create a new, focused Ministry of Social Protection will be ideal, but this will only succeed if the intentions/motivations are sincere. Otherwise, it will be nothing more than a cosmetic, rebranding exercise designed to garner positive headlines or give the impression of change while it is not properly equipped to achieve the badly needed restructuring that should have lasting impact. Furthermore, in the light of Nigeria's federal structure, ensuring that the lower levels of government (i.e., states and local governments) are informed and able to build proper governance structures for social protection will also be imperative. The current state of affairs, with regard to the fragmentation and lack of clear governance mechanisms at the state and local governments, is quite acute as several states approach, and engage with, different social protection programmes through different ministries as well. In states where donors are also implementing programmes, approaches often clash and collide, further cementing the near-fossilised fissures in the 'burdened' system.

In addition, the current SP governance model lacks the capacity for implementation at various levels of government. Unfortunately, this is not just a problem plaguing the implementation of social policy programmes, but indeed most public policy programmes in Nigeria. It is, therefore, critical that the 'environmental context' for implementing both existing social protection and future programmes, requires a large dose of re-invigorated mindset by bureaucrats. As alluded to in the words of a key informant (a top Government official), Nigeria's social protection needs a new, upgraded 'software' for its jagged, outmoded 'hardware' to become 'fit for purpose' [3]. Instructively, a new cadre of highly trained bureaucrats with the expertise, experience, and knowledge to administer social protection across all levels in Nigeria are sorely needed. This is crucial to the agenda of building a sustainable and sturdy social protection system. Notably, while there are a few staff in federal, state, and local governments with some understanding of social protection in its current conceptual framing, several of the government staff working in the area of social protection are drafted and often seconded from different MDAs. Often lacking knowledge about what social protection entails, and having limited, short-term focused training, means that retraining is imperative once staff are reassigned to other assignments/areas;

consequently, such knowledge and the vital 'institutional/organisational memory' needed for programme's sustainability is not retained and may even be lost. Therefore, beginning a process of capacity building and retraining of knowledgeable staff in the area of social protection for the long term is crucial. Furthermore, despite the presence of several local and international non-governmental organisations, and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and philanthropic organisations with activities in Nigeria, the overall pool of capable SP experts remains significantly low. Pooling human and material resources through constant engagement with local and international non-state actors and institutions in the area of social protection should be a priority for stakeholders. This is also important for the emergence of a vibrant epistemic community that can inform the future reconfiguration of SP programmes.

What is more, institutionalising monitoring and evaluation [M & E] mechanisms should be integral to any social protection system. As highlighted, Nigeria SP demonstrates ineffective M & E that is vital to informing better delivery of social protection policy and programmes. The situation could be remedied by enthroning effective grievance mechanisms that should allow beneficiaries to provide vital, but needed, feedback to improve programme monitoring and evaluation. Although civil society groups are sometimes involved in M & E teams for certain SP programmes in Nigeria, their involvement remains highly circumscribed as they seem confined mostly, geographically, to urban centres. Incorporating a more effective M & E and a robust grievance mechanism into the existing SP governance framework should be top priority in Nigeria's evolving SP system. Equally imperative is ensuring that stakeholders understand the nexus between SP and socio-economic development. Social protection can significantly accelerate national development, whilst contributing to rebuilding and strengthening the social contract between the people and the government. Furthermore, the evolution of Nigerian SP and its flaws, affirms the imperative of, and the urgency of, a robust legal and institutional framework for anchoring 'developmental welfarism' and 'unburdening' it from the shackles of inefficiency as a way for guaranteeing SP's sustainability. With several actors, big and small, implementing social protection programmes across Nigeria, the government must assertively institutionalise programmes, making them legally binding on successive governments. Hopefully this should put a stop to the current staggered and ad hoc status of several programmes being implemented by disparate NGOs, philanthropists, civil society organizations, and international development agencies in the country. Furthermore, the pathway leading to building strong and better partnerships with these stakeholders will surely benefit all. In addition to strengthening the partnerships and relationships between the aforementioned stakeholders, bringing in Nigerian citizens, the public, and beneficiaries of social protection as stakeholders is important. The general public in Nigeria is largely unaware of the social protection programmes and policies, and people are often very sceptical and distrustful of the government's efforts in delivering SP. Creating awareness and working with citizens as stakeholders is imperative and treating beneficiaries of social protection as stakeholders, and not simply recipients of benefits, will also be helpful.

9. Conclusions

This article's central argument is that Nigeria's social protection is 'burdened': choking, as it were, under the weight of 'developmental state' welfarism, (defined simply as the pressures and problems of actualising nation-building developmental programmes and policies). By employing the concept of the development state, and emphasising its bureaucratic excellence and the state's assertive approach to executing programmes for the benefits of citizens, without permitting bottlenecks to interfere with governance, the article makes the argument of 'unburdening' Nigerian SP governance from its suffocating weight of administrative and governance bottlenecks and inefficiencies. By unpacking the variegated nature of the territorial governance of Nigerian social protection and the challenges inhibiting the creation of a sustainable, enduring, and fit-for-purpose, resilient social protection system that the country deserves, the article affirms that some of the self-inflicted, self-sabotaging challenges embedded in the system can be surmounted if the leaders (political elites, and other stakeholders) can muster the political will to reconfigure the current system by unburdening it of its unnecessary weight, much like jettisoning old and unneeded cargo from a loaded vessel. To do this effectively requires all stakeholders working together, progressively, incrementally, but in a systematic and sustained fashion, to achieve inclusive developmental outcomes for all Nigerians, many of whom are in dire need of social protection. Relevant policy recommendations were proffered to support the process of inclusive social protection for all in Nigeria.

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