Underdevelopment: A Case-Study of Nigeria

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Abstract

Underdevelopment has plagued Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), since independence the post-colonial African states have experienced extreme poverty, unemployment and other economic ailments that have persisted in the region. The aim of this thesis is to critique the null hypothesis of dependency theorist that it is structural factors that caused underdevelopment rather this study proposes an alternative hypothesis through Neo-Classical Realism to explain that it is in fact state-level actors and domestic issues that are the true culprit of causing the dependent variable. The methodological approach is a single embedded case-study with an explaining-outcome process-tracing. The thesis found that the cause of the underdevelopment in Nigeria is firmly rooted in the domestic sphere and that it delves much deeper than main factors; resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism, and Sino-Nigerian relations, but it is the socio-political culture that has produced the norms which the elites operate on and possibly contributing to the exasperation of the negative aspects of the main factors that have perpetuated and sustained underdevelopment in Nigeria and SSA.

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1. Introduction

Underdevelopment has plagued Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), since independence the post-colonial African states have experienced poverty, unemployment, and other economic ailments that have been detrimental to their development. The IR focus of this study is Global Political Economy (GPE) precisely because the “GPE approaches tend to be more holistic, placing states and other kinds of actors within larger structures or the global system” (Marlin-Bennett and Johnson, 2021). The research question is what is causing underdevelopment in Nigeria?

The subject of this case-study is the West African nation called Nigeria with a population of “216.747 million”, making it among one of the highest populated countries on the continent (IMF, 2022). Despite the abundant resources and access to cheap labor, this has not translated to development instead the vast oil reserves in Nigeria have been a curse for the country (Akinola, 2018a as cited in Akinola, 2020:489; Lashitew and Werker, 2020:1; Taylor, 2007:634). Nigeria has a myriad of problems that are debilitating the developmental prospects. Nearly half of the population is “below the poverty line”, and the nation grapples with a lack of economic diversification, ‘insufficient infrastructure’, ‘high inflation’, weak and inefficient institutions, high levels of poverty and unemployment, and these issues hamper the poverty reduction efforts within the country (World Bank, 2021). Yet, a recent press release by the World Bank (WB) — the organization has called for the need to “urgently reduce inflation” as the current rates are one of the highest worldwide and the principle cause is the due to gasoline prices (World Bank, 2022). Therefore, Nigeria has seen underdevelopment through rising unemployment rates and stagnation of the poverty reduction programs (IMF, 2022 and World Bank, 2022b:14-15).

The study aims to critique the null hypothesis presented by dependency theorist that the cause of underdevelopment is solely structural/systemic factors originating from colonialism and capitalism, and this thesis details an alternative hypothesis presented by Neo-Classical Realism that focuses on bridging “spatial divides (domestic—international), cognitive (material—ideational), and temporal (present—future)” that centers in the international, state, and individual levels (populace and leaders namely elites) (Foulon, 2015:654; Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:431-441), thus due to NCR’s bridging aspect this approach provides the tools for analyzing the nuance on the state-level whilst not compromising on its international dimension. The issue of
underdevelopment in Africa has typically been analyzed by dependency theorists, yet NCR can
shed new light onto this phenomenon since the theory provides the tools not only to focus at
multiple levels of analysis, but delve deeper into each aspect to derive a sufficient explanation
for the causes of underdevelopment. Therefore, the GPE puzzle of this study concerns explaining
a dependency-centric issue from the perspective of NCR, and the chief concern is to derive a
meaningful explanation regarding the cause of underdevelopment through the latter approach
whilst critiquing dependency. Thus, the researcher has opted for a theoretical framework
consisting of NCR coupled with a “choice-theoretic” approach with the state-level actors being
the African elites. Furthermore, the researcher alongside NCR and choice-theoretic utilizes
insight from Chabal and Daloz’s paradigm (1999:155) called the Political Instrumentalization of
Disorder (PID) that provides a ‘fresh’ and unique perspective of the politics in the region
specifically the elites actions and may shed light on the possible causes of underdevelopment,
and the methodology is a single embedded case-study of Nigeria with an explaining-outcome
process-tracing. This study seeks to utilize all these tools to develop an argument addressing the
puzzle through analyzing the main factors: resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism,
and Sino-Nigerian relations to derive a conclusion that can sufficiently explain what is causing
underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Firstly, the literature review section will outline the literature surrounding the central
argument by evaluating the scholarship through the lens of the main factors followed by a
discussion of the theoretical framework adopted. Secondly, the methodology details the methods
or tools that the researcher will analyze the literature with by reflecting on the way that the
knowledge will be derived and justify the approach. Thirdly, the analysis will examine the main
factors through the literature, apply the method, and theoretical framework to explain why these
factors may be responsible for causing underdevelopment, and this section will finish with the
results of the study. Lastly, the conclusion will bring the entire study together to discuss the
findings and what this might mean for IR and beyond.

2. Literature Review

Scholars have sought to understand underdevelopment in SSA. Whereas, dependent
development theory shifts the issue to the “role of the state and the transformation of public
institutions into management bodies directed toward sustainable economic development” (Akinola 2020:491). Similarly, Taylor (2015:11-15) argues that the reason for Africa’s continued dependence is due to a combination of several factors at the state-level (manufacturing, consumption, and lack of saving). Whilst, Uzonwanne (2013:6-22) argues that the ethnicity-driven prebendalistic political system has curtailed national development and economic growth. Notably, these approaches mentioned above echo the issues outlined by NCR primarily due to the focus on the state-level and domestic variables, thus this section will discuss the literature surrounding underdevelopment through the main factors: Sino-Nigerian relations, resource dependence, lax institutions, and prebendalism.

2.1. Underdevelopment

Underdevelopment is a complex phenomenon; therefore it is necessary to clarify the nature of this issue alongside its antonym — development. Underdevelopment is simply put, a country that is not developed, and there are several markers to determine whether a country is underdeveloped (Oduwole, 2013:332), and the study will seek to understand development through the lens of Seers’ conception of development as a ‘good change’. This perspective offers a comprehensive view of development that does not “equate growth with development” rather this approach focuses on going beyond the economic metrics by associating development with the mitigation of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Seers, 1972 as cited in McGillivray, 2016:30-31). Seers (1972:21-22) argues that “it looks as if economic growth not merely may fail to solve social and political difficulties; certain types of growth can cause them.” moreover, the term ‘development’ itself is synonymous with progress. Furthermore, the method that this approach determines progress is if the following three issues are mitigated; ‘poverty’, ‘unemployment’, and ‘inequality’ (Seers, 1972:24). Thus, this implies that the issue of underdevelopment can be viewed as the inverse of development since development indicates that the economy is developing or moving forward by tackling the issues stated above, hence underdevelopment is not only an indicator that represents a lack of development rather in certain areas there is a stagnation or regression in solving the economic ailments. Therefore, this perspective goes beyond simply relying on economic indicators as the metric to judge development as this study intends to do. Henceforth, the study utilizes the inverse of Seers’ formulation as another definition of underdevelopment when the country continues to suffer
from the ailments of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, thereby classifying it as underdeveloped. The following section will discuss dependency and the Sino-Nigerian relations.

2.2 Dependency and Sino-Nigerian relations

Dependency theory emerged at the end of the 1950s due to the rift between rich and poor countries, thus this theory became a tool to scrutinize “development and underdevelopment in the international political economy” (Ferraro, 2008 and Namkoong, 199 as cited in Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:429). According to Agbebi and Virtanen (2017:430-434) dependency theory separates the world into two parts: the centre (industrialized) and periphery (underdeveloped), yet there are two strands within dependency theory namely Marxist and non-Marxist, and each approach highlights how the South is being exploited by the North and what is the culprit of this dynamic; yet both frameworks differ on the specific causes and solutions (non-Marxist such as Haq and Prebisch propose reform of the international political economy whereas the Marxist such as Dos Santos argue for social revolution), but they agree that the principal cause is historical circumstances (capitalism and colonialism respectively). Lastly, dependency theory has contributed towards highlighting the ‘unfair trade rules’ between the North and South also it has been instrumental in deeming some western notions about development in the South as redundant specifically those policies and ideas that do not meet the South’s developmental needs (Mason, 2017:86; Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:437).

Since the expansion of Sino-African interactions this subject has become “the main topic of interest in respect of Africa’s international relations” (Taylor, 2006:937). Nigeria is amongst China’s key trading partners as Beijing is seeking to secure her energy demands to maintain economic development and pursue international ventures, thus resources play a key role of China’s presence in Africa (Konings, 2007 as cited in Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:438; Taylor, 2007:631; Mason, 2015:92). Moreover, this relation is a fundamental departure from the West’s approach that prescribes neo-liberal economic policies to African countries, whereas China adapts to a given country thereby allowing elites to negotiate and determine their developmental route (Hodzi, 2018:196-197; Hodzi, 2020:891). Therefore, China’s presence is a breath of fresh air for the African countries who have embraced the “financial aid and technical assistance from
China; they were seen as offering more advantages than those of traditional western donors” (Ayodele and Sotola, 2014 as cited in Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:437).

With the advent of the Sino-African relations — IR scholars have sought to explore what role can dependency theory play in explaining this dynamic. Agbebi and Virtanen (2017:441-446) argue that due to the basis of dependency theory’s assumption being based on an exploitative historical past between the North and South (for example the South being just a supplier of raw materials) — this dynamic is not repeating itself with the Sino-African relations, but China’s involvement in different aspects of the African economies such as manufacturing, agriculture, and industry partnership devoid of conditionalities has exemplified this relationship as a interdependency. Yet, Mason (2017:91-93) argues that dependency theory must be updated to include a new type of dependence emphasized by the Sino-African relations. The following section will discuss resource dependence as this is another key factor that is related to the underdevelopment in Nigeria.

2.3 Resource Dependence

Scholars agree that Nigeria is heavily reliant on oil and that a majority of its proceeds derive from this natural resource (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:1; Akinola, 2020:489). Furthermore, Taylor (2016:20-22) found that the ‘rise’ narrative is based on the “intensification of resource extraction whilst dependency deepens, inequality increases and de-industrialization continues apace”. Thus, Nigeria's dependency is based on the oil and gas resources that the country uses to gain revenue. As Auty (2001:843-844) asserts that “resource-abundant countries rely on primary product exports longer than resource-poor countries”, and this delays a key process of the ‘competitive industrialization model’ that is required to develop the economy. Moreover, the continent saw the outflow of more raw materials and imported manufactured goods, thus further rooting the view of Africa being solely a provider of primary commodities (Hodzi, 2018:199). The alleviation of resource dependence may not bode well for the continent since this is precisely the reason why China is seeking new source of raw materials for her own developmental progress, so this might mean that China possibly has vested interest in maintaining their resource dependence as China aims to position itself as a “global player in the international oil market” (Taylor, 2007:938; Hodzi, 2018:196). As a key incentive for the political elites to supply Beijing’s energy demands as this brought an increased return for the
‘African states income’, yet this overreliance can make the African nations vulnerable to negative price shocks that results from the instability of international oil prices (Taylor, 2006:951).

Taylor (2016:8) seeks to analyze the interplay between the narrative of the ‘rise’ of Africa, yet this leads to the continent being edged towards ‘underdevelopment and dependency’. Furthermore, the research utilizes a quantitative empirical study that displays data through figures in tables from the 2000s onwards through various categories such as manufacturing, economic indicators, rates of industrialization. Taylor (2016:11-18) uses a quantitative approach through several concepts associated with the extractive industries specifically their linkages to the other aspects such as over-reliance on extractive resources, consumption, lack of production/industrialization, and misrepresentative indicators. Also, scholars follow this approach of using quantitative methods and others choose to include qualitative analysis, but most opt for the former relying on export figures, GDP statistics, and data derived from International Financial Institutions (IFI) to determine the nature of resource dependence and its possible impact (Ross, 1999:322; Lashitew and Werker, 2020:6-7; Taylor, 2016:11-18; Auty, 2001:844). The next segment will discuss norm subsidiary and the PID.

2.4 Norm Subsidiary and Political instrumentalization of Disorder

The concept that concerns norms and theory of norm creation outlined by Acharya named norm subsidiary (Acharya, 2011:118). According to Acharya (2011:97-105) “norm subsidiarity [is] as a process whereby local actors create rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors”, and this action of subsidiary is specified to a less significant actors, thus this can be viewed as a resistance of these actors against a more powerful actor. This point is essential since there is the history of colonialism that is unavoidable when discussing North-South relations. Thus, Acharya (2011:109) argues that “subsidiarity is triggered by the exclusion of regional actors from rule-making and the perceived hypocrisy of great powers in defending agreed principles”, therefore arguments of subsidiary in this thesis can be factored into the African states resistance to maintain the prebendal system against the conditionalities stipulated by the IFI (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:123; Oni, 2017:427).
Since, the cultural characteristics of the African continent are predicated on the primacy of ‘informal’ and ‘vertical’ relationships over the opposite, therefore Africans have preserved their ‘norms’, ‘rules’, and ‘autonomy’ from the influence of the ‘central actors’ (Acharya, 2011:97). Chabal and Daloz (1999:163) employ their paradigm to understand how Africa functions despite the missing “sustained development”. Moreover, the term ‘disorder’ refers to the “different ‘order’, “the outcome of different rationalities and causalities […] political development which reflects the experiences of Western societies”, and this illustrates that the disorder is from the perspective of other theories and paradigms that does not comply with the ‘recognized norms’ in Africa, thus the authors based their analysis on “an interpretive framework which makes sense of those norms” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:15).

2.5 Lax institutions

Discussions of institutions are internal matters, thus it might not seem relevant to IR at first sight. NCR allows for the inclusion of state-level variables (Foulon, 2015:637) such as domestic politics, state leaders, and etcetera, thus it stands to reason that this approach allows for the inclusion of institutions as a factor, and IR scholars have analyzed the impact of this issue. Mason (2017:86) centered his article on the analyzing the implications of Sino-African relations through the lens of dependency theory, and interestingly enough the author cites the institutional framework of African states as a cause for concern in the governance within the continent since neopatrimonialism has adverse effects on institutions. Similarly, Hodzi (2018:192-195) utilizing the NCR approach whilst also discussing the Sino-African dynamic in relation to economic growth and political elites — he also highlights the nature of the African institutions and their explicit impact on the state, meaning how the elites utilize the state to their own ends, and the author details the consequences of that this type of institutions in Africa in relation to China. Therefore, the inclusions of institutions can be brought into the realm of IR, yet it requires that analysis of the institutions and factoring what the consequences are in the international dimension.

It is imperative to first look at the nature of the Nigerian state and institutions to determine their status. According to Chabal and Daloz (1999:4), the African states since independence have not been ‘institutionalized’ and the authors have determined that this is
because the institutions have not been “emancipated from society”, thereby adopting a Weberian analysis of institutions that it is an independent entity which functions separate from the society, thus marking the emergence of an ‘autonomous political institutions’ which has not occurred in Nigeria rather the opposite is more prevalent. Moreover, the authors emphasize that the current status of the state in the extension, the institutions is “vacuous and ineffectual” because for the former the state was not “consolidated” but rather quickly eroded falling victim to “particularistic and factional struggles”, thus failing to acquire core aspects of the modern state. As for the latter, it has not been the aim of the “African political elite” to labor towards the formal “institutionalization of the state apparatus” or the state is at its most “usefulness when it the least institutionalized” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:14).

Akinola (2020:500) argues that Africa requires considerably stronger states with a ‘functional institutional framework’ to combat the exploitation of African resources. This shows that most of the problems related to economic reform and extractive industries arise from the states (within them as well) themselves especially the mismanagement of the resources, lax institutions, etc. Moreover, Uzonwanne (2013:6) seeks “to shed light on the weaknesses of Nigerian social and political institutions”. The author found that the Nigerian political economy from 1960 to 2007 is characterized as a weak state due to the ‘successive’ institutions of weak governments led by ‘ethnically-driven’ and ‘prebendalistic officials’ (Uzonwanne 2013:22). On the conversation of why institutions in SSA countries are weak, Chabal and Daloz (1999:13) highlight that it is due to the lack of separation from society, thus not acquiring a ‘neutral political status’ that allows for the ‘political system’ to be overwhelmed by the personalized and vertical relations that is a bulwark against ‘proper institutionalization’(Hodzi, 2018:192-195).

Uzonwanne (2013:6) has adopted an in-depth qualitative approach in the form of a “thematic analysis of interview and questionnaire data” thereby, finding that the Nigerian state is weak. Chabal and Daloz (1999:13) employ an approach that emphasizes “the empirical realities of contemporary Africa as we can observe them […] the profit to be found in the weak institutionalization of political practice”. This perspective accounts for the elite’s perception and political behavior within the context of the African institutions and this argument may pave the way to understanding the institutional aspect of underdevelopment (Foulon, 2020:15). Since these approaches are predicated on a qualitative analysis with quantitative serving as a
supplement as opposed to the resource dependence scholars, this study employs both methods, yet the qualitative analysis is given prominence because it puts the quantitative data into perspective, thereby offering insight into the figures.

2.6 Prebendalism

Prebendalism is a complex system that requires defining before attempting to analyze its influence on underdevelopment. Prebendalism was conceptualized by Joseph, and he describes this system as the “shared expectation about the appropriation of state offices, and the use of revenues accruing to them” (Joseph, 2013:264). Moreover, prebendalism is characterized by the political actions of competing for and using the advantages of the ‘office-holder’ (Joseph, 2013:264-265). Furthermore, prebendalism “refers to the handing out of prebends, in which an individual is given a public office for him/her to gain personal access over state resources.” (Joseph, 2013:269). In addition, the nature of prebendalism is the relationship between ‘patron-client’ and the appropriation of ‘public resources’ (Joseph, 2013:271). The evidence above implies that this is a system that operates on the misuse of the office and public funds by political elites, thereby reaping the benefits from their position for themselves as the patron and their clients. Furthermore, Chabal and Daloz (1999:103) assert that the current African states operate on a tactic of ‘prebendal exploitation’ that is reciprocally beneficial if those who ‘redistribute’ illicit gains accordingly.

The Nigerian political economy has been described as a rentier economy which is a common occurrence amongst resource-rich countries, and this has manifested in the political elites deriving the rents from resources and within the context of the Sino-Nigerian relations the rents are derived from Chinese capital who gain success from financing the political elites since they are “in control of their states’ means of production by monopolising and personalising trade negotiations with the Chinese investors” (Akpomera, 2015:156; Pay and Nowsu, 2015:357; Hodzi, 2018:198). Also, this control they exert means that the elites have sabotaged the ‘state structures’, thus leading to them personally benefitting from the China relations, and this ultimately poses a threat to the development of the country (Taylor, 2007:635; Mason, 2017:86; Akpomera, 2015:156).
Capital flight, according to Osei-Assibey et al (2018:59) is exemplified by the vast “outflow of financial assets and capital from a nation” and the authors admit that the literature draws connections between capital flight and corruption is limited concerning SSA. Yet, the authors have drawn an important link between these two phenomena that can aid in this research (Osei-Assibey et al, 2018:60). Otusanya and Adeyeye (2021:62) argue that economic interests have enabled the illegal ventures of the “political and economic elites from developing countries”, and the scholars focus on “capital flight, money laundering, and global offshore financial centers (OFCs)”. Thus, solidifying the relevance of the international aspect of prebendalism since the region has lost close ‘to $1.3tn’ in illegal finance with Nigeria being among the highest outpours (Business Day, 2020 as cited in Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:63). And these “funds have been traced to foreign accounts, personal investments in real estates both at home and abroad making any claims on primordial interest an illusion.” (Oni, 2017:432). Thus, these proceeds have been used for enrichment at expense of development, and the next section will discuss the methods deployed by scholars that are relevant to this study.

The methods employed by scholars within this subsection (some of which are inferred from their material) is primarily qualitative for political system i.e.prebendalism, whilst the corruption scholars employ either a qualitative approach with quantitative analysis (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:79; Joseph, 2013:264-265; Osei-Assibey, 2018:59; Oni, 2017:432; Hodzi, 2018:191, Hodzi, 2020:887). Notably, these scholars; Joseph (2013:261-265), and Otusanya and Adeyeye (2021:79) both use Nigeria as their focus, the former for the formulation of prebendalism whilst the latter employs a case study to analyze the elite's actions in transferring illicit funds. Moreover, the scholars adopted this approach with the intent to draw conclusions that could apply to the entire SSA. Henceforth, this illustrates that Nigeria is fertile ground for applying concepts and theories with the possibility of the findings that may apply to the region. Furthermore, “the theoretical assumption underpinning this study is that corrupt financial activity is a social practice involving both individual actors and social structures, which has been shaped by history, power relations, politics, and a poor regulatory environment.”, this framework is poignant since the authors are comprehensively weighing the role of corruption which was elaborated on above with regards to the function that it serves within SSA countries and the study will adopt a method of using a case study of Nigeria similar to the authors to explore the puzzle (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:79).
The story of SSA’s underdevelopment and dependency is well known and the factors that led to this issue are numerous. These three factors exude a common trait that is vital for this puzzle that is they all have a direct impact on the phenomenon in question whereas they vary in degrees, yet their influence on underdevelopment is undeniable, and more importantly informative. This study aided with the main factors will use NCR’s main focus of the state-level issues and actors as a guiding map to explain the causes of underdevelopment whilst factoring the international dimension through the implication the Sino-Nigerian relations (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2013:430-431; Foulon, 2015:635).

3. Theoretical Framework

NCR is a theoretical approach as the name suggests is within the realist school of IR, yet is distinct from its predecessor neorealism. NCR agrees with neorealism’s core assumption regarding state, relative power, and anarchy, yet the departure from neorealism is characterized by the NCR bridging of the “spatial divide” between the domestic and international which manifests as the inclusion of the domestic variables into the states behavior and action, thus NCR contends that “domestic politics and perceptions held by state policymakers” plays a key role on the international dimension as this approach includes these elements as a secondary variable (Foulon, 2015:636-637; Brawley, 2009:139). Therefore, NCR is exemplified by moving beyond the common criticism leveled against neorealism that treats the states as a “metaphorical black box [that] underplay different compositions” (Foulon, 2015:647) by highlighting what is internally informing the external decisions that states make.

The inclusion of state-level variables such as perception, ideology, and resources mobilization alongside the recognition of the state-level actors as “active participants” ensures that this approach includes and transcends the “spatial divide (domestic–international), as well as cognitive and temporal divides, through state-level perceptions” (Foulon, 2015:638-646; Foulon, 2020:14-17). Moreover, this theory operates on a multi-level analysis that incorporates three realms; “spatial (domestic-international), cognitive (material-ideational), and temporal (present-future)” (Foulon, 2015:641-654), thus this approach provides the tools to analyze deeply within the state and its actors without compromising the international dimension. NCR asserts that the aim of states is not to always accrue more power (Brawley, 2009:139), and this coupled with NCR’s focus on the transformative nature of state-level actors provides an opportunity to analyze
African Elites relations vis-à-vis the international actors as the scholar Obert Hodzi (2018:191 and 2020:887) has utilized within his work

Despite the strengths of the NCR’s approach in the inclusion of subunit actors and variables, yet a glaring issue must be addressed. NCR operates on a preconceived assumption of the nature of the state; that the state is strong enough to exert its will over the entire society, and “override domestic cleavages formed on the basis of other interests” (Brawley, 2009:2). This suggests that the archetype of the state is Western-centric, and as mentioned above the African states do not conform to this — primarily due to the African states being a “personalization of power [as] it is those agencies of institutionalisation power are missing or incapacitated” under the neopatrimonial governance that prevails in the continent (Hodzi, 2018:192; Mason, 2017:86; Akpomera, 2015:156-157). Foulon (2020:14-17) has acknowledged this issue, and argues that this “Western-centric nature of its produced knowledge, which risks misrepresenting and misunderstanding world politics”, yet he asserts that NCR can assimilate non-Western issues and questions. Nonetheless, according to Mearsheimer and Walt (2013:435) even with this approach has a glaring issue it is necessary to stick with this theory as far as the researcher is aware there is not a better alternative. Yet, this is a fact worth considering when adopting this theory on future African IR research.

NCR is adamant that “systematic incentives shapes but do not dictate state behavior” (Foulon, 2015:636), and this is a key criticism of dependency which assume that it is precisely due to imperialistic and capitalistic nature of the system causes the centre to engage in unequal exchange with the periphery, thus leading to underdevelopment there (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017:430). Therefore, dependency theory implies that the centre states may be solely driven by profiting of the periphery for the economic gain, and due to their relative positions their interaction within the structure of the international system remains the same i.e. the exploiter and exploited (Namkoong, 1999 as cited in Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:430). Furthermore, dependency theory dismisses local issues and argues that the causes of underdevelopment center on “imperialism, colonialism, and neo-imperialism” (Akinola 2020:491). This is the theory that this study will position itself against although the researcher acknowledges the utility of this approach on the system-level, but this theory is not feasible to comprehensively explain the root causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to contradict the dependency
theorist's claims that Africa's failure to develop is entirely due to external factors, and the possible culprits could be the elements of the traditional societies that have endured into modern Africa; (neo)patrimonial governance underlies the current African political system due to its utility for ‘client’ and ‘patrons’ because ‘political actions’ are based on the domain of reciprocity, local, and communal that demonstrates its ‘instrumental values’, and recently this issue has been observed in the dealings between African actors and their Chinese clients (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:103-158; Mason, 2015:86; Lampert and Mohan, 2015:4; Foulon, 2020:15).

This study will employ NCR alongside the choice theoretic approach with the PID informing the nuances of the state-level actors. ‘Choice-theoretic’ theories aim to “explain outcomes by specifying a limited number of actors, their dispositions, and their decision-making logics” (Jackson and Nexon, 2013:553). By focusing on the local actors namely the African elites specifically their role as ‘autonomous decision-makers’ (Jackson and Nexon, 2013:553). The autonomous decision-makers in this case are the African elites whom operate on the state-level, and the study adopts the model outlined by Hodzi (2020:891) that political elites are members of the higher echelons of government typically the executive branch, and that they have “structural power” to influence domestic-level issues down to the individual-level as “it is critical to shift focus from African states to political elites in Africa” also the study seeks to combine this approach with the model forwarded by NCR that considers state-level variables beyond the aforementioned spatial divide including the cognitive (Elites ideas and conceptions) (Strange, 1988:25 as cited in Hodzi, 2020:891; Hodzi, 2020:891; Foulon, 2015:646; Foulon, 2020:17). Moreover, in the two logics mentioned above the former refers to the relationship between the ‘decision-makers’ and norms specifically how they conform to them and justify their actions concerning “its logic of appropriateness” whilst the latter logic concerns the ‘utility-maximizing actor’ operating on this logic is attempting to manifest ‘desires’ towards results with confidence regarding the tactical position that the actor is in (Jackson and Nexon, 2013:556). For example, the norm of success in Africa is ‘ostentation’ where it is important for ‘political elites’ to redistribute to their clients whilst displaying their ‘prestige goods’, moreover resources generated through their power and these ‘personalized relations’ with clients, the ‘political elites’ they seek to buy the ‘affection’ of the masses (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:107,158,160). Therefore, the logic of appropriateness and consequence, in this case, refers to elites meeting the resource redistribution expectation from clients for appropriateness, whilst the actors attempt to utilize
these elements to rise in their political status, thus the elites may justify their prebendal action due to these norms. This study synthesizes these two logics (Jackson and Nexon, 2013:556) and attempt to understand the elite's actions under the variables presented by NCR to determine what causes the current underdevelopment in the region.

4. Methodology

The relevant literature to this study each describes an aspect that may contribute to understanding underdevelopment. Taylor (2016) uses a quantitative approach through figures to illustrate the dependency of African countries whereas Mason (2017:84) Hodzi (2018:191 and 2020:887), and Uzonwanne (2013:4) utilize a qualitative approach through a “thematic analysis of interview and questionnaire data was undertaken”, and the approaches have merits in analyzing their issues, yet the sole usage of quantitative or qualitative approach has its limits in presenting data that shows the whole picture of the issue. The method selected for this study is a single embedded case-study with an explaining-outcome process-tracing. Therefore, this section will outline the methods (data collection, etc), analyze, and justify this approach for the study.

This is a GPE case study of underdevelopment in Nigeria. A case study offers the opportunity to intensively examine a case also providing “insight into social processes that inform how we understand or explain IR” (Halperin and Heath, 2020:234; Lamont 2015:126). Therefore, case studies allow for the researcher to explore a case in detail concerning the phenomenon. Furthermore, the objective of a case study is to understand a large group of similar units and use concepts that apply to other contexts then make inferences that apply to other countries beyond the original case (Gerring 2004:342 as cited in Lamont 2015:128). Thus, the criterion for selecting a case is that the case has the presence of all the main factors of analysis namely resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism, and the Sino-African relations. Whereas most SSA countries have all these factors present, yet one or two factors are more pervasive than the other, but Nigeria has first three the factors that are equally producing and sustaining underdevelopment in the country also considering that Sino-Nigerian relations are relatively more comprehensive than other African states. Also, scholars have utilized Nigeria as a case-study for the related phenomenon of underdevelopment namely prebendalism, corruption, and capital flight, and they have generalized their findings to the entire continent (Otusanya and
Adeyeye, 2021:79; Joseph, 2013:265). Therefore, the researcher has determined with these factors as the criterion that Nigeria is the ideal fit for hypothetical testing of the factors alongside the theoretical framework since it shed light into the phenomenon that the researcher wishes to understand (Lamont 2015:129).

Furthermore, the rationale for selecting a case study is the following; the advantage of case study research, question type, and analytical generalization. According to Yin and Campbell (2018:35), “a case-study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context”. Therefore, a case-study provides the researcher with the tools to focus intently and analyze this issue closely; especially in the single case study model since this phenomenon namely underdevelopment can be empirically situated and also has consequences that may have wider implications on Nigeria and the region.

This study follows an embedded case study with NCR in mind. Notably, as mentioned above NCR positions itself “between the two levels, as the bridge between the two political realms. It incorporates domestic variables into international relations in a distinctive way” (Taliaferro et al. 2009; Ripsman 2009 as cited Brawley, 2009:2). This aspect of the theory lends well to the embedded case study since this approach provides the tools to analyze the local-level factors whilst providing the framework to branch outward onto the international realm specifically enabling to explain how these local factors influence Nigeria’s relations with China and what this means for underdevelopment. The main characteristic of embedded case-study research is the inclusion of sub-units, and the subunits themselves “need to be within or part of the original single-case” (Yin and Campbell 2018:88), and the researcher will analyze the single-case (Nigeria) in tandem with the subunit (African elites) also analyze Nigeria in relation the other levels of analysis such as beneath the state-level (elites) and the international-level (elites interaction with China and Western financial institution) and how this aspect is influencing Nigeria’s internal affairs (institutional decision-making). The reason for selecting this approach is due to the tools that it offers to analyze how these units and subunits specifically their influence on underdevelopment. The strength of the embedded case-study design is that the subunits can add notable chances for substantial analysis, magnifying the comprehension of the single-case (Yin and Campbell 2018:90), and this is an essential element of the study since the addition of African elites is to provide a deeper insight into what their role in underdevelopment
is. Thus, this type of case study goes hand-in-hand with the NCR which focuses intently on the internal machinations of the state, and how it can manifest on the international realm (Foulon, 2015:652)

The researcher acknowledges that this approach has a pitfall that “occurs when the case study focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis, or the original ‘case’ (Yin and Campbell 2018:89), furthermore just focusing on the African elites in the context of domestic politics alone can deem this study to be IR irrelevant. Therefore, to address this the focus is at multi levels of analysis in the following section when necessary as the factors will each reside in different levels namely prebendalism is at the subunit level extending to the international level by discussing the possible where the elites may transfer their gains to transnational actors. Whereas the resources dependence will be at the state-level, and the lax institutions will also be at the state-level also the Sino-Nigerian relations that is rooted in the international stage, and that might be influenced by the issues mentioned above. The method for using numerous sources of evidence in this study is triangulation.

Triangulation is another method that this study adopts, and it needs to be clarified by which type and how this will be undertaken. Among the types of triangulation within case-studies, data triangulation (Patton, 2015 as cited in Yin and Campbell 2018:172) will be utilized, and this refers to the adoption of evidence from multiple sources namely quantitative and qualitative (the specific usage of the data is discussed below). The reason for selecting this approach is manifold; the utilization of multiple sources can lead to the findings of the case study to be more accurate since different sources have led to the same conclusion thereby increasing confidence in the study whilst strengthening the construct validity of the case study (Yin and Campbell 2018:172-173).

By employing case studies the researcher aims to utilize an explaining outcome process-tracing method to trace the causal mechanism that may have caused this phenomenon. Process-tracing is essential for this study since the theory of choice in this study will be focused on autonomous actors i.e. African elites this approach presents the necessary tool to look “for evidence of the pressures, incentives, motivations, and decision-making calculus in any given instance of action” (George and Bennett 2005 as cited Halperin and Heath, 2020:237), thus,
process-tracing allows for the tracing of the sequence of events that led to the outcome this study is trying to explain (Lamont 2015:135). Therefore, it distinguishes the causal mechanisms that link the independent variables to the dependent variable, thus supplying extensive explanatory insight for the reader (Lamont 2015:135). Moreover, process-tracing can verify whether a theory’s causal mechanisms are in fact occurring in the actual world as it depicts, thus this study aims to collect evidence to argue that the NCR’s assertion that domestic variable impact the state’s behavior as much as the systematic pressures, yet it is state-level actions that determines a countries interaction at the system-level (Foulon, 2015:647; Brawley, 2009:2; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2013:343). Therefore, the main concern of process-tracing is to assess the “empirical performance of the theory’s explanatory logic” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2013:434) meaning this approach determines whether the theory’s variables can explain occurrences within reality.

Specifically, the type of approach is a inductive explaining-outcome process-tracing pertains to an examination of a little-studied outcome and is a “bottom-up type of analysis, using empirical material as the basis for building a plausible explanation of causal mechanisms whereby X (or multiple Xs) produced the outcome” (Beach and Pedersen, 2013:20), and the Xs will be the following; prebendalism, resource dependence, lax institutions, and Sino-Nigerian relations which aims to explain the outcome Y (Underdevelopment). This is utilized to derive a minimally sufficient explanation considering all the relevant factors that can account for the outcome this will involve ensuring that the factors are relevant and well clarified by the developed explanations (Beach and Pedersen, 2013:20-63). Moreover, it is pertinent to illustrate how the author will deal with the data using process-tracing. As stated above the factors will be used to collect the relevant data followed by an analysis of said data to determine how this factor is contributing to the outcome after analyzing all the factors under this procedure — the study will outline in the result section the key findings from these factors.

This research material consists of descriptive accounts and empirical secondary data collected from various search engines with specific key terms that serve to filter and find the material. Moreover, the data mentioned above will be based on a qualitative internet-based (Lamont, 2015:89) alongside a data triangulation approach, therefore it is necessary to detail the data that will be collected. This study seeks to synthesis NCR with choice-theoretic and PID to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the state-level actors and their behavior. To
effectively retrieve the data from the search engines and databases the following key terms will be used are ‘underdevelopment and dependency in Nigeria’, ‘capital flight’, ‘prebendalism’, ‘political economy of Nigeria’, ‘institutions in Nigeria’, ‘resource curse’, ‘natural resources and economic development’, ‘dependency theory’, ‘neoclassical realism’ and ‘China-Africa relations’. The quantitative data consists of numerical figures derived from relevant organizations such as WB and IMF specifically the quantitative data comprises economic indicators such as the GDP rate timeline from the IMF to diagnose the economy’s current state, also the study uses an article from a news agency called Al-Jazeera regarding Nigeria economic status and the other indicators pertain to WB’s poverty assessment, unemployment rate derived from the IMF, and inequality rates drawn from WB’s poverty assessment, and the timeline of the data is 2015 onwards for the WB figures, but the IMF data is from 1980-2025 as the quantitative data serves to ground the issue through those figures that may establish the problem of underdevelopment. The quantitative data paints the picture of the current condition within Nigeria by following Seers’ (1972:24) conceptualization of development, thus determining if there is underdevelopment before embarking on analyzing the cause with the qualitative data.

The qualitative aspect consists of the empirical secondary data that is collected from relevant scholars who discuss the factors that the study mentioned above. The qualitative data is collected from search engines such as Google Scholar which provides extensive resources mainly scholarly articles and relevant credible publications, yet when searching for relevant data it does not wholly fulfill the researcher’s needs. That is where Connected Papers is an essential tool that provides a trove of relevant sources to the main factors. The qualitative approach may be utilized to make sense of the linkages between and how they interact with one another (Lamont 2015:115). The qualitative data will consist of WB assessment of Nigeria to inform the current state of the country’s economy and scholarly works such as articles published within the field of IR and political science since this topic operates at both dimensions, therefore articles with the corresponding key terms above are the main target for the data selection process. This data is relevant because it is limited to the key terms and the factors pertaining to process-tracing, therefore only the pertinent data is analyzed. Moreover, this study opted for a secondary empirical research precisely due to the lack of time and resources to conduct primary research. Moreover, the data processing is reliable due to the author systematically outlining where the data is derived, what components are selected and for what purpose, and the case study (with
data triangulation) alongside process-tracing provides tools to analyze different factors (Xs) to determine what is causing the outcome (Y= underdevelopment), thus by documenting the steps taken and explicitly stating the procedures to mitigate the flaws, biases in the study, and enable replication to find the same result (Yin and Campbell 2018:78-82).

The key terms that will be used throughout this study are the following; resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism, African elites, and Sino-African relations. Resource dependence is as the naming suggest is when a country/economy is reliant on a particular resource as its primary source of income, and this concept is synonymous with resource abundance in natural resources (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:3), therefore this issue will be analyzed by firstly aiming to determine whether Nigeria is reliant on a single-commodity and what that is. Moreover, lax institutions will be investigated by measuring them through the parameters outlined by Chabal and Daloz (1999:5), and this concerns whether the institutions have a distinct public/private divide, thus if they are divided then that institution will be considered strong otherwise that will identify it as weak. Prebendalism is a term that will encapsulate the entirety of the African political system, thus using the following terms interchangeably i.e. patronage, patrimonialism, and neo-patrimonialism (Oni, 2017:424). Therefore, the way this aspect will be analyzed is by looking at how the government is organized, so these questions will be pertinent to answer; how are government officials appointed to their posts? Is it through meritocracy or ethnicity? And how do the African elites utilize their office (do they appropriate the office for private use or not?) (Joseph, 2013:264). The topic of African elites are those who are the heads of government and other high-level officials who have the power to enact their policies at home or abroad (Hodzi 2017a, 193 as cited in Hodzi 2020:891), therefore the elites are distinguished by their position and that they hold office as well. Moreover, the Sino-Nigerian relations as the name implies this study will factor this dynamic to explore the nature of Nigeria’s relations with China and analyze the implication this has on underdevelopment, hence analyzing the fruits of this interaction. The factors mentioned above are mainly centered at the state-level whereas the Sino-Nigerian relations lies in the international dimension, thus these factors can be tested under the theoretical framework since it is NCR that has identified how these factors fit together (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2013:428-432; Foulon, 2015:635).
5. **Analysis**

The section will analyze the data gathered to address the central argument analyzing the alternative hypothesis NCR to critique the null hypothesis outlined by dependency. And the main factors such as resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism, and Sino-Nigerian relations will be utilized to explain the cause of this outcome namely underdevelopment in SSA. The first part will analyze the quantitative data compiled from reputable sources such as the UN and WB to assess the status of the Nigerian economy to determine whether there is underdevelopment. The subsequent part will consist of analyzing the main factors mentioned above. Lastly, this section will be concluded with an overall analysis in the results followed by the conclusion.

Underdevelopment is a complex issue to effectively analyze, yet the study has opted to utilize the main factors mentioned above as the core issues for analysis. Furthermore, the researcher has chosen NCR, choice-theoretic approach, and informed of nuances (elites, and main factors) by the PID. This approach selects the pertinent issues linked to underdevelopment in Nigeria also the researcher aims to understand how these factors are causing underdevelopment by analyzing their instrumental value meaning how can they be utilized by those in power. Moreover, previous research echoes that the main factors mentioned above adversely impact economic development (Akinola, 2020; Lashitew and Werker, 2020:16; Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 5).

5.1 **Underdevelopment and Indicators**

Nigeria is considered one of the largest economies in Africa and this is one of the reasons that the author has chosen this country for the case study concerning the issue of underdevelopment. To analyze the main factors it is necessary to discuss the quantitative data because the study must establish that there is underdevelopment in Nigeria. Therefore, this section will analyze the indicators regarding Nigeria and discuss underdevelopment followed by the analysis of the factors with the findings outlined in the results section finishing with the conclusion.
According to figure 1 the WB’s forecasts of Nigeria’s economy (World Bank, 2021:97), has experienced growth despite several dips in 2016 and 2020 as the real GDP fell to -1.6% for the former whilst the latter saw a dip to -1.8%. Yet, each time the growth rate has bounced back and the WB is forecasting that the economy will have a sustained economic growth above 2% from 2021 to 2023 (World Bank, 2021:97).

The country’s GDP growth has risen to 3.4% after the aforementioned slump in 2020 with the Nigerian government expecting that this figure will rise to 4.2% in 2022 (Olurounbi, 2022). Furthermore, the statistics from the IMF (which are the projected figures that accurately align with the latest economic statistics concerning Nigeria) (Figure 2) corroborate the findings of the article that the figures mentioned above especially the recent real GDP of 3.4% (IMF, 2022).

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<td>-1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<td>Oil Price (Bonny light, US$/obl)</td>
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<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real GDP Growth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>-8.9</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry-NonOil</td>
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<td>-5.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil GDP</td>
<td>-5.4</td>
<td>-14.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>-8.9</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Oil GDP</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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Source: National authorities and World Bank estimates
The indicators for the levels of employment, reducing poverty, and inequality play a larger role in the (under)development of Nigeria. According to the WB’s recent poverty assessment of Nigeria, the IFI found that 40% of Nigerians live beneath the poverty line whilst most “lack education and access to basic infrastructures, such as electricity, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation” (World Bank, 2022a). In addition, according to the IMF (2022) (Figure 3) the unemployment figures have been rapidly increasing the past years, and recent assessments show that only 17% of Nigerian workers have ‘wage labor’ that is suited for uplifting them from poverty (World Bank, 2022). According to the World Bank (2022:14-15), poverty reduction stagnated before the Covid pandemic, and the data from 2010 to 2019 illustrated that the number of poor has increased from 70 million to 80 million since 2010. Moreover, there are 82 million living in absolute poverty whilst there is a concentration of poverty in the rural areas since they comprise 84.1%, and 18% of poor Nigerians live in urban areas, thus illustrating an identifier of “Nigeria’s spatial inequality” (World Bank, 2022b:3-13), spatial in this case refers to the
distribution of poverty meaning where do the poorest reside. Unemployment is another core concern for Seers and figure 3 shows that the unemployment rate stood at 5.1% in 2010, and that figure doubled to 10.6 within 3 years which was preceded by a steady decline to 7.8% in 2014 afterward that figure exploded to the current known rate standing at 22.6% (IMF, 2022).

Figure 3: (IMF, 2022)

The data displayed above regarding underdevelopment show the reality of the Nigerian economy. Whilst the evidence suggests that the norm of accelerated economic growth translating to development is not occurring in this case, what is observed here is that the adverse is occurring; poverty and unemployment are increasing whilst the economy is exceeding growth expectations (Taylor, 2016:8). This suggests that Nigeria is amongst the ‘third world’ country that has “the contradiction of increasing national revenue and growing indices of poverty” (Akpomera, 2015:156). More importantly, the elites will not want to solve these problems because it may spell the end of aid that they use to cover their food shortages and as another source of revenue (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:5), therefore, it is within their benefit to ensure that this condition of underdevelopment prevails. The next segment will analyze and discuss the
main factors within this study namely resource dependence, lax institutions, prebendalism, and Sino-Nigerian relations to explain how they contribute to the underdevelopment in Nigeria.

5.2 Resource Dependence

Nigeria is considered a resource-rich country since the discovery of oil in the latter part of the 20th century. According to the World Bank’s (2021) recent assessment of the country, the IFI has determined that “oil accounts for over 80 percent of exports”, and that is a figure that demonstrates that Nigeria is extremely dependent on oil as it accounts for “80% Abuja’s revenue” (Taylor, 2007:634). Notably, the figure above only leaves 20% for other exports which highlights the country’s overreliance on oil (Taylor, 2006:951). Furthermore, Akinola (2018:214) argues that this dependence has stifled the agriculture sector leading to the country importing food products whilst the reverse was true for Nigeria decades before. Moreover, a pertinent question is what does Nigeria’s dependence on oil mean for underdevelopment in the country. The next part will analyze the effects of resource dependence on Nigeria and how this has contributed to underdevelopment.

Resource dependence has a significant impact on the Nigerian economy. Auty (2001:843-844) asserts that resource-abundant countries rely on a primary export far longer than their resource-poor counterpart thereby contributing to the delay of the ‘competitive industrialization’ which further adversely affects the diversification of the economy. Since this might foster complacency within SSA resource-abundant countries furthering their reliance on the single commodity, thus hampering the ‘structural’ changes required for the manufacturing sector to mature (Auty, 2001:844-845), and this sentiment is echoed by Taylor (2016:11) that the ‘manufacturing growth’ is near the bottom out of 12 growth sectors. This illustrates that resource dependence has not only increased reliance but has negatively impacted the core sectors that would have accelerated development as the WB states that Africa is circumventing industrialization as a major accelerant of growth and jobs (World Bank 2014:2 as cited in Taylor, 2016:12-13). Another name for the phenomenon that correlates resources to negative economic outcomes is called the resource curse otherwise known as the ‘Dutch Disease’.

The resource curse is an issue that is characterized by upon discovery of a vast deposit of natural resources leading to the country’s major industries and the politicians shifting their focus
on the extraction of this resource (oil in this case) (Akinola, 2020:495; Taylor, 2006:956). Furthermore, this result in the exponential growth of the oil sector which halts the growth of other sectors as the elites and government compete over the proceeds from this resource (Akinola, 2020:495). Moreover, Auty (2001:844) argues that resource dependence leads to the economy becoming ensnared in a ‘staple-trap’ characterized by a reliance on a single commodity (oil) and declining economic competitiveness. This factor may further the stagnation of the economic maturation that is required for Nigeria’s economy to attain so that they can overcome underdevelopment. The issue has political impacts on development as well.

Resource dependence has political ramifications on the developmental outcome. On a positive note, the resource proceeds can be translated to ‘public good provision’ and other positive ventures, thus these resource ‘rents’ can accelerate economic development by investing in the critical infrastructure required for progress (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:2-4). Yet, Lashitew and Werker (2020:16) found that resource dependence has a ‘negative indirect’ outcome due to its “strong negative relationship with institutional quality”, and this is characterized by the political elites undermining the institutional change to retain a political environment that favors ‘rent-capture’ (Pritchett et al., 2018 as cited in Lashitew and Werker, 2020:4), this implies that resource dependence can foster a political environment that is not conducive towards the effective use of resource into developmental projects. Thus, due to the country’s massive oil revenues being considered a lucrative venture — the elites have resorted to funding oil theft operations and they sell it illegally to international buyers, thereby accruing economic and political power at the expense of the Nigerian economy and the populaces welfare (Akpmora, 2015:161-163; Taylor, 2007:642). The dividing line where abundant resource have positive or negative effects is predicated on how these resources are utilized and how diverse the economy is, which shows that whilst Nigeria has an abundance of oil. Yet, due to a lack of diversification is primarily because the elites after independence sought to rely on a single export (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:113).

Nigeria's institutions have been influenced by the resources as detailed above since this country is considered to be reliant on the proceeds from oil. Therefore, the institutions will suffer at the expense of the developmental progress of the nation. Institutions are the core accelerator of development, thus “resources indirectly undermine developmental outcomes” (Lashitew and
Werker, 2020:4), this implies that one of the main drivers of Nigeria’s current underdevelopment is her resource-dependence that halts non-oil sector growth and stifles ‘institutional reform’ (Akinola, 2020:495-499; Akpomera, 2015:163). Furthermore, the discovery of new oil reserves is preceded by a notable rise in the GDP (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:3). Moreover, according to Lashitew and Werker (2020:7) “a one percentage point increase in the share of resources in GDP is associated with a decline of political and governance institutions by 1% and 0.5% respectively”. This illustrates that a larger share of resources undermines the political and governance institutions, and this proves the assertion above that resource dependence does have a negative impact on the institutions and considering that the institutions are the means by which the country operates, thus illustrating the detrimental nature of oil as Nigeria’s main source of revenue.

In sum, it is reasonable to assume that resource dependence is a key factor that contributes to the continued underdevelopment in Nigeria for the reasons presented above. The evidence suggests that resource dependence has negative effects on the Nigerian economy and political institutions which may be fuelling underdevelopment in the country. This is reflected by the government not relying on taxation for their expenditure since they already have oil to serve as their financial source, thus eroding the ‘accountability’ that the government has to the society (Ross, 1999:312). Hence, allowing the elites to utilize the oil wealth for their benefit without repercussions — instrumentalizing the country’s resource dependence and its proceeds whereas this resource wealth could have been used to fund developmental programs such as building infrastructure that could’ve lifted Nigeria from her current underdeveloped state (Akpomera, 2015:158). This is why the resource wealth is viewed as a curse in Nigeria since this fuels the rampant corruption and furthering economic sabotage by predatory elites (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:1; Akpomera, 2015:162). This dependency on oil might further increase primarily due to China’s energy needs that have resulted in increased returns for African petro-states, yet it might mean problems such as overreliance and external price shocks adversely impacting the economy if Nigeria does not diversify the economy away from extractive industries (Taylor, 2006:951; Mason, 2017:92; World Bank 202).
5.3 Lax institutions

Institutions play a pivotal role in the politics and economy in any given country, therefore this section attempts to analyze its role in the underdevelopment of Nigeria. As mentioned above the institutional structure determines development (Lashitew and Werker, 2020:2), thus it is necessary to highlight the nature of Nigeria’s state/institutions. After answering these pertinent questions about institutions only then can the influence of current institutions on Nigeria’s underdevelopment is accounted for.

The criterion of a strong or weak state is linked to what degree are institutions autonomous from the private sphere. Thus the institutions are considered strong if the public and private spheres are separated and the ideal model for comparison is the Western institutions that are characterized by a clear division between the public and private; this is shown through the “office holders losing all right to the ownership of public goods, of which they are but the temporary custodians” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:4-15). This is not the case in Nigeria where the prevailing order is the ‘institution of ethnic politics’, and another marker for weak institutions and states is that the ruler and clients structure the state around themselves at the cost of the masses (North, 1981 as cited in Uzonwanne 2013:5-6). Notably, it is through corruption elites are personalizing these public institutions that are the cause of the concentrated elite power and influence over the economy, politics, and society (Hodzi, 2018:192; Akpomera, 2015:157-162).

Considering these factors above Nigeria has the core traits of a weak institution, and the distinction is quite telling that the elites in Nigeria continue to operate in the ‘ethnically-driven’ neopatrimonial politics that ultimately blurs the lines between public and private as power is transferred between the ethnic groups that reside either in the north and south (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:5; Uzonwanne, 2013:9; Mason, 2017:86). The view of dependency seeks to explain the origins of the weak institutions in Africa.

Akinola (2018:48-94) asserts that the ‘colonial’ legacy of Nigeria imposed by the ‘British’ has sewed the ‘political instability' as they have imposed an alien style of governance that is based on an illusory ‘sense of national identity’ that is characterized by ethnicity, and it is colonization that adversely impacted the “socio-economic and emerging political system”, and the colonized ‘periphery’ is dependent on the ‘core countries’. This notably post-colonial/world-
system approach implies that the cause of the current institutional framework is the colonial past and is reinforced throughout the interaction between Nigeria and the core countries. This view makes a valid claim regarding how historical events may have formed the current system in Nigeria, but colonization having ended nigh on 5 decades ago this argument does not hold anymore for modern-day Africa. Rather neopatrimonial governance causes the institutions to be weak due to a “lack of division between public and private realms” that has allowed for the prominence of ‘patrimonialism’ that was present before colonization, thus African leaders have instrumentalized this by enriching themselves (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:5-103; Mason, 2017:86). Thereby, reinforcing the current institutional framework characterized by personalized and particularistic ethnic politics, so the question stands what role do the institutions play and how does it impact the development?

The weak institutions have been instrumentalized by the elites in several ways that can ultimately undermine the developmental process, thus contributing to underdevelopment in Nigeria. Moreover, the result of the weakness of Nigeria’s state/institution is the national developmental projects that suffer due to its ‘ineffectiveness’ in enacting the reform required to combat ‘impoverishment’, exploitation (internal and external), and implement “successful economic reform” (Akinola, 2018:89). This provides the optimal conditions for the elites to influence resource sectors such as oil since the absence of impersonal institutions allows for the decision-making to be based on ‘political’ and ‘personal considerations’ (Akinola, 2020:498), thereby allowing for elites to instrumentalize the oil wealth for their benefit, due to the weak institutions being unable to constrain the political actor's behavior. This suggests that institutions play a critical role in the developmental progress thereby being a key catalyst or indicator of underdevelopment as well since the institutions control the political actor's rules of engagement. Whereas, strong institutions constrain the illicit actions and set clear rules for how the elites can conduct themselves, yet weak institutions cannot restrain the political actors due its inefficiency. Therefore, due to the present conditions of ethnic politics in Nigeria, the elites can shift ‘developmental plans’ in their favor whilst stifling ‘national developmental’ plans that are considered secondary to the prebendal elites who seek to enrich themselves (Uzonwanne 2013:21; Taylor, 2007:642). This illustrates that in Nigeria “politics, patronage, and oil are inextricably linked” (Taylor, 2007:636).
5.4 Prebendalism

Prebendalism is another core aspect of the Nigerian economy that may be contributing to underdevelopment. According to Joseph (2013:264) prebendalism is characterized by allowing the political elites to utilize their offices into personal possession thereby using state resources for personal enrichment (Tettey, 2012:30 as cited in Hodzi, 2018:202). The evidence suggests that despite prebendalism’s impact being primarily centered in the local-level through domestic politics, yet scholars argue that its influence extends to the international-level through China and Western financial institutions. Capital flight and corruption are intrinsically tied together in SSA, and the funds that the elites have appropriated have to go somewhere be it investing in ‘luxury goods’, ‘redistribution to clients’, or in this case transferring them to foreign financial institutions (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:107; Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:76; Amin, 1972:518).

The political elites conspiring with Western Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) and Western banks offer the ‘infrastructure’ to transfer their illicit wealth from the developing countries by taking advantage of the ‘weak institution’, ‘lack of good governance’, and lax regulations to effectively move their capital to the west where there are ‘secrecy laws’ to protect those illicit funds (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:74-76). Moreover, even if Nigeria receives foreign investment into the domestic economy due to its vast gas and oil reserves and the current political-economic structure (prebendalism and capitalism) the practices of the elite can arrange for the ‘outflow of capital’ (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:74; Pay and Nowsu, 2020:352). In addition, an example of Africa-West relations in the context of norm subsidiary can be observed through Africans choosing to maintain their current political culture despite the influence of the IFI through their structural adjustment programs and conditionalities which have changed little in the politics of the continent where leaders did reluctantly alter their policies to align with that of the IFIs, but they did so attempting to instrumentalize the loans and financial aid from these organizations for their ‘patrimonial’ benefit (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:123). This shows that the African agency at the international-level as these state-level entities have reinforced their preferred approach to governance and this is a key component in evaluating the role of African elites at both spatial dimensions (domestic and international) (Lampert and Mohan, 2015:11; Hodzi, 2020:900; Foulon, 2015:635).
Therefore, this shows that prebendalism is not merely constrained to the local-level rather the elites have options to maneuver their illicit gains which they exercise liberally as the following example demonstrates. General Sani Abacha has reportedly transferred between ‘$2bn to $5bn’ to western banks in ‘Switzerland, Luxembourg, the UK’, etc, and the reason may be that these financial institutions offer the ‘secrecy’ and ‘confidentiality’ that Abacha requires to safeguard his illicit gains from the local authorities. This shows that the elites have pillaged public resources from ‘Nigeria’s treasury’ and placed these gains abroad in their ‘personal accounts’ through the technical support of Western banks (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:80-88).

Furthermore, evidence shows that there is a clear link between prebendalism and western financial institutions at the international-level and this argument draws on an intriguing perspective for IR since corruption is mostly analyzed at the local level. Thus, this answers the question posed by Chabal and Daloz (1999:135) over two decades ago; “Could African disorder also be instrumentalized at the international?”, and the answer is affirmative that one way that the elites can instrumentalize it by colluding with Western financial institutions to store their illicit funds in their banks out of reach of their governments. As the evidence shows prebendalism has strong adverse effects on development since the revenues extracted from resources such as oil have led to development conversation whilst those rents are used for “conspicuous consumption (such as the construction of new capital in Nigeria) and other patrimonial expenses” since they have unrestrained power over development projects (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:160; Hodzi, 2018:201). The funds may have been used to develop the country’s infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and other developmental initiatives that can improve the current impoverished condition through sustainable and inclusive growth instead Nigeria relies on external capital to fund the aforementioned issues, yet the elites use these proceeds to maintain their “patronage networks” (Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:71; Akpomera, 156-157; Hodzi, 2018:200). Another way that the African disorder can instrumentalized at the international is through the Sino-Nigerian relations since these elites can reconfigure their interaction with the international actor (Foulon, 2015:637; Hodzi, 2020:902).

With the prevalence of the neopatrimonial system — this has seen African elites utilize the Sino-African relations to their benefit (Mason, 2017:86; Lampert and Mohan, 2015:10). According to Agbebi and Virtanen (2017:434) actors within the system have a symbiotic
relationship, yet this is a criticism against dependency for determining the system as parasitical (imperial and capitalism that only wants Africa raw materials) — yet Hodzi (2018:198) argues that this “symbiotic relationship is between African political elites and Chinese capital […] provide political elites with rents to finance their political machinery and pay off their clients.” and the political elites in control of the state have personalized trade negotiations with Chinese investors to support their Chinese client’s business ventures in return for bribes (Lampert and Mohan, 2015:4; Pay and Nowsu, 2020:352). This demonstrates that as mentioned above prebendalism is not restrained to state rather the elites considering their domestic and transnational interests will ultimately advance their own end whilst reconfiguring the China model to those said interests as the elites are not merely confined to political realm, but “in the wider realm of economic enterprise”, and they are the domestic economic forces who assert themselves through the state-level (Hodzi, 2020:898-900; Mason, 2017:86; Lampert and Mohan, 2015:11; Foulon, 2015:635). It is precisely due to the elites persistence to reinforce these neopatrimonial practices that has mitigated the possibility of African states using the Sino-African relations as a vehicle for development, yet they have captured, exploited, and molded the China model for their sole economic advantage (Lampert and Mohan, 2015:11; Hodzi, 2020:902).

This internal factor of the state shows that prebendalism is not just situated in the local-level. Prebendalism is fostering this acceptance of corruption and due to this expectation there is a line of aspiring political elites who covet the offices for this reason to secure the advancement of their status, networks, and political standing (Joseph, 2013:268 and Chabal and Daloz, 1999:5-108). Therefore, the prebendalistic system is one main culprit of the continued underdevelopment of Nigeria and the evidence points to the elite’s usage of offices as a key problem since the looted resources could have alleviated the underdevelopment in Nigeria if the appropriated funds were not spent on personal enrichment or transferred abroad. As NCR’s specialty lies in providing the tools to analyze the state-level variables, yet this factor extends into the cognitive realm (Foulon, 2015:653), since the elites will be constrained within the mindset of this prebendalistic system, thus their actions are centered around how they can get the ‘best deal’ that facilitates their enrichment and ability to redistribute — be it from the local-sphere or international.
5.5 Sino-Nigerian Relations

The nature of the Sino-Nigerian relations as mentioned above is a partnership where the underpinning dynamic is that of interdependence between the actors (Agbebi and Vitranen, 2017:445-446), yet there are issues that must be addressed. The reason why African elites prefer their economic relations with China is due to a suspicion of the Western conditionalities centered on democracy and human rights, therefore China countered this narrative by arguing that sovereignty and economic development are more important and it is this position that has endeared African leaders towards China (Taylor, 2006:939). This position has manifested as the Chinese principle called ‘noninterference’, and as the name implies it means simply that China will respect the state sovereignty of the African countries (Taylor, 2006:941). This principle echoes a core assumption of NCR that sovereignty is something that “states will guard jealousy”, and the Chinese ties are based on ‘noninterference’ it is not a surprise that African elites prefer it to the alternative because this principle has extended to elite sovereignty as well (Brawley, 2009:140; Taylor, 2006:958). Moreover, the relationship echoes bandwagoning in that it is the African countries who are seeking economic ties with China, and this relation has enabled some African elites to fund projects that accrue them political support to stay in power since the economic benefits has contributed to enhancing the “triad of political, economic, and military power” (Brawley, 2009:9-10; Hodzi, 2018:195-200). A key question stands which is what is the implication of the Sino-Nigerian relations vis-à-vis underdevelopment?

Although the focus of the Sino-Nigerian relation was oil at first, yet it has expanded from there. The Chinese interest has extended into numerous sector within the Nigerian economy such as agriculture, telecommunication, textiles, and manufacturing, thus resulting in an increase of Chinese investment from $1 billion in early 2000s to $35 billion in 2015 (Pay and Nowsu, 2020:348; Agbebi & Virtanen, 2017:439). This demonstrates that China is not solely concerned with the extraction of oil as presumed by scholars (Taylor, 2006:938-956). Yet, Mason (2017:88) argues that China’s endeavors in Africa may have the opposite effect by possibly contributing to “de-industrialization in Africa if the current pattern of trade (primarily narrow commodity exports) remains unchanged”, but China has established special economic zones in some African countries to support export diversification coupled with manufacturing investments that have increased African countries capacity to produce and trade, thus possibly leading to industrialization in African states (Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:443). The diversification has
signaled that Beijing is willing to embark on a common development program through cooperation, and the linkages between resource sectors has resulted in expansive industrial development as demonstrated in the Nigeria that is complemented with China’s aid to Africa’s industrialization having a pledge of US$10 billion to facilitate a China-Africa industrial cooperation fund (Morris et al., as cited in Agbebi & Virtanen, 2017:442; Agbebi & Virtanen, 2017:441-444). Therefore, China has aided in attempting to alleviate underdevelopment in Nigeria, and this has been an opportunity for the country to exercise different options, and the components of dependency is not present as observed in the North-South dynamic. Yet, Mason (2015:91-93) argues that the theory must be updated to factor this new type of dependence — one of “anti-Western based on the accusation of neo-colonialism” cries of neo-colonialism has been a go-to argument of African elites, which shows the influence that cognitive factor can have since African government are unwilling to consider an alternatives image once they have established an image regarding the West being ‘exploitative’ and ‘imperial’ with conditionalities compared to the ‘understanding’ and ‘pragmatic’ Chinese (Foulon, 2015:652; Taylor, 2006:948).

5.6 Result

The main actors in the local-level are elites who may have produced and sustain the prebendalistic system that has led to the lax institutions, resource dependence, and sabotaging Sino-Nigerian relations as they cause underdevelopment in Nigeria. To answer the issues of main factors concerning underdevelopment, the scholars suggest that it is necessary to undertake ‘institutional reform’ and ‘strengthen government institutions’ to attain a more powerful state also for Nigeria to enact ‘rigorous political restructuring’ (Osei-Assibey et al, 2018:73; Otusanya and Adeyeye, 2021:90; Oni, 2017:434; Akinola 2020:500; Akpomera, 2015:163), although these solutions are enlightening, the results indicate the core cause is not being addressed. Admittedly, it is Oni (2017:434) alongside Otusanya and Adeyeye (2021:90) who have come the closest by citing that there needs to be a ‘rigorous political restructuring’ and ‘political will’, yet the study has found that it is the socio-political culture that needs to reshaped, and Chabal and Daloz’s (1999:162) explanation adequately answers the central question. Therefore, NCR’s assertion reestablishes a key concept validating the importance of domestic politics since it is this area that determines the actions of decisions-makers (elites) on the state-level and international-level (Brawley, 2009:139). Moreover, a synthesis of NCR and global IR may provide the tools for
analyzing African norm formation specifically due to NCR flexibility to embrace non-Western IR (Foulon, 2020:17)

This study has illustrated that what is causing underdevelopment can be traced back to a dysfunction within the state caused by state-level variables as opposed to the assertion of dependency theorists that it is due historical and systemic variables. NCR specifically critiques approaches that separate the dimensions i.e. structural and domestic rather it asserts that these two approaches are mutually exclusive, but they impact each other, thus NCR is critical of theories that favor the structural over domestic arguing that “structural theories underplay domestic economic factors” (Foulon, 2015:645-654). Hence, NCR levels a valid criticism against dependency theory since it is focused solely at the system-level and looks at underdevelopment regressively, by citing historical past as the cause (Agbebi and Vitranen, 2017:441), hence this might lead to dependency theorist overlooking the domestic factors that are causing and exasperating underdevelopment within Nigeria, thus resulting in an insufficient explanation for what are the causes of this dependent variable.

The article by Agbebi and Vitranen (2017) clearly demonstrates the issue with dependency theory since the authors account for the contributions of China to Africa and what it means for dependency theory, yet they miss a crucial component within Africa’s mode of governance that may adversely impact the Sino-African relations namely neopatrimonialism, thus it is lacking the necessary coverage to sufficient generalize its finding, but other scholars have not overlooked this variable (Hodzi, 2018:192; Hodzi, 2020:898; Mason, 2017:86). The historical past assumption is insufficient nowadays — it has been over half a century since decolonization, and Asian countries that have a colonial past have exceeded and developed far better than their African counterpart. NCR asks a crucial question “What can states do after domestic political concerns are incorporated in a structural approach?”, thus it is necessary to note that the states are themselves co-opted by African elites who utilize the state for their own interests, therefore this issues explains how African agency can operate on multiple levels as the elites reshape the China model based on “domestic and international interests of the African government” for good or ill (Foulon, 2015:654; Hodzi, 2020:898-902). Therefore, since the study has adopted process-tracing, thus the explanatory logic of dependency theory is not withstanding in explaining the cause of underdevelopment as it minimizes the domestic issues in
favor for the structural concerns (Foulon, 2015:650; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2013:434) whereas the domestic issues are the leading factors causing and contributing to underdevelopment and influencing Africa’s foreign policy regarding China. Whilst NCR considers other sources of agency such as culture and ideas that guide the domestic actors who are considered “active participants that act as the nexus between two levels of analysis” in these aforementioned issues (Brawley, 2009:141; Foulon, 2015:641; Acharya, 2014:650 as cited in Foulon, 2020:15).

The elites through prebendalism may be causing underdevelopment, but there are internal aspects that can be attributed to the “cognitive (material-ideational)” that is forming the elite’s perceptions (Foulon, 2015:653-654; Foulon, 2020:15). Thus, the true culprit, in this case, is the current socio-political culture (informal, vertical, and communal) in Nigeria that is the driving force behind the main factors starting with prebendalism because this culture has been present before colonialization, thus implying that it has endured despite “all generational and social change, adapting as it goes along with the demands of modernity” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:103). And this system has produced the elites in question — allowing them to instrumentalize underdevelopment and dependence as that is where their power resides at the price of the country’s economic welfare by choosing to ‘maximize returns’ now instead of investing in future development (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:113-115).

Moreover, to reiterate the evidence suggests that this political culture is the cause of the main issues contributing to underdevelopment detailed above. Resource dependence is the result of the elites relying on immediate returns instead of diversifying the economy, thus the export proceeds from the single resources such as agriculture or minerals have greased the ‘vertical’ and ‘personalized’ system of redistribution which maintains ‘patrimonial ‘relations’, thus, it is this ‘vertical’ relations that are “driving the very logic of the political system” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:113-158). This suggests that the nature of the political system’s logic is perhaps determining the norms that ultimately sustain the underdevelopment since the status quo is more profitable for the few in power and there is an implicit promise that others will have their ‘turn’ (that will nourish their clients), therefore there is not an adequate motivation to ‘properly institutionalize’ (Joseph, 2013:268; Chabal and Daloz, 1999:162), thereby repeating this cycle of underdevelopment. Lax institutions as mentioned above are the products of vertical political
relations since ‘informal’ agreements weigh more than ‘institutional regulations’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:103).

Therefore, effective developmental progress within the domestic arena needs substantial force and assets through a cooperative, “institutionalized political and economic” organizations functioning above “existing particularistic dynamics”, moreover, it is not enough for development to be commanded from the top, because the required “political institutions are not working” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:131). The true victim of this political structure is the notion of working towards a better future for all in Nigeria since those in power are concerned with their immediate circle, and this is the norm that is undermining ‘economic development’ in Africa (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:160-161; Uzonwanne 2013:22). Rather the change must come from the ‘political will’ of the African masses since it is the norms that are agreed upon are deemed legitimate, thus dictating the engagement of political elites in governance and economics that then produces the system they operate on, thereby fostering a “new form of political accountability” that may result in ‘meaningful change’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:162). Therefore, the pressure for reform must come from the individual-level to change the thinking of the elites hence the cognitive dimension since this concerns the alteration of norms from bottom-up also firmly rooted in the ideational realm. And with enough domestic pressure on the elites this may reconfigure the sociopolitical culture towards a system that can capitalize on the vast resources and “leverage Chinese investments for socio-economic development […] by using concrete industrial policies and localization policies”, so Nigeria can capitalize on this opportunity, and this paves the way for a new type of political elites with the perception to utilize the state resources to attain national development as opposed to personal gain (Agbebi and Virtanen, 2017:443-444; Hodzi, 2018:202: Foulon, 2015:648-654; Acharya, 2011:117-118; Foulon, 2020:15).

6 Conclusion

The GPE puzzle of explaining a dependency-centric issue through the lens of NCR has provided an interesting perspective into underdevelopment. The central argument of this study is that the null hypothesis derived from dependency that it is structural factor that lead to underdevelopment is not sufficient to explain the causes of this phenomenon whereas the
alternative hypothesis proposed by NCR has the tools and dimensions to provide an adequate explanation for the cause of underdevelopment. The researcher chose the NCR alongside the choice-theoretic approach aided by PID to analyze the nuances of the elites actions. The methodological approach chosen is a single embedded case-study of Nigeria with an explaining-outcome process-tracing that used data triangulation comprising a qualitative internet-based method with quantitative data. The study outlined the literature related to the dependent variable followed by discussing the theoretical framework, methodology, and the analysis attempted to investigate the causes of underdevelopment through the main factors to produce a sufficient explanation. This thesis has sought to explain underdevelopment from a different perspective by opting for a multi-level analysis of the local-level and linking the elite's actions to the international-level whilst navigating to the root cause of the phenomenon.

The contribution that this thesis has made to IR is that cause of underdevelopment is rooted in the socio-political culture, and not solely structural factors as the dependency theorists would argue that is not to say their arguments are invalid rather the problem runs much deeper than their assertions. The study also shifts the focus of underdevelopment onto the cognitive realm since the results demonstrate that any effective reform cannot come from the top — instead this is a condition that may only be changed by the ‘political will’ of the African people (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:131-162; Foulon, 2015:653). Thus, the conversation of norms and culture means that this discussion has ventured into the constructivist realm, and it may be useful to consider what can this theory offer in the discussion of changing the norms in the continent alongside NCR to determine how these norms manifest in the international-level. Where institutional, developmental, and dependency scholars have failed to suggest impactful solutions based on addressing the root of causes underdevelopment — possibly constructivist/NCR scholars with the tools to investigate the cognitive realm specifically the theory of norm creation and norm diffusion can interrogate the sources of these problematic norms utilized by elites following their preferences and suggest how to tackle the restructuring of the sociocultural norms of SSA (Foulon, 2015:646; Acharya, 2011:118; Foulon, 2020:15; Hodzi, 2020:887). As mentioned above it might be fruitful to consider a synthesis of NCR and Global IR to delve deeper into analyzing the Africa sociopolitical culture, and what is perpetuating these norms that are contributing to underdevelopment, and crucially how can they be altered to serve the African people rather than the current opposite dynamic (Foulon, 2020:14-17).
This study began as a political-economic endeavor, but with the theoretical framework, concepts, and literature it has ventured beyond its initial focus. Through tracing and explaining what’s causing underdevelopment, this study has delved into the roots of the problems plaguing post-colonial Africa. Thus, these findings counter the narrative perpetuated by a dependency theorist that it is structural factors that cause underdevelopment in Africa, but it is dysfunction at the state-level that causes and shapes underdevelopment that then impacts the international relations of Nigeria, thus the results disagree with the null hypothesis that Africa’s current status is due to being a victim of history and circumstance. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis; NCR implies that this perspective forces the African masses to reflect on their systems, and hopefully muster the ‘political will’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:162) to reject the current deleterious systems that serves only the few, and replacing it for a new systems that serve all.
7 Bibliography


even-more-urgently-needed-to-reduce-inflation-lessen-fiscal-pressures-and-attract-investment


