



9th INAUGURAL LECTURE - Prof. Isaac Adegbeniga Aladegbola



CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY

Faith City, Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.



INAUGURAL LECTURE

Topic:

**GROUPING IN THE LIGHT:
NIGERIA AND THE BURDEN
OF DEVELOPMENT**

DELIVERED BY

**PROF. ISAAC ADEGBENGA
ALADEGBOLA**

Bsc. (Pol. Sc) (Ilorin) M. Sc (Pol. Sc)
PGDE: (Ado) PhD (Pol. Sc) (Ilorin)
Professor of Political Science

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CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY
Faith City, Atan/Agbara Road,
Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria

**9th
Inaugural Lecture**

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PROFESSOR REUBEN JIYA KOLO, Ffs
Vice Chancellor
Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

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PROFESSOR ISAAC ADEGBENGA ALADEGBOLA *FCAI*
Bsc (Pol. Sc) (Ilorin) MSc (Pol. Sc) PGDE (Ado) PhD (Pol. Sc) (Ilorin)
Professor of Political Science

Protocols

- The Vice-Chancellor,
- The Registrar,
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- The University Librarian,
- The Dean, Postgraduate School
- The Dean of my College, College of Business and Social Sciences,
- The Dean of College of Natural and Applied Sciences,
- The Ag Dean of College of arts and Communication
- The Ag Dean of Students Affairs,
- Directors, Ag Directors
- Members and Representatives of the Board, Council and Senate,
- My Head of Department, Department of Political Science and International Relations
- Other Heads of Departments and Heads of Units,
- Your Royal Majesties and Highnesses, here present,
- My Highly Esteemed Academic Colleagues,
- Non-Academic Colleagues (Administrative and Technical)
- Our Beloved and Highly Valued and Articulate Students (Past and Present)
- Distinguished and Highly Esteemed Guests
- Members of my Nuclear and Extended Family
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

With all glory and honour to the Most -High God, it is my pleasure to present the ninth inaugural lecture of our esteemed institution, Crawford University. The title of the lecture is “Groping in the Light: Nigeria and the Burden of Development.” This lecture, incidentally, is the second from the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the university. It is also being delivered two years after Prof. John Adeola of the Geology department presented the eighth inaugural lecture in this very hall. Permit me to begin by quoting from Scripture, where I found the inspiration for this lecture. "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men (King James Bible, 2017, Isaiah 59:10)

The topic is not only a reflection of my academic works over the past two decades; it is also my organized response to challenge critical stakeholders in charge of the Nigerian project. At 65 years of independence, Nigeria ought to resolve its contradictions in economic growth and development.

A third motivation is to challenge all of us as stakeholders at Crawford University. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, we should not continue to “groping in the light.” Instead, we must rise and shine.

The country cannot be liberated until the vices that form the dark part of the Nigerian psyche are eradicated. We must resolve not to hate, cheat, or denigrate one another. Particles of light must pierce each soul to banish wickedness, discrimination, ethnicity, irredentism, and callousness. Only then will the spirit of selflessness rise and a great nation emerge, heralding its forward march with cymbals and music.
(The Guardian, 1997)

Vice-Chancellor Sir, traversing four different universities as an academic staff for over two decades, my research interests have mainly covered the areas of poverty and development, public policy, and the political economy of developing states. Perhaps my academic choice of specialization is a product of my birth and upbringing. I grew up witnessing a prototype of a class society micromanaged within our royal extended family.

It was evident in my early years and elementary school days that my survival would depend on either being at the mercy of the “haves” within the family or struggling to create opportunities for myself as part of the “have-nots.” The first choice was unattainable, and I had to embark on the lonely road of personal struggle to access education.

The family structure, contrary to external perceptions, had economic contradictions. The family was not rich; there was deep-rooted poverty ravaging us, though unknown to town folks who envied our so-called glorious family. Those who succeeded in those early years did so through hard work and providence. The arrowhead of the extended family valued education highly. He harbored no discrimination and supported any of us striving to achieve academic excellence. His constant encouragement unconsciously inspired a high level of academic competition among the children of our extended family. This drive motivated me to rise above the poverty of my parents, the late Mr. Gabriel Akinmoladun Aladegbola and my unlettered mother.

The efforts of this man and others may have failed, but I received a massive boost from God. I met Christ—or rather, Christ sought me out. He saved me early in life, and I started to worship at the Apostolic Faith Church. I suddenly became a “millionaire” in the Lord. Ever since then, I have received numerous blessings from God, including those I did not specifically request. My presence here today is a testimony of triumph over a tortuous life journey punctuated by human disruptions, yet held firmly by a covenant with God.

Introduction

In the complex landscape of narratives surrounding Africa, poverty and development issues take center stage. Unarguably, the elimination of deep poverty is the primary objective of development (World Bank, 2000). The literature is saturated with statistics indicating that Africa, and specifically Nigeria, faces significant poverty and vast inequality. Almost every discourse on governance in Africa has been reduced to discussions of development (Aladegbola, 2020a, p. 30). The severe lack of essential capabilities such as education, health care, and nutrition among the continent's poor majority poses a threat to development in Africa as a whole, and in Nigeria in particular.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, I believe national development—which is the central theme of this lecture—stands in contrast to economic growth. It fundamentally concerns what both individuals and a nation are able to achieve in addressing poverty. Seers (1973, p. 7) supports this perspective by emphasizing the connection between poverty and development. He posits that a fundamental enquiry regarding a country's development should focus on the trends in poverty, unemployment, and inequality? He argued that if one or more of these central issues have worsened, it would be inappropriate to label the

outcome as development.

I am fully aware of the multifaceted dimensions of development; however, I choose to focus on social development, which significantly impacts poverty reduction. In practical terms, development entails creating wealth for the benefit of citizens. It also involves transforming society and its institutions to ensure the success of its people (Mabogunje, 1995). On this subject, Agagu (2011, p. 6) aptly captured the essence of development when he described it as “the ability of a community to ingeniously tame nature and manipulate the resources at its disposal to ensure a good standard of living, thereby eliminating abject poverty and earning well-deserved respect among the comity of nations.”

As I researched poverty, I concluded that it lacks a universally accepted definition. Poverty is a relative concept, often remaining an ideal concept at the descriptive level because its understanding evolves from personal experience. In my PhD thesis, I described poverty as surviving with tattered clothes and walking barefooted (Aladegbola, 2012). My readers may not have realized that I was primarily referring to my secondary school days, when a senior, embarrassingly a girl (apologies to those who are gender sensitive), accused me of not tucking in my shirt. She went so far as to use her

cane to lift my shirt, only to find a poorly patched pair of shorts at my backside. I was merely trying to cover my patched and faded shorts due to my financial struggles, not out of disregard for school rules. Later, I could easily relate to the experience of former President Goodluck Jonathan when he declared his “I had no shoes” mantra.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, what Goodluck Jonathan learnt from that experience and what he accomplished during his tenure as a leader is a topic for discussion on another occasion. However, both before and after him, the plethora of leadership at every level in Nigeria has arguably taken one step forward and two steps backward in the country's development trajectory—motion without meaningful progress. The recurring question is whether our leaders can discern that development is about the “richness of human life” across all strata, rather than merely the political propaganda of economic growth.

As I contemplate the unending paradox of economic growth and contradictions of development in Nigeria, I came across an online description of Nigeria's development deficits even as it boasts of progressive economic growth.

In Nigeria, a man started work in the civil service in 1983 with a salary of N500, then equivalent to \$700. He retired in 2016 on a salary of N180,000, equivalent then to \$500. For 33 years, the

civil servant in question was slowly and constantly moving backward (Nigeria Insiders, 2024).

For this worker, the state increased his salary from N500 in 1983 to N180,000 in 2016. However, the economic reality of development reveals that, when considering purchasing power parity, his per capita income in 1983—using the international benchmark of dollar to naira—was more favorable than his income in 2016. What a remarkable way to develop. The state has abandoned the poor in their battle against poverty (Olagunju, 2023).

Vice-Chancellor Sir, based on these experiences, my research has uncovered the undeniable relationship between poverty and development. Development is not merely a project; it is a process that is intrinsically linked to human survival. Once development is framed in this context, everything falls in place. In my modest contributions to this thesis, I have progressively published on the relationships between development and poverty (Aladegbola, 2016a, 2013a; Aladegbola and Saliu, 2012b; Ibitoye and Aladegbola, 2011; Olaniyan and Aladegbola, 2012); economy and economic growth (Aladegbola, 2007, 2018b, 2024b; Omilusi and Aladegbola, 2020b), security and conflict (Aladegbola, 2020a, 2021a; Omilusi & Aladegbola, 2020a; Olaniyan, Aladegbola, & Adefisoye, n.d.); education and poverty of

mind (Aladegbola, 1997, 2004, 2020b, 2023a; Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, 2016d; Aladegbola & Oluwayomi, 2021c); governance and policy issues (Aladegbola, 2005, 2006b, 2012, 2014a, 2016b, 2020c; Aladegbola & Ibitoye, 2015a; Adu, Aladegbola, & Owolabi, 2004; Aladegbola & Famosaya, 2020e; Aladegbola & Odewusi, 2014b; Aladegbola and Akinlade, 2013b); democracy, elections, and stability (Aladegbola, 2006a, 2019, 2021b, 2023b, 2023c, 2024a; Ogunwa, Aladegbola, & Omisore, 2023; Oluwaleye & Aladegbola, 2024); corruption and leadership deficit (Aladegbola, 2017, 2021c, 2022; Aladegbola & Olaniyan, 2020d); religion and politics (Aladegbola & Ibitoye, 2014c; Aladegbola & Adefisoye, 2022); health and general well-being (Aladegbola & Odewusi, 2015b; Aladegbola & Iwu, 2021d); transport and employment (Aladegbola, 2018a); gender and discrimination (Jaiyeola & Aladegbola, 2020; Jaiyeola & Aladegbola, n.d.; Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, n.d.; Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, n.d.); and nation-building and constitutional matters (Aladegbola, 2016c; Ajayi & Aladegbola, 2006; Aladegbola & Bamidele, 2006c), among others.

Arising from these experiences, today's lecture, a summary of all of these, compares individual poverty reduction as the basis for national development and concludes that Nigeria episodic economic

growth cannot be equated with individual development. This lecture addresses three key components: first, to illustrate the poverty experienced by the populace; second, to address the development deficit of the nation; and third, to critique the increasingly robust propaganda of economic growth, which persists despite the widespread penury of a significant portion of the populace. As a political scientist engaged in development studies, our departure point from development economists is our emphasis on understanding the broad historical forces associated with underdevelopment, as well as the institutions that shape these dynamics. We also aim to explore the behavioral responses and lifestyles of various sectors within underdeveloped countries. In contrast, traditional economic theory has often produced development models that do not fully align with the realities of underdevelopment.

By and large, in all of my works, including this one, I have presented solutions derived from research that can prevent Nigeria from groping in the daylight of God-given human and material resources. Due to the limited time and space available for this lecture, I will briefly address some of the key issues. Also, in recognition of this unique platform provided by Crawford University, I will offer a brief commentary on our developmental cleavages, particularly as the university community commemorates its 20th anniversary.

The Theoretical Conception and Misconception of Development in Africa

The burden of development in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, began with a crude understanding and flawed ideologies. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I have identified three key variants of this misconception over time. This lecture will explore these variants as the central issue and explain why Nigeria, entangled in these misconceptions, has continued to engage in futile development efforts and consequently remains trapped within the “bottom billion of the poor” (Collier, 2007).

Variant 1: Relativity of Poverty and Money as a Concept

Fundamentally, the prevailing understanding of poverty in Africa is based on monetary measures. This perspective emerged from the globalization of Western culture and the attendant expansion of markets. Thus, a society that sustains itself outside of monetized cash transactions and wage labor, such as a hunter-gatherer pygmy group, is regarded as poor (Thomas, 2008, p. 471). However, does Africa possess an ideology of development? This is difficult to determine. Pan-African sentiments have frequently opposed Eurocentric socio-economic and political ideas on development but have not provided a robust and practical alternative beyond the existing pro-independence

nationalist struggles and advocacy efforts. What is globally evident is Africa's departure from its traditional communalism and Pan-Africanism, which was forcibly replaced by the global capitalist structure. This shift has led to an understanding of development that is centered on surplus value accumulation—a costly arrangement. The biggest theoretical setback Africa has suffered is the wholesale acceptance of the universal definition of poverty as an economic condition dependent on cash transactions within the marketplace.

Variant 2: Development and Growth Contradictions

The only feasible way to escape the unending interpretations and broad scope of the concept of development is to assume it exists primarily as an ideological framework. In this context, Ayres (1995) identified two distinct schools regarding development: orthodox theories and radical theories. The orthodox school adopts a neoclassical approach, emphasizing economic growth, capital accumulation, free trade policies, open markets, and individual decision-making. A variant of this theory is W.W. Rostow's unilinear model of development, referred to as the historical stages approach. Another variant is the widely recognized modernization theory, developed in the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasizes individual motivation and capital accumulation while justifying the flow of

foreign trade, investment, and technical assistance for development.

In contrast, radical theories of development (supported by many African writers) oppose the orthodox theory of free trade and the prevailing international division of labor. These theories are rooted in structuralist and institutionalist schools, as well as post-neo-Marxist dependency and regulation schools. They emphasize rigidities, bottlenecks, and economic lags that necessitate government intervention and specific economic policies. The Marxist and neo-Marxist dependency school situates development and underdevelopment within the historical impact of capitalism on developing countries.

The fundamental problem affecting the African continent is the dominance of the orthodox economic school since World War II. Most governments and multilateral agencies equated development with economic growth in a free-market international economy. The paradox in Africa is that high economic growth indices often lack corresponding improvements in the well-being of the population (Addison, 2015). Although developing nations may meet economic growth targets, the living standards of the masses often remain stagnant, indicating flaws in the limited definition of development.

Seers (1995, p. 20) argued:

Development means creating the conditions for the realization of human personality. Its evaluation must therefore take into account three linked economic criteria: whether there has been a reduction in (i) poverty, (ii) unemployment, and (iii) inequality. GNP can grow rapidly without any improvement on these criteria; so, development must be measured more directly.

Worse still, economic growth in many African countries is often driven by non-labor-intensive sectors such as natural resource exports, which contribute little or no value addition. Consequently, most economic reforms maintain growth while leaving the majority of the population impoverished, malnourished, unemployed, and excluded from the development process, all while the environment remains under constant threat (Obasanjo, 1999, as cited in Aladegbola, 2012, p. 312). Obasanjo opined that the pursuit of abstract economic growth undermines genuine development and emphasized the importance of people's goals, values, and choices in the development process. Ultimately, development is about instilling hope in ordinary people that their children will live in a society that has caught up with the rest of the world.

Variant 3: Development as “Catching Up with the West”

Internally, emerging African states adopted the dominating characteristics of colonialists, and their leaders failed to abandon the imperialist mindset. This authoritarian and arbitrary leadership style, inherited from colonial structures, became one of the most significant obstacles to pursuing development and establishing an effective development paradigm with a solid ideological foundation (Ake, 1996). Although development was a key rationale for securing independence, the impatience to "catch up with the West" after independence proved overly ambitious and overshadowed genuine development efforts. Commitment to development was vaguely defined, and its ideological framework became problematic. Leaders prioritized power struggles over societal transformation. They were confronted and possibly confused with three development paradigms:

1. A free-market capitalist approach with the private sector as the engine of growth
2. A state-directed and controlled path (socialism or communism);
3. A modernized indigenous African approach (Ayittey, 2005, p. 58).

Development Deficit of the Nation

Figure 1

Minimum Wage Changes and State Compliance (2016 – 2024)

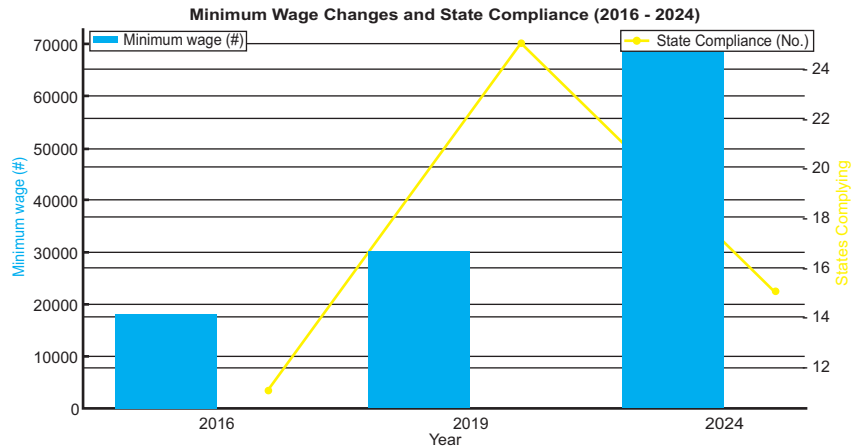
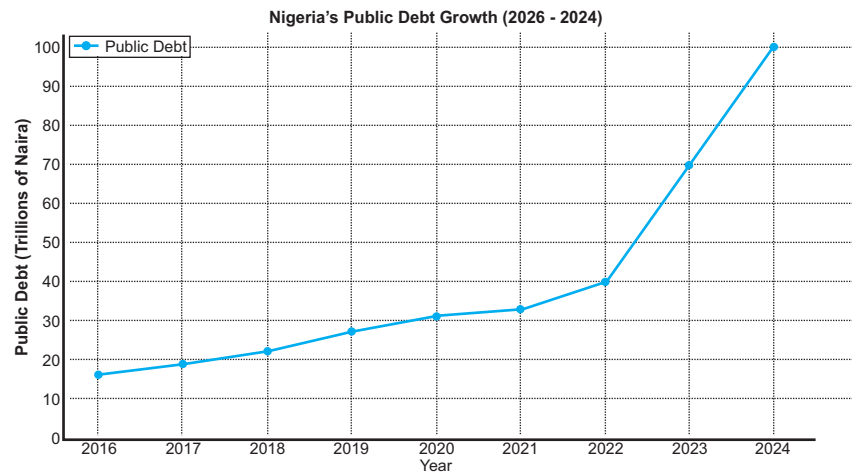


Figure 2

Nigeria's Public Debt Growth (2016 – 2024)



Note: Designed with data extracted from various sources

In the past decade, Nigeria has experienced a relatively unfriendly period in terms of growth, aid, stability, and public spending. However, challenges became apparent when former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari confirmed in 2016 that 27 of the 36 states of Nigeria could not pay workers' salaries despite the bailouts provided at the time (Wakili, 2016). Subsequently, state governors requested additional bailout funds due to the economic crisis, while organized labor demanded an increase in workers' basic salary from ₦18,000 to ₦56,000, which was eventually adjusted to ₦30,000 in October 2019. By December 31, 2019, at least 25 states failed to meet the deadline set by organized labor to conclude negotiations on the consequential adjustments arising from the ₦30,000 minimum wage ("ICYMI: Minimum Wage", 2020). As of June 2021, ten states still could not comply (Odunsi, 2021). Some states, like Ekiti, initially paid only junior workers but eventually stopped payment altogether. This 2016 setback now pales in comparison to 2024, where 60% of Nigerians are financially excluded, leaving them out of the financial system and hindering development (Olorunlome, 2024). The 2024 consensus regarding a ₦70,000 minimum wage remains contentious in many states across the federation.

The existing crises, including Fulani herdsmen rampages, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, and persistent *Boko Haram* attacks, have been exacerbated by the confusion surrounding the naira redesign. This situation is further complicated by a power crisis intensified by the removal of fuel subsidies, food shortages with accompanying hyperinflation, extreme naira devaluation, and separatist agitations from regions of the federation demanding attention. Organized labor is reacting with protests, demanding a minimum wage of up to ₦1 million to ensure survival in the distressed economy (Iyatse et al., 2024; Omolaoye, 2024; Chibueze, 2024b).

In 2016, an investigation by *Economic Confidential* revealed that 15 states in Nigeria were at risk of bankruptcy, as their Internally Generated Revenues (IGR) in 2015 were far below 10% of the Federation Account Allocation (FAA) for the period from June 2015 to May 2016 (Anumihe, 2016). By 2022, every economic indicator in these states was signaling distress, underscoring their inability to meet basic obligations to their citizens. At the federal level, the government was borrowing nearly every month. The Debt Management Office, in a press release on Wednesday, June 9, 2021, disclosed that Nigeria's total public debt as of March 31, 2021, stood at ₦33.107 trillion (USD87.239 billion), projected to surge to ₦100 trillion in 2024

(Akubo & Musa, 2024). Despite this, government statistics over the years have claimed robust growth. For instance, the Buhari administration reported investing ₦1.3 trillion over seven years to improve the lives of vulnerable Nigerians: ₦890.7 billion on N-Power, ₦246 billion on cash transfers, ₦17.6 billion on the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP), and ₦200.9 billion on the school feeding program. These programs allegedly lifted 15 million Nigerians out of poverty (Editorial Board, 2024). However, poverty remains pervasive, with Afejuku (2024) asserting that this is the worst time to live in Nigeria.

Underlying the evident shortage of viable livelihoods and the high levels of social inequality is the lack of economic diversification, especially when compared to the success stories in Asia (Addison, 2015, p. 1). These challenges not only redefine development but also suggest that Nigeria and other developing countries are no longer following the development paths of industrialized nations. While wealthy countries prioritize sustainability and resilience, developing nations like Nigeria are grappling with alternative development models, shifting away from neoliberal growth strategies centered on capital accumulation, privatization, and investment.

With Tinubu's reforms, seemingly in response to the demands of IMF, the country risks repeating the experience of the early 1980s when stringent fiscal, monetary, and exchange control measures were implemented to address economic decline. Did those strategies prove effective then? Will they be effective now? These are critical questions.

The contradiction in this economic blueprint lies in the failure to transition the economy from primary production, which is dominated by peasant agriculture and raw commodity exports, to secondary production, which is characterized by industrialization, where manufacturing significantly contributes to GDP, and ultimately to a robust service sector.

Propaganda of Economic growth

Figure 3

Nigeria's GDP Growth Rate (1995 – 2024)

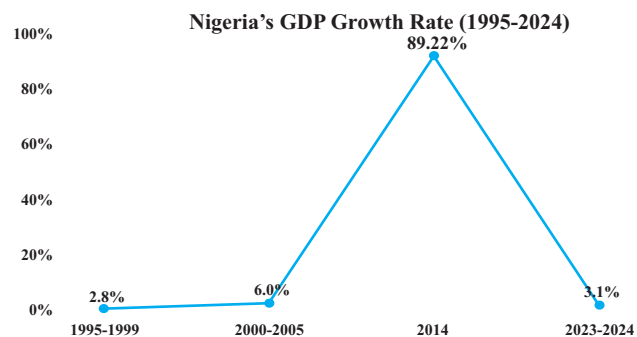
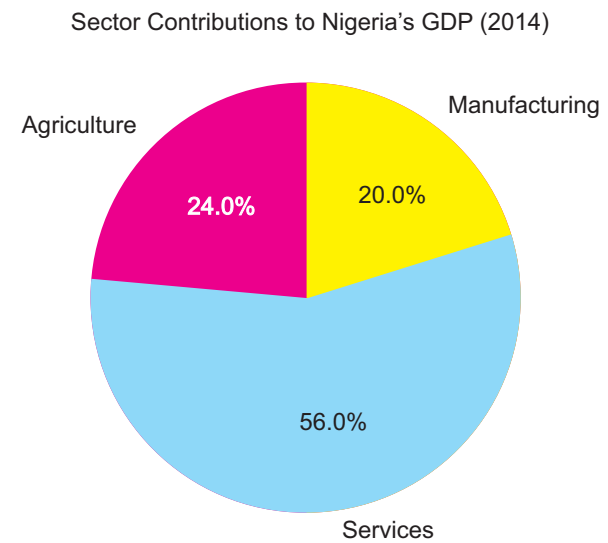


Figure 4

Sector Contributions to Nigeria's GDP (2014)



Note: Designed with data extracted from various sources

The situation in 2014 was not significantly different from that in 2024. Relying on the statistical feasibility documents of the neoliberal growth strategies, the country rebased its economy in 2014, twenty-four years after the previous exercise. The government proudly celebrated, having provided profound economic statistics enviable by all standards. Considering the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country within a given year, Nigeria's GDP increased by 89.22% in 2014. Consequently, Nigeria was valued at ₦80.2 trillion or

\$509.9 billion, rising from its original figure of ₦42.4 trillion or \$269.5 billion. This achievement positioned Nigeria as the 26th largest economy in the world and the largest in Africa, surpassing South Africa (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014).

According to the former Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the rebasing of Nigeria's economy revealed that the service sector includes significant economic activities such as wholesale and retail trade, information and communication, real estate services, human health and social services, as well as professional, scientific, and technical services. Additionally, Nigeria's per capita income rose from \$1,555 to \$2,688, elevating its global ranking from 135th to 121st position.

Despite the aforementioned favorable scenario, economic literature (Ekpo, 2015; Alabi, 2009; Collier, 2007; Anyanwu, 1993; Adejugbe, 1995, 2002; Ogunleye, 2005; Obadan, 1993; Aladegbola, 2012; Onoh, 1990) presents a less optimistic perspective. Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on exports and imports, relying primarily on raw commodity exports, particularly crude oil, for government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. Crude oil exports shape the structure of the economy, while agriculture, which contributes about 48% of GDP, remains the mainstay. The country

imports capital goods, as well as finished goods and services from developed nations.

Until recently, Nigeria was classified as a low-income economy, but it is now considered a middle-income economy. However, poverty remains widespread, affecting approximately 70% of the population, with millions lacking basic necessities such as quality education, electricity, health care, running water, and adequate housing. The state of infrastructure, particularly power, is deplorable, and youth unemployment reached as high as 53.40% in 2020 (Trading Economics, 2025).

The vulnerability of the economy to the global oil market became evident following the sharp decline in oil revenues from 2016, which left 27 out of 36 state governments unable to pay workers' salaries for several months, forcing them to seek federal bailouts. By 2024, a report from *The Guardian* newspaper indicated that states in Nigeria risk total collapse amidst rising hardship, unemployment, and the *Japa* syndrome, with the economy on the verge of slipping into a comatose state (Guardian Nigeria, 2024).

The future remains uncertain as the economy is currently mono-cultural, with no tangible evidence of diversification despite repeated promises.

It appears that Tinubu's economic policies are compelling the nation to reconsider longstanding questions: Will Nigeria ever attain real development through the frameworks of international multilateral institutions and neoliberal growth strategies? The task for the current government is to analyze why the 2014 assertion that Nigeria was the largest economy in Africa and the sixth in the world had such a brief duration and limited impact on the lives of Nigerians.

The observable gap in neoliberal growth theory is that its development strategies have not constituted dynamic processes of structural change and capital accumulation, which would enable societies to better meet the basic needs of the majority—shelter, clothing, education, and health care. Fundamental inquiries for evaluating a country's development focus on the emerging trends regarding poverty levels, unemployment, and inequality. If these indices are worsening, then it is a peculiar form of development, even if per capita income triples under such circumstances. Hicks and Streeten (1979), writing for the World Bank, assert that growth of output alone is not an adequate indicator of development. Instead, the reduction of poverty and the satisfaction of basic human needs should be primary goals reflected in measures of development

The Poverty of the People

Poverty is recognized as a persistent issue in the developing world; it also represents a global challenge. The worldwide commitment to eradicate poverty, promote gender equality, and provide universal primary education, among other goals, constitutes a framework established by all the countries and leading international developmental institutions. This initiative, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), was collectively endorsed by 189 countries, including Nigeria, at a United Nations (UN) summit in September 2000. A set of eight targets aimed at reducing income poverty, addressing various sources of human deprivation, and fostering sustainable development was established to alleviate poverty and enhance the living conditions of millions around the globe. The target date for achieving these goals was set for 2015.

Adebeshin (2006, p. 15) expressed skepticism regarding the possibility of achieving the established goals. The inadequate poverty indicators, even with the conclusion of the MDG target period, largely substantiated Adebeshin's concerns. The MDGs have since been replaced by 17 global goals set by the UN, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are also referred to as “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Within the global setting, Nigeria, as a developing country, occupies a unique position as endowed state. Unfortunately, its situation has been paradoxical. This paradox, as described by the World Bank (1996), remains evident in events and statistics observed within the country. The contradiction lies in the fact that Nigeria's poverty levels are at odds with its vast wealth. The country is abundantly endowed with human and natural resources, including intellectual capital, agricultural assets, minerals, and other resources, many of which remain largely untapped.

Over the years, Nigeria has established itself as one of the world's largest producers of crude oil, boasting approximately 33 billion barrels in oil reserves. The country's daily oil production is estimated at 2.5 million barrels, with minimal refining conducted domestically. Additionally, the country's gas reserves are projected to last for 110 years at the current rate of consumption (Aladegbola, 2012, p. 313).

Physical indices, however, do not align with statistical figures, and Nigeria seems far from achieving the MDGs and SDGs. The primary objective, which serves as the focal point for all the goals, is to eradicate poverty and hunger. However, there seems to have been little to no reduction in the number of individuals living in poverty. In 1996,

the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimated that 48% of Nigerians lived below the poverty line of one US dollar per day. By 2005, the Department for International Development (DFID) reported this figure as 60%, or approximately 75 million people.

By 2007, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Health Organization (WHO) collectively agreed that more than half of Nigeria's population (approximately 80 million people) lived below poverty line, subsisting on less than one dollar (about ₦127) per day (Jarlath, 2007, p. 14). Since then, these indices have deteriorated further due to the global decline in oil prices and the devaluation of the Nigerian currency.

In 2024, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor, with 63% lacking access to health care, education, and pipe-borne water. The Human Development Index ranked Nigeria 61st out of 189 countries (Sogolo, 2024). Approximately 40% of Nigeria's population lives below the national poverty threshold of \$1.90 per day (Nwafor, 2024).

Despite the paradox highlighted above, Nigeria has, in recent years, boasted significant economic growth, claiming that GDP growth rate increased from 2.8% during the period of 1995–1999 to

6.0% from 2000 to 2005, ultimately reaching 89.22% in 2014 (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). The National Poverty Eradication Agency claimed that its policies fostered empowerment through safety nets and improved service delivery. The agency further guaranteed mass participation in the economic development process, which resulted in increased investor and public confidence. However, this growth has not translated into poverty alleviation for the majority of the population. Beyond the complex and often confusing economic jargon, which is often presented under the guise of computations, the level of hardship in Nigeria is evident in homes and visible on the streets. Nowadays, begging no longer carries any social stigma. Responsible men and women in esteemed professions now beg openly and with ease because they are unable to meet their most basic needs, which their devalued incomes can no longer afford (Onyekwere et al., 2024, p. 4).

The question then arises: Can we achieve strong economic growth while a significant portion of the population continues to live in abject poverty? Is it possible to have growth without development?

Rodney (1976, p. 9) outlines the multifaceted process of development. At the individual level, he states that “it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-

discipline, responsibility, and material well-being.” According to him, the attainment of personal development is linked to the overall state of society, depending on collaborative group efforts within the modern state.

Rodney (1976, p. 10) associates economic development with a society's collective capacity to efficiently manage and exploit the environment. He argues that development depends on human ingenuity and tools available within the context of environmental resources.

From a Marxist perspective, development within a capitalist framework entails the accumulation of surplus value, which is often criticized as exploitative. Marx, as cited in Larrain, 1989, p. 41) explains that development involves the expansion of productive forces and the accumulation of capital through the appropriation of surplus value generated by labor.

Ake (2001, p. 125) emphasizes that true development must prioritize people as both the ultimate goal and the means of achieving development. He identifies five assumptions regarding development:

1. Development is not economic growth, though economic growth determines its possibility.

2. Development is not a project, but a process.
3. Development involves people creating and recreating themselves to achieve higher levels of civilization.
4. Development must be people-driven, though external help can facilitate it.
5. Development should consider Africa and the global environment as they are, not as they ought to be.

Ake's (2001, p. 126) perspective underscores the importance of people-oriented development strategies. This approach highlights the necessity of integrating the poor into the country's development process.

Thus, measures of development can be employed to analyze the lack of development or underdevelopment (Allen & Thomas, 2000, p. 29). In this context, we conceive development as the quantitative and qualitative improvement in the socio-economic conditions of a people's living standards. The absence of these improvements signifies underdevelopment, or what Obasanjo referred to as *development deficits* (Obasanjo, 2000, p. 153).

The indicators for measurement include, but are not limited to national income per capita, mortality ratio, life expectancy, literacy

rate, stage of industrialization, level of urbanization, the state of healthcare delivery, doctor-to-patient ratio, level of technological advancement, and circulation of print and electronic media.

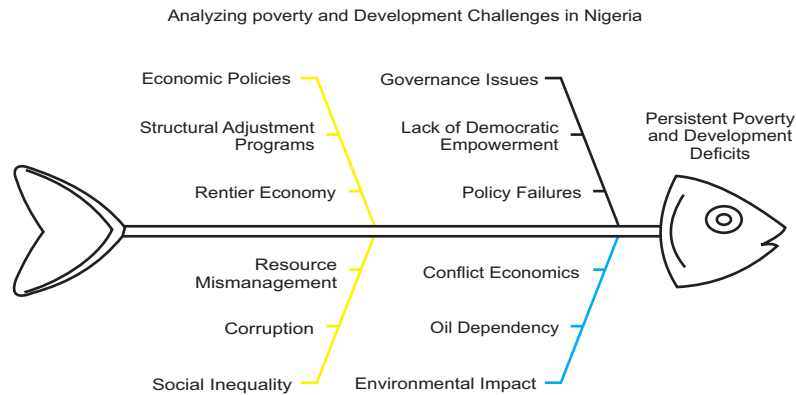
Along these lines, McLean (1996) defines development as the fulfillment of the necessary conditions for realizing the potential of human personality, which translates into reductions in poverty, inequality, and unemployment. These reductions are characterized by the increasing satisfaction of basic needs including food, as well as improvements in specific social indicators like housing and physical quality of life. Additionally, development is associated with enhanced national self-reliance and self-determination. This perspective is predicated on the notion that development is an internally driven process in which dependency is minimized.

Ultimately, the goal of eradicating poverty to promote social advancement can be achieved through the deliberate integration of the poor into the country's development process. This approach is often known as a people-oriented development strategy.

Quality of Economic Growth; Impact on Poverty in Nigeria

Figure 5

The Wings of Poverty and Development Challenges in Nigeria



Note: Author's impression (2024)

The bold attempt to restructure the Nigerian economy informed the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which was inspired by the IMF/World Bank. The program took effect in July 1986 and was eventually scrapped in the early 1990s (Obadan, 1993). SAP was a policy measure designed to re-align aggregate domestic expenditure and production patterns within the Nigerian economy to reduce dependence on the oil sector and enhance the non-oil export base, thereby steering the economy toward a path of steady and balanced growth. It involved the establishment of a second-tier foreign exchange market to achieve a realistic exchange rate for

the naira. Additionally, it sought to rationalize public enterprises for enhanced efficiency and to make arrangements for external debt management through rescheduling and debt conversion (Uniamikogbo, 2007, p. 20; Iyayi, 2007, p. 33; Ogunleye & Oke, 2008, p. 175).

The devaluation of the naira led to an astronomical rise in the prices of imported items. With cultivated preference for foreign goods, Nigerians began to seek out more affordable used items. This marked the emergence of *Tokunbo* (used goods) in the Nigerian economy, a trend that continues to this day. The period between 1994 and 1998 was characterized by the dominance of the military elite, during which major economic problems arose. Efforts to revamp the economy were minimal, resulting in further economic blunders.

One consistent issue in Nigeria's economy is its rentier nature. The persistent economic stagnation can be attributed to mutually reinforcing political dynamics, including a weak developmental state and widespread rent-seeking behavior within the private sector. This syndrome was a catalyst for Nigeria's initial economic crisis in the early 1980s and continues to hinder structural adjustment initiatives. Economic policy reforms have often been compromised by state strategies designed to preserve elite rentier group gains, while private

entrepreneurs have responded to policy changes by seeking refuge in finance and other non-tradable sectors. As a result, structural adjustments failed to elicit significant supply responses or generate political support for an enabling environment. This indicates that changes in nominal incentives must be accompanied by broader institutional transformations for economic reform to be effective.

In recent times, resource-related issues have given rise to war economies driven by greed and opportunity. This phenomenon has underpinned conflicts and perpetuated dynamics of violence. Initially confined to the Niger Delta region, this conflict economy has expanded into violent struggles over resource opportunities, including inter- and intra-communal and ethnic conflicts, as well as oil theft and illegal trading in refined and crude oil. These activities have exposed the intersections between the Nigerian state, multinational oil companies, the international community, and youth militias. Although the economy did not directly cause these conflicts, it has become both a component of the resistance and a resource for sustaining them. Poverty has worsened amid the proliferation of arms, institutionalized violence, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, and pervasive crime.

In retrospect, Nigeria fared well after gaining independence, seemingly on a promising path of economic planning and growth.

Agriculture served as the backbone of the Nigerian economy, contributing one-third of the GDP, employing about two-thirds of the labor force, supplying raw materials for industries, and accounting for a significant portion of non-oil export earnings (Ogunleye & Oke, 2008, p. 173). In the absence of oil revenue, a modest GDP growth rate of 4% was achieved in the early years, with annual per capita income nearing \$1,000 and over 70% of the population living above poverty line. Stability was maintained in exchange and interest rates, while inflation levels remained low. The infrastructure was relatively robust and consistently improved, with steady energy and water supplies, operational rail services, and ongoing human capacity development. Financial allocations to health and education averaged 30% (Adegoke, 2002, pp. 1–25; Ogunleye, 2005, p. 49; Fafowora, 2006, p. 16).

The discovery of oil marked a turning point in Nigeria's economic development, shifting the primary source of growth from agriculture to crude oil. Oil emerged as the major contributor to the country's GDP, government revenue, and foreign exchange earnings. For example, Ogunleye and Oke (2008, p. 172) observed that the share of crude oil in GDP, which averaged only 1.6% from 1960 to 1969, surged to 17.4% between 1970 and 1974, and further increased to

24.3% from 1975 to 1979. Oil revenue as a percentage of federal revenue increased from 26.3% in 1970 to 82.1% in 1974, and slightly decreased to 81.4% in 1979. Nigeria holds 35.9 billion barrels of proven petroleum reserves, the largest in Africa and eighth globally, and exports approximately 2.5 million barrels of oil daily, making it the fifth largest supplier to the United States (Tayler, 2006, p. 50). Foreign exchange reserves skyrocketed from \$146.5 million in 1970 to \$9,957.2 million in 1980. However, the dramatic increase in oil earnings led to the “Dutch disease” syndrome, fundamentally altering production and consumption patterns.

The good news surrounding the 2014 rebasing of Nigeria's GDP to \$510 billion, the acclaimed human development, and the pre-2014 increase in oil output that generated substantial revenue for the country are not matched by improvements in livelihoods and income. There is therefore no basis for the claim of “economic growth turned stronger” mantra, which has largely been peddled as achievement over time (Aladegbola, 2012; Aladegbola & Hassan, 2012).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted that the Nigerian economy would contract by 1.8% in 2016, despite its claim of being the biggest in Africa. This represents a revision from its earlier projection of 2.3% made in April 2016 (Abioye, 2016). The evident

reality is that the economies of the region have yet to achieve the diversification that underpinned the success stories of Asia (Addison, 2015, p. 1). It is yet to be determined how Nigeria, despite its acclaimed status of a giant, can be separated from the prevailing grim picture of poverty. This situation is particularly concerning, as the Nigerian economy is increasingly susceptible to global disruptions, such as the Russia-Ukraine war and the possibility of NATO intervention.

In Africa, the terms of trade deteriorated by 18%, with declines exceeding 40% for oil producers such as Nigeria by early 2015 (World Bank, 2015). Addison (2015) provided a 30-year analysis of Africa's development, utilizing data from various sources to confirm that the root of the poverty problem lies in the inadequate progress in transforming Africa's economies. Although Africa has demonstrated sustained growth, structural transformation has not occurred on the necessary scale.

According to Addison:

... the incidence of poverty is down, from about half of all Africans in 1990 to about one-third today. Yet the number of Africans in poverty is expected to remain high: 392–416 million in 2011 to 317–344 million in 2030, higher absolute numbers than in 1990. Millions are grouped just above and

below national poverty lines, with insecure employment, and are highly vulnerable to shocks. On current World Bank estimates, poverty will be concentrated in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region by 2030, when more than 85 percent of the global poor will be Africans (Addison, 2015, p. 1).

The Nigerian experience over time has shown that the country aligns with Addison's findings:

The creation of good jobs—remunerative employment in decent working conditions—is failing to match the growth rate of new labor force entrants. While Africa's middle class has expanded, and top income earners are doing very well, social inequality is widening given the lack of opportunities for those at the bottom. If unchecked, this trend will threaten social stability (Addison, 2015, p. 1).

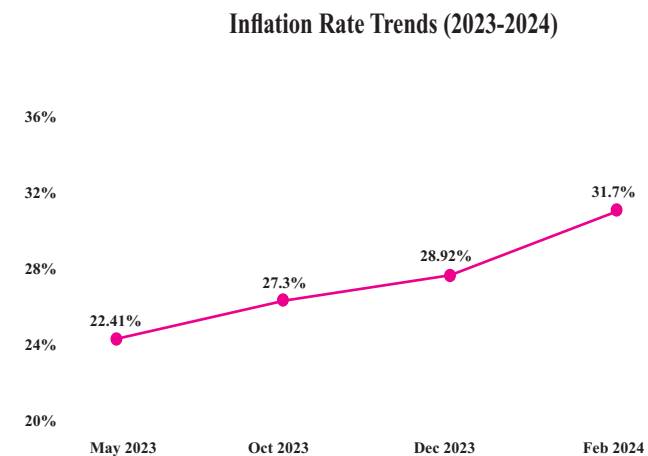
This study cannot overlook the emerging discourse that presents a bright outlook for the continent, which may serve as a precursor to Nigeria's economic development. Referred to variously as “the sun shines bright” in 2011 and “Africa Rising” by Time Magazine (Economic Commission for Africa, 2016, p. 16), this optimism becomes intriguing when linked to the economic growth in Africa between 2000 and 2014, during which annual GDP growth averaged

4.6%, according to UNCTAD (2015). While several explanations have been proposed to justify the sustainability of this growth (Economic Commission for Africa, 2016, pp. 16–17), this study seeks to align broader African issues with the specific context of Nigeria, enabling readers to draw informed conclusions. Is Nigeria truly rising? This question significantly contributes to debates surrounding growth theory and raises concerns why such growth may not necessarily lead to poverty reduction.

The Poverty Implications in Contemporary Nigeria

Figure 6

Inflation Rate Trends (2023 – 2024)



Note: Designed with data extracted from various sources

There have been expressions of discontent as basic needs exceed actual income levels. Okeke (2024) reported a significant increase in the inflation rate, which rose from 21.34% at the end of December 2022 to 28.92% by the close of 2023, marking the highest in nearly three decades. According to Olayinka (2024), food inflation as of February 2024 was 37.92% on a year-over-year basis, compared to 13.57% in February 2023. In recent times, food prices have been on the rise across Nigeria, with a marked deterioration in the last few months following President Tinubu's World Bank-prescribed economic policies, which included the abrupt removal of oil subsidy and substantial naira devaluation, as well as interest rate and electricity tariff hikes (Uwaegbulam, 2024; Yusuf, 2024). Olayinka (2024) noted that Nigeria's headline inflation rate rose to 31.7%, up from 29.9% in January 2024, representing an increase of 1.8%. It was anticipated to reach 32.77% in March 2024 (Oji, 2024). Compounding the issue, the current lending rate stands at 30%, while the inflation rate was 31.7% as of February 2024 (Uwaegbulam, 2024). By the end of 2024, these policies have resulted in soaring inflation, now at a 28-year high of 33%, with food inflation hitting 40% (Yusuf, 2024). This situation is occurring in a country where 133 million people, constituting 65% of the population, live in multidimensional poverty, and over 20 million children are out of school.

The 2024 World Bank Report indicates that countries like Nigeria, which are struggling with extreme poverty, may require over 100 years to eradicate this issue. The report also presents a post-COVID assessment of global progress toward alleviating poverty and enhancing prosperity in its *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report*. It redefines the poor as individuals living on less than ₦10,275 or \$6.85 per day. However, extreme poverty refers to individuals surviving on less than \$2.15 or ₦3,225 per day. Furthermore, the report concludes that ending extreme poverty, prevalent in developing economies, by 2030 is no longer attainable (Iyatse & Olayinka, 2024).

Floating Currency and Budgetary Issues

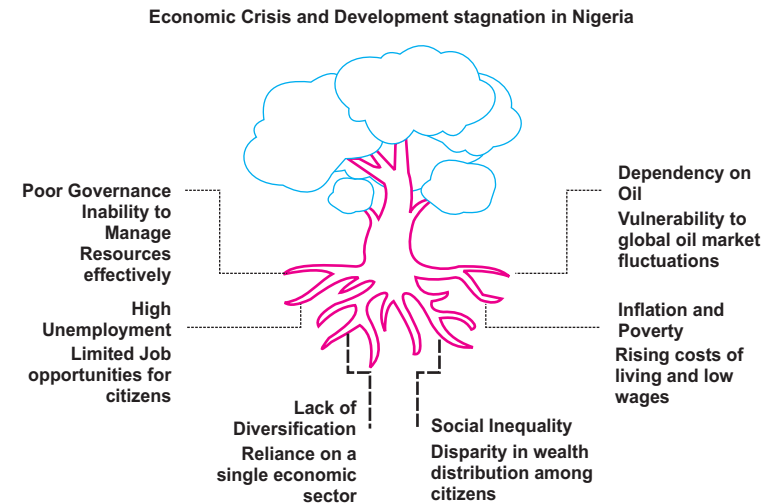
The national currency is a crucial component of a country's power (Akhaine, 2024). For Nigeria, 2024 has been marked by economic challenges, particularly as the naira continues to depreciate against the US dollar. Adebayo (2024) reported that Nigeria's floating currency has lost 68% of its value, while the government struggles to stabilize the economy. The floating naira has adversely affected all forms of productive activities and has driven up the prices of commodities and services. Additionally, oil production has significantly dropped, resulting in a shortfall of 400,000 barrels in the 2024 budget. The revenue crisis is exacerbated by this production deficit, which falls

short of the projected benchmark of 1.78 million barrels per day, further entrenching poverty in the country (Jeremiah, 2024). It is particularly paradoxical that the issue of corruption, specifically the padding of the 2024 budget, dominated discussions in the National Assembly instead of focusing on solutions for implementing the budget through borrowing. In this context, a whopping sum of 3.7 trillion naira is reported to have been padded in the Senate of Nigeria (Akhaine & Nwokoro, 2024). The 2025 federal budget is not faring any better; it amounts to a record of N49.74 trillion, reflecting a 41.9% increase from the previous year, with a revenue forecast of N35 trillion, and this results in a deficit exceeding N13 trillion or 4% GDP. The Tinubu administration plans to secure over N13 trillion in new borrowings, which includes N9 trillion in direct borrowings and N4 trillion in project-specific loans. This situation has numerous negative implications for the government's ability to meet the needs of the people. Awogbenle (2024) warns that stakeholders in Nigerian projects should be contemplating Nigeria's future without oil.

Weak Economy and the Rising Poverty

Figure 7

The Root Cause of Economic and Development Stagnation



Note: Author's impression, designed with information extracted from various sources

The 2014 assertion that Nigeria was the largest economy in Africa based on economic growth indicators, has proven to be an illusion, or at best, a macro mirage due to poor economic management and corruption. As a result, the majority of the population remains unemployed and impoverished a decade later. According to Guardian Nigeria (2024), the factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria include:

52% collapse of public institutions; 49% proliferation of illicit economic activities; 46% large-scale involuntary emigration (Japa syndrome); and 31% spread of infectious diseases. These issues are occurring amidst escalating hardship, rising unemployment, and a continuous increase in multidimensional poverty. Chibueze (2024b) reported that Nigeria is currently experiencing the worst economic crisis in its history, surpassing even the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to this report, the cost of living is skyrocketing, with food inflation reaching an unprecedented 35%, leading to widespread hunger among citizens. The exchange rate is volatile, with the local currency at an all-time low. At the beginning of President Tinubu's administration in May 2023, he announced the removal of fuel subsidy. The market reacted immediately, causing the price of premium motor spirit and many other consumer goods to become unaffordable to the common man. Nwafor (2023) reported that Nigerians are struggling as basic needs exceed real income, with minimum wage earners spending 90% of their income on rice alone. Furthermore, 90% of Nigerians cannot afford a healthy diet, amidst an inflation rate of 31.52% in 2023. UNICEF estimates that 2.5 million Nigerian children under the age of five suffer from severe malnutrition each year, with approximately half a million of them succumbing to

this condition (Sunday et al., 2024). This dire situation persists despite the government's food program, which gulped N200.9 billion. In 2024, the naira depreciated to as low as N1,700 to a dollar, prompting protests in different parts of the country, with organized labor demanding a monthly minimum wage of 1 million naira. While this labor request may appear utopian, it reflects that the population has outgrown the economy amid rising dependency and hardship. Over the past decade, the population has grown by 30%, while the economy expanded by less than 3%, resulting in 74% of adults experiencing financial distress (Iyatse, 2024).

The economic downturn is significantly impacting the nation's international trade. There is renewed advocacy for exports, as the import dependency ratio has reached 95% (Oyebade, 2024). According to Oyebade, international air cargo exports have been steadily declining since 2017, when the country had an import-to-export ratio of 66:34. This dropped to 84:16 in 2018, 86:14 in 2019, 89:11 in 2020, and 87:13 in 2021.

The pressing question is: What can Nigeria do to reverse this development deficit and address the ongoing decline into an economic coma? The final section offers potential solutions.

Policy Option: Creating an Outward-Oriented Economy via Social Development

After decades of implementing various shades of the economic growth paradigm for development, Nigeria must confront the reality that these strategies are not only inappropriate but also irrelevant to its actual needs. Millions of people still live in abject poverty, regardless of how it is measured and defined. The critical question, therefore, revolves around how the country can address the significant backlog of poverty and advance toward fundamentally restructuring and transforming its predominantly rural economy. This issue is even more urgent, as the growth-oriented strategies adopted so far have failed to yield the desired development outcomes. It is now essential for Nigeria to establish new development goals and objectives and to reorient its planning strategy in a manner that aligns more closely with the country's socio-cultural and economic structures, as well as its natural resource endowments.

In this context, the term development must be understood to encompass much more than a rapid increase in Gross National Product (GNP). As Ake (2001, p. 125) suggested, development is not merely synonymous with economic growth, although economic growth significantly influences its feasibility. Materially, development

involves the expansion of productive forces and the increased production of commodities. It is the process through which people create and recreate their identities and life circumstances to achieve higher levels of civilization in alignment with their own choices and values. Therefore, this study strongly advocates for social development, emphasizing both quantitative and qualitative improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the people. In this regard, development must be seen as a process aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the majority through the equitable distribution of growth, regardless of their social strata or the geographical regions from which they originate.

The contradiction in Nigeria over the years is that the country's economic reforms aimed to sustain economic growth and good economic performance—evidenced by high external reserves, capital inflows, GDP growth rate, control of inflation, and a stable exchange rate—while allowing a significant portion of the population to remain impoverished, diseased, malnourished, unemployed, marginalized, and excluded from development process. This exclusion alienates them from production relations. In addressing this issue, much discourse on the state and development, particularly in Africa, has underscored that the continent's inability to benefit from elements of

economic growth is largely due to inept, inefficient, and incapable governance. This situation has escalated into governance crisis. However, this crisis can be alleviated if the state becomes sufficiently competent to create an enabling environment. Broad-based development can be achieved by reforming public services to better serve those at the lower rungs of the economic ladder through the redistribution of resources and financial assistance. This approach prioritizes human development over mere financial growth.

The key objectives to pursue are an outward-oriented economy and social development. An outward-oriented economy necessitates the diversification of the export base, substantial direct foreign investment, deeper debt relief, and a stable political and macroeconomic environment. The revenue generated from this will enable the country to utilize foreign exchange earnings to acquire essential inputs for the industrial sector and infrastructure upgrades. One of the primary policy options available to the government in pursuing an outward-oriented economy is the revitalization of the country's productive base. The most urgent action to take is the rehabilitation of the nation's infrastructure. Enhancing electricity supply is crucial to boost industrial operations and productivity among small businesses. Plans for the extensive rehabilitation of roads and

modernization of the railway system should be implemented promptly. Education must be made accessible to all citizens, especially at the primary and post-primary levels, to enhance individual capacity for productive work. The nation must return to the nearly neglected technical education to reengineer the entrepreneurial base of our economy. To create wealth and alleviate poverty, there must be sustained improvements in the economy's global competitiveness.

The private sector should be empowered by fostering a low-cost environment that enables it to play a significant role in job creation and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, poverty cannot be alleviated until the business environment improves. Millions of individuals could be reintroduced to gainful employment by simply rectifying the electricity supply issues. Revamping the nation's deteriorating infrastructure will reduce the prohibitive cost associated with doing business. By maintaining a competitive and outward-oriented economy that generates jobs domestically, China was able to achieve an average annual growth rate of 9% for 28 years, lifting 400 million people out of poverty as of 2007 (“Economic growth rate”, 2007). Again, from 2007 to 2022, China was able to increase this number to 800 million (World Bank, 2022). In Nigeria, revitalizing the real sector is crucial for improving the nation's infrastructure,

including roads, railways, and power supply. In this regard, the Minister of Economic Planning should present a comprehensive blueprint for establishing an outward-oriented economy. Specific targets should be set for achieving self-sufficiency in the production of rice, sugar, petroleum products, clothing, footwear, and other essential goods, which will help reduce import dependency and create employment opportunities.

Other Experts' Advice as Related to Social Development

An effort is made here to present the most recent expert advice that aligns with the concepts discussed in this study. This aims to broaden the perspective and provide an implementation framework for the social development model, which is deemed essential for effective execution.

Experts are concerned about how Nigeria can achieve a \$1 trillion economy by 2030. During the 2023 annual conference of capital market journalists in Lagos, they emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between GDP growth and development. The experts proposed the establishment of a national integrated infrastructure master plan and recommended an investment of \$3 trillion in infrastructure over the next 30 years, which would require annual spending of \$100 billion (Oji, 2023). Additionally, Akinwumi

Adesina, the current president of the African Development Bank and the first Nigerian to hold this position, strongly advocates for welfare-based policies and people-centered development. According to Adesina (2024):

Given the high level of poverty in Africa, and Nigeria, what are needed are welfare policies that exponentially expand opportunities for all, reduce inequalities, and improve the quality of life for people. These must be anchored on public-centric policies and private sector wealth creation for all.

Adesina further identified five key areas that the country must focus on: rural economic transformation and food security; universal health care security access; education for all; affordable housing; and governmental accountability alongside fiscal decentralization to achieve true federalism. Additionally, Adepetu (2024) expressed concern about Nigeria's actions in a world where technology contributes \$500 billion to the global economy. He noted that between 2010 and 2016, mobile broadband lifted 2 million people out of extreme poverty in Nigeria, resulting in a 1.5% reduction in the country's extreme poverty rate. Furthermore, Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, is expected to capitalize on its youthful population. Africa is said to be the youngest continent in the world, boasting the largest

demography of young people. As of 2003, individuals aged 15 years and below accounted for 42% of Africa's population, while 55% of the population fell within the 15 to 64 age range, and over 70% are under the age of 30.

In conclusion, this lecture concurs with Jerven (2015, pp. 16–17) that Africa must understand the “effects of externally driven growth, learn lessons from past shocks and booms in African economies, and focus less on aggregate growth and more on the political economy of growth by asking who benefits.” Jerven's concern, which aligns with mine, is that “GDP numbers tell us too little about what has truly happened or whether living conditions on the African continent are improving.” Unarguably, Africa seems to have Nigeria in mind when it drafted "Agenda 2063." This ambitious agenda encapsulates not only the continent's aspiration for the future but also identifies key flagship programs that can enhance Africa's economic growth and development, leading to the rapid transformation of the continent.

Development Comments on Crawford University

Having spent about five years at Crawford University and having transitioned through the ranks to a management position, I believe the university, now 20 years old, urgently needs to address its

development deficits. Stakeholders must first recognize that a university is a universal entity and cannot be entirely divorced from global expectations and standards. Are we prepared to transform our growth into meaningful development? If so, this endeavor will require significant capital investment. Thankfully, the current Crawford university Proprietor, Board of Trustee, Council and Management leaderships are working so hard, but ownership entails both financial and supervisory responsibilities. It is an enterprise—a business that necessitates investment. If the proprietor lacks funding, alternative financing mechanisms must be explored. This means that the university must remain open to learning from other institutions, with the understanding that we must regulate our practices to uphold the spiritual ethics of the university's foundation. My hope in writing this is that the proprietor, the District Superintendent (DS), and even the Superintendent General (SG) will appreciate my perspective and recognize the universality inherent in every institution that bears the title of a university.

In the same vein, it is true that most past recruitment exercises, especially for non-academic staff, were conducted with a considerable degree of sentimentality. The university employs many underutilized and underpaid staff members, many of whom lack the necessary skills to perform their tasks effectively or whose responsibilities could be

more efficiently managed through technological interventions. For these categories of staff, I believe their future developmental potential would be better realized if they were reassigned to entrepreneurial activities that could provide financial sustainability for the university. In my view, this is where the future lies in our rapidly changing world.

Acknowledgments and Appreciations

My academic journey, and indeed any success I may attribute to today, is intrinsically linked to my spiritual emancipation. Both have been occasioned by God and supported by men and women who unconditionally volunteered to be used by God. I am profoundly indebted to God. I am a consistent testament to what happens when the Lord steps in. I can categorically say that all that matters is that the Lord is with us. Thank you, Lord, for staying true as a Savior, Father, and Promise Keeper.

My late father, Mr. Gabriel Akinmoladun Aladegbola, and my mother, Mrs. Emily Bolajoko Aladegbola, never had the opportunity to receive formal Western education, yet they endured the hardships of their early lives. My father was a loving man. During my elementary years, he would put me on the back of his bicycle and move me around his extended family, showing me off as his future glory. He was unapologetic about it. My mother later explained to me why my name

is Adegbenga; she also recounted how she fainted seven times after my birth, and I was almost forgotten in a pool of her blood. Thank God she survived and is still alive today. After the passing of my father, his junior sister, Mama Adekeye has shown me tremendous love for which I am grateful. I am also grateful to my siblings and the other boys and girls from our extended family with whom I grew up: my senior aunts, Mrs Victoria Kolawole, Margaret Akindele-Alo, Lydia Ayeni, Moradeke Oluwafemi, Ronke Obamakinwa; and my brothers, seniors and juniors; Mr. Adewale Aladegbola, Adeyeye, Tunde, Adeolu, Adebunayo, Busuyi, Adesanmi, Adekunle, Adedeji and Kayode. Thanks too to Adesola, Adedun, and Aina. I am particularly grateful to Engr. Dayo Aladegbola for his unwavering support and admiration. This gratitude extends to all Aladegbolas, both at home and abroad.

My experiences in primary and secondary school were a struggle for survival. However, the late Chief Samuel Aladegbola, my father's elder brother and the leader of our royal family, created a competitive environment for the nine of us who sat for WAEC at the same time. His command of the English language, strict discipline, and my financial limitations served as motivation that ultimately led to my success despite the challenges I faced. After grappling with life's initial struggles, the Lord led me to one of my older cousins, Daddy (Bro.) Simeon Adewumi (now in his very old age). He led me to Christ

and directed me to the Apostolic Faith Church, though he was not a member. It was a turning point. I am so grateful to him and the late Mrs. Aina Adeparusi, who bought the JAMB form that enabled me to enter the university after several attempts. Her benevolence was initially sustained by Yetunde Abu, her daughter, before being taken over by her son, the late Dr. Adebola Adeparusi, and his wife. I grew close to Dr. Adepass, as he was fondly called, due to his passion for academics. His death was a devastating loss for me. Prof. Ogunsanya took me to the University of Ilorin and encouraged me to pursue a degree in Political Science instead of English Language or Mass Communication, for which I had been admitted for elsewhere. The memories of the late Prof. Ogunsanya as a father, friend, and mentor par excellence remain evergreen. After his demise, his wife, Mrs. Lucy Ogunsanya, and their children, Ade, Femi, and Bunmi, became monuments of his unparalleled benevolence.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Vice-Chancellor, Professor Reuben Jiya Kolo. He appointed me as the Dean of Students' Affairs shortly after he assumed office. He also facilitated the process that led to my appointment as a professor. I am truly grateful for the confidence you have in me and for the honor of serving as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. I would also like to extend my recognition to the immediate past Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof.

Alaba Simpson. I appreciate all other members of the management team of Crawford University: Mr. Moses Itauma, Mrs. Olukemi Ojo Ayeni, and Mrs. Lateef Bukunola, the Registrar, Bursar, and University Librarian, respectively. I would love to thank the Chancellor, Rev. Dr. Isaac Adigun, the Board of Trustees Chair, Ambassador James Olaleye, the secretary and my friend, Mr. Jide Yesufu, Barrister Paul Ajetunmobi and all other BoT members for their unwavering support at all times. (I will come to our Council shortly)

Before I proceed to acknowledge the men and women who have made my intellectual journey extremely productive, I would like to thank God for the men and women of God in Apostolic Faith who nurtured me at every stage of my spiritual development. A unique characteristic shared by all these people of God is their genuine concern for my career. In this regard, I cannot forget the late Rev. Oye Ogunyemi, under whose ministry I started to grow and who later conducted my wedding ceremony; the late Mama Famodimu, in whose house we started a church in Ogotun Ekiti. I am thankful to Rev. M. A. Ajayi, who discovered me while I was with Mama Famodimu and under whom I later became a youth leader and regional secretary of the church. I thank God that the Gospel introduced me to my brother, father, mentor, and friend, the late Bro. Nathaniel Aniramu, who until

his death, was my human Gospel guiding light. He was faithful until death. The late Rev. Akin Adedulu, the late Rev. Soji Oni, the late Rev. Gabriel Ajayi, the late Rev. Peter Awomoyi, the late Bro. Oluwadiya—a great man; the late Rev. Gabriel Adesanya, the late Rev. Ayo Orisamuko, and so many others influenced my spiritual journey profoundly. Among the noble men who are thankfully still alive, Rev. Bolaji Pelu, Rev. Jacob Fadijo, Rev. Enoch Folorunsho Ajayi, Rev. Adebayo Adeniran, Rev. Funso Shobowale, Rev. Adeboye Aro, Rev. Akin Ajayi, Rev. Festus Oniyide, Rev. Festus Oyeniya, Rev. Umarudeen Olowosile, Rev. Ogoh Okoh, Rev. Elijah Olaleye, Rev. Oba Fatoba, Rev. Asaya, and many others have remained spiritual fathers and friends to me. They have made significant contributions to my well-being during my tumultuous times of spiritual affliction. Specifically, Baba Folorunsho Ajayi remains a reference point in my gospel trainings while Rev. Umarudeen Olowosile has been a consistent force of encouragement to me since our paths crossed from old Ekiti region. Notably too, Rev. Jacob Fadijo predicted my career as a lecturer when he discovered me while he was the pastor at Ido church. Since that time, he has remained committed to that conviction and played the role of a devoted father, both in kind and in cash. At the University of Ilorin, Rev. (Prof.) Mathew Adewumi became my adoptive father, brother, and friend after he picked me up at the altar in

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Recollecting my time as an undergraduate at the university, particularly in the Political Science department, stirs fond memories of the late Prof. Ebunlomo Davies, who later supervised my BSc project. He became a role model to me. He was an exceptional teacher, possessing a profound mastery of teaching methodologies, both theoretical and practical. Scholars of his caliber are exceedingly rare in our field—a disciplined and a no-nonsense academic who left a significant impact. While one may not have appreciated his strict lifestyle and his 'stingy' grading, one could not help but admire his fairness, diligence, and commitment to producing outstanding graduates. He will be remembered for these qualities. I had many other great teachers at Ilorin: Professors Ola Rotimi, Lucky Ovwasa, Emmanuel Gbade Ojo, Adedoyin Omede, Johnson Olaniyi, late Dr. N. Nwosu, and Johnson Oyedele. Some of these educators emerged when I returned to the university in 2007 for my PhD. Professors Fatai Aremu, Saka Lukeman, and Associate Professor Abdurasheed Alada became great friends and helpers along the journey.

In my journey back to the University of Ilorin for my PhD, my friend, Bonnie Ayodele played a pivotal role in facilitating the process. We navigated the program together for many years. He is one of the friends sponsoring this inaugural lecture. Thank you, Bonnie, for your

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Among the distinguished academics and friend that I like to appreciate is Prof. Azeez Olaniyan, who serves as a beacon of motivation and an exemplar of achievements that academics should aspire to in our field. We hail from the same town, the same street, and attended the same secondary school, although we pursued our studies in different universities simultaneously. Later, we worked together at Ekiti State University (EKSU).

Prof. Hassan Ajisafe Saliu, the current President of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), supervised my PhD thesis. He was determined to produce a PhD graduate with distinction. Although he pushed me to the limits and I nearly succumbed to the pressure, I deeply appreciate his unwavering focus and exceptional editorial skills. Thank you, Sir, for insisting on your standards of excellence rather than yielding to my complaints, tears, and limitations. You have left an indelible mark of merit on my academic journey.

I began my teaching career at Ekiti Parapo College, Ido-Ekiti, where I met wonderful people both at work and in the church. God brought me to that place, and, remarkably, it was there that I met my wife. I am grateful to the Fanilolas, the Oluboduns, Brother and Sister Adelekun, and many others who provided me with unique fellowship.

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My sudden movement to Crawford University in 2020 was both dramatic and traumatic; however, it was a divine intervention. Again, Prof. Rotimi Ajayi, the then Vice-Chancellor, offered it as a mere stopgap, given my inclination for academic mobility. However, God sustained this opportunity. I am thankful to all who made this possible: Prof. Emeritus Peter Okebukola, who, at a time, was willing to move me out to any University outside of Nigeria but I later came to his hand in Crawford, the wife, a mother and mother-in-law to me, Prof. Foluso Okebukola, Rev. Adebayo Adeniran (the Chancellor at that time), and the late Rev. Gabriel Ajayi, who appointed me as a representative of the church on the university's Governing Council. Crawford University provided me with the serenity I needed to regain my composure after a challenging period in my life. I am especially

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I would like to use this occasion to appreciate the support of Ogotun Development Union, Ado-Ekiti branch, as well as my friend, Mr. Ajibabi. I am also inspired by the activities of my old student associations: Ogotun High School '85 set, ably led by S. P. Muibi Adebimpe, and the University of Ilorin '97 set.

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Closing Remarks

Poverty—can we end it in our lifetime? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Jeffrey Sachs (2005) wrote an excellent book of over 400 pages, suggesting that eradicating poverty by 2025 was a realistic goal. However, now in 2025, little has changed significantly. Ironically, the most notable development aligns with Sachs's prediction (2005, p. 266): “We pretend to work, and you pretend to pay us. Many poor countries today pretend to reform while rich countries pretend to help them.”

He further observed that “many low-income countries go through the motions of reform, doing little in practice and expecting even less in return.” On the other hand, “aid agencies focus on projects at a symbolic rather than national scale, just big enough to make good headlines.”

In spite of this dark spot, we can still make significant progress in addressing inequality by implementing pro-poor programs, preventing impoverishment, redistributing income through increased taxes on the wealthy, and exempting small businesses from tax. Additionally, we should provide subsidies and palliatives for the poor, combat corruption, and adopt a bottom-up approach in our poverty reduction strategies. The government should concentrate on

improving power supply and establishing the necessary conditions for socio-political and economic development and at the same time reinforce social justice where merits rather than patronage will enable the children of the poor to compete effectively with the children of the rich. Similarly, we can intentionally distance our university, the Crawford university, from the unnecessary hypocrisy painted by Sachs Jeffrey.

It is unnecessary to grope in the light. The abundant light of development, generously bestowed upon us by God, has the potential to transform both our nation and our university into a veritable Eldorado.

I thank the Lord for this day and for all those I may not have mentioned. May the Lord bless you and take you all back safely to your destinations.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this is my inaugural lecture.

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About Isaac Adegbenga Aladegbola, the Inaugural Lecturer

Prof. Isaac Adegbenga Aladegbola, a distinguished academic and administrator, assumed the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Crawford University in December 2023. His appointment was approved by the University Board of Trustees and the Governing Council, recognizing his exceptional qualifications and contributions to the institution. Born close to six decades ago in the southern part of Ekiti State, Prof. Aladegbola has an illustrious academic background. He earned a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in Political Science from the University of Ilorin in 1997, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and a Master of Science (MSc) in Political Science from the University of Ado-Ekiti (now Ekiti State University) in 2004 and 2006, respectively. He further pursued his doctoral studies, obtaining a PhD in Political Science from the University of Ilorin, with a specialization in the political economy of developing nations, focusing on policy responses to poverty management and inclusive growth.

Prof. Aladegbola's academic career spans over two decades, during which he has made significant contributions to teaching, research, and administration. He began his journey as a Graduate

Assistant at the College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, from 2002 to 2005. Subsequently, he served at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, College of Education, Ikere Campus, where he rose through the ranks from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer I between 2005 and 2014. From 2014 to 2016, he held a faculty position at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration. He then joined Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, where he progressed from Lecturer I to Senior Lecturer from 2014 to 2020.

In 2020, Prof. Aladegbola joined Crawford University, where he has since held various administrative positions. He served as the Acting Head of the Department of Political Science and International Relations from 2020 to 2021 and as the Dean of Student Affairs from 2021 to 2023. Before assuming his current role, he was a member of the Governing Council.

Prof. Aladegbola's research expertise is evident in his extensive list of publications in prestigious local and international journals, books, and conference proceedings. He has participated in numerous local and international conferences, where he has presented his scholarly works and engaged with peers in his field.

In his career, Prof. Aladegbola has been the recipient of numerous accolades and awards including the Merit Award for Most Dedicated Lecturer from the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) in 2005, the Lecturer of the Year Award from the National Association of Political Science Students (NAPSS) in 2021, and the Academia Award as Academician per Excellence by the Freelance & Independent Broadcaster Association of Nigeria (FIBAN) in 2008. In 2022, he was honored with the Academia Award from Gold Media Concepts International, among several others.

Prof. Aladegbola is an active member of several professional organizations, including the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), Social Science Research Council, the Pan African Solidarity Education Network (PASEN), and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). In 2014, he became an African fellow of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and was awarded the APSA Centennial Grant in 2017, further recognizing his academic excellence. He also won four scholarship awards to attend international conferences of the African Institute of South Africa (AISA) and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) between 2013 and 2015.

Prof. Aladegbola's doctoral work focused on the causal factors and effects of increasing poverty indices in Nigeria. The study offers insights into the political, economic, and development issues in Africa, highlighting the continent's flawed development ideologies as contributing factors to its persistent poverty and the challenges faced in addressing this issue.

Flowing from his experience as a scholar and a regular commentator on national and state broadcast stations, he has a keen interest in the expected role of the African states in the development and welfare of African citizens, as well as the interface with Western neo-colonialism. The perennial questions are: In what ways can African states serve as catalysts for African development and welfare? In light of relentless momentum of globalization with its impact on the nation-state, can African states still play a significant role in the discourse on development and welfare? It is already established that the state was instrumental in the development in Europe. Prof. Aladegbola belongs to the school of thought that African states must be strengthened and liberated from the modern slave trade in the continent.


In addition to his academic pursuits, Prof. Aladegbola possesses extensive leadership experience in community youth development activities. He has been prominently featured on radio

PREVIOUS INAUGURAL LECTURES

CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY
Faith City, Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

5th INAUGURAL LECTURE

Topic:
ANIMAL SKIN: ONCE YOU SEE IT, YOU CAN'T UNSEE IT



Delivered By:
Gbolagade Duradola Gbolagunte
BS,(SEATTLE PACIFIC), M.Sc., PhD(ABU, Zaria) FCA (Nigeria)
Professor of Applied Biology

Date: 4th of June, 2019, Time 3pm
Venue: Multipurpose Hall, Crawford University.

6th INAUGURAL LECTURE

Topic:
**CONSUMING WITHOUT PRODUCING:
DIALECTICS OF A PRODIGAL SON**

Delivered By:
GABRIEL LANRE ADEOLA
B.Sc., M.Sc. (Paris), M.Phil., PhD (France)
Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science and International Relations

CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY,
Faith City, Igbesa, Ogun State.

Thursday, 28th November, 2019

CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY
Faith City, KM 3, Atan Agbara Road,
P.M.B 2001, Igbesa, Ogun State

7th INAUGURAL LECTURE

TOPIC:
**"IMAGE MIRRORING COST TRANSACTION LOOP:
THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE APPARENT CUL-DE-SAC"**

Delivered by:
Professor Comfort Ejayokhin Omorogbe
B.Sc. (EDSU), M.Sc., PhD, (UNILAG), CMA, FFIA, FCAI
PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING

Tue. 29th Sept., 2020

CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY
Faith City, Atan/Agbara Road,
Igbesa, Ogun State.

8th Inaugural LECTURE

TOPIC:
**NIGERIA ECONOMIC FORTUNE:
GOING BACK TO THE ROCKS**

DELIVERED BY:
ADEWOLE JOHN ADEOLA
B.Sc. (OAU), M.Sc. Ph.D. (Ibadan),
(MNMOS, MCOMEG, MNAV, MNAEGE, MIMGA, FROGRHS)
Professor of Economic Geology

THURSDAY 27TH APRIL, 2023

MULTIPURPOSE HALL,
Crawford University, Igbesa,
Ogun State.

12:00 NOON Prompt