

**Political Economy of Food Security and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria**

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**Abstract.** The paper examined Political Economy of Food Security and Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria. The main argument of the paper is that whereas food security is desirable but the unregulated anthropogenic activities coupled with the nonchalant and antidemocratic behaviour of the actors of Nigerian state can encumber sustainable economic development in Nigeria. One of the objectives is to prove that food security can be achieved without impeding the achievement of sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The paper relied on secondary sources of data and adopted democratic elitism as an analytical construct. One of the assumptions of democratic elitism is that in every society, the few rule but they must rule in tandem with democratic values and principles. The paper observed *inter alia*, that understanding and applying the basic principles of Political Economy can also engender the achievement of food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria. One of the recommendations of the paper is that political elites and indeed Nigerians should imbibe and demonstrate democratic culture.

**Key Words:** Political Economy, Food Security, Sustainable Economic Development, Democratic Elitism, Actors of Nigerian State

**Introduction**

The greatest concern of man is survival. Every living organism within the fauna and flora needs food for survival. Abraham Maslow in his theory of hierarchy of needs averred that food is one of the basic physiological needs that must be satisfied before satisfying other higher needs. It follows naturally that for man to survive, he needs to eat food, and if man must eat food, man needs to work. Thus, work which finds expression in the labour power of man is a veritable means of recreation or reproduction of man. Before now, particularly during the dark ages, the production process was not only crude but also solitary as man starts and ends the entire production process. However, with the exponential increase in population and the concomitant pressure exerted on the available resources, private ownership of property emerged and inequality became entrenched in society. Consequently, it created two distinct classes – those who own the means of production and those who do not own the means of production. Production therefore became socialized which led to the emergence of social relations of production. The overall effect of economic production activities for food security and ultimate survival is that it exerts much pressure on the environment, and if these anthropogenic activities are not regulated by conscious efficacious policies and laws of the state, it will not only frustrate efforts towards food security but also encumber sustainable economic development.

**Theoretical Framework – Democratic Elitism**

Given the primacy and centrality of the state in the harnessing of resources and regulation of Eco-socio-political and anthropogenic activities of man, democratic elitism was adopted as an analytical paradigm relevant to the study. Aside from the fact that the state is an abstract term but it has been personified by those (actors) who occupy its institutions and agencies. The main thrust or plank of democratic elitism is that in every society, the few who rule but must

rule with democratic values or tenets. It should be noted that the theory of democratic elitism is a bold step by Karl Mannheim and other scholars to reconcile elite theory and democratic theory.

The elite theory is basically of the view that every society is ruled by few individuals. Thus, the society is divided into two groups – the rulers and the ruled. According to Ikpe (2010), the elites are those who wield influence and make decisions for the society.

On the other hand, democratic theory places premium on the participation of the people – the masses or the ruled in the process of decision-making. Democracy therefore is a system of government whereby the people – the majority actively participate in governance. It is predicated on a democratic culture that presupposes the existence of a modern state that can protect the rights of its citizens and extract duties from them. A culture of democracy must reflect norms and values that places emphasis on the freedom of the individual, freedom from state abuse and from infringement of rights by other individuals. It further guarantees equality before the law, as well as providing opportunities for all citizens to have equal access to the material and cultural resources that guarantee their basic livelihood (IDEA, 2000).

In support of democratic elitism, Karl Mannheim (1979) in Guaba, (1981) argued that society did not cease to be democratic by entrusting the actual shaping of policy to the elites. The people cannot directly participate in government, but they can make their aspirations felt at certain intervals, and this is sufficient for democracy.

In his view, Manley (1999) avers that democratic elite theory claims to be a progressive theory compatible with equality and the needs of the weak. This means that democratic elite theory holds that the elites in playing their roles as leaders must uphold the principle of equality before the law. And in formulating and implementing policies, the interest of the weak or ruled must be considered. It is evident from the foregoing, that democratic elitism demands that the few who rule must rule in accordance with the felt needs of the people by upholding democratic values and principles. The relevance of democratic elitism to the subject matter stems from the fact the few who rule should be guided by democratic values, formulate and implement pro-poor policies that can engender food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Political Economy

Political economy is generally concerned with the increase and improvement of economic activities aimed at ameliorating the material condition of the people. It also ensures that what is produced is fairly and equitably distributed in order to promote an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation, oppression and marginalization. From the orthodox or bourgeois tradition perspective of political economy, emphasis is placed on extreme economic nationalism which manifested through mercantilism. It concentrated on the study of how to give maximum national protection to the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. Akpuru-Aja (1998). The works of William Petty (1623–1687), Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Ricardo (1777–1823) marked the foundation of the classical bourgeois political economy (Akpuru-Aja, 1998).

The liberal view of political economy is concerned with how political and economic forces influence each other to effect economic reforms and welfare policies to give succor to the existing political system. It follows that politics and economics are inextricably linked for us to understand the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. We need to understand the policies formulated and implemented, and how such policies influence the material well being of the citizens, and inform how the economic realities can also influence policy formulation and implementation. The implication of this interplay between politics and

economics is that the economy and by extension the material well being of the people can suffer serious setback if the right policies are not formulated and implemented. On the other hand the economic realities of a country can influence policies and exchange equilibrium between a country and other countries within the interdependence web of the global system.

According to the world system view of political economy, the world is seen as a single social unit of analysis and it studies international economic development variables as couched in capitalist mode of production. The theorists in this world system perspective of political economy are known as globalists and are generally interested in class analysis. The main thrust of globalists is to understand the global context with which states and other economic actors interact in a world, which has been historically dominated by capitalism (Akpuru-Aja, 1998).

Thus, the world system view is concerned about how capitalism developed in Europe and how it has been exported to other countries in what appears like international capitalist division of labour and has led to the categorization of the world into core, semi-periphery and periphery. Most countries are primary producers while other countries, mostly in the North, are secondary producers. It has created exploitative dependent relation which impoverishes, through massive capital flight, the countries of the South. It should be noted that capital as a factor of production and indeed capitalism as a mode of production have some characteristics, they are expansionary, self augmenting and exploitative. These characteristics of capital and capitalism are the driving forces of imperialism. Lenin, V. I. corroborated this fact when he averred in one of his works that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Imperialism is the domination and exploitation of one country by another and it has different phases – colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization. And because they are from the same root-capitalism, they also possess the characteristics of capitalism. Wallerstein in Akpuru-Aja (1998) noted that to understand the development of global economic, political and social processes, we must keep our eye on the development of capitalism. For Wallerstein as cited in Akpuru-Aja (1998),

capitalism should be examined as an integrated, historically expanding system that transcends any particular political or geographic boundaries. Understanding the fate of other particular countries is a function of understanding capitalism as a truly integrated world system, particularly, in the absence of world government.

The world system view explains the wealth or poverty of countries, depending on their position in the international capitalist relation. However, we make haste to add that the internal factors can also be cogent in considering the wealth or poverty of countries.

The Marxist political economy is anchored on the fact that society is divided into distinct diametrically opposed classes – those who own the means of production (Bourgeoisie) and those who do not own the means of production (Proletariat). The bourgeoisie, also known as the capitalist or employer, buy the labour power of the proletariats (also known as workers) as he pays the workers wages/salaries. At this point, production transcends necessary labour and gets to a stage where labour is commoditized and it becomes socialized as social relations of production emerges. The social relations of production is exploitative and antagonistic as the capitalist appropriates or expropriates the surplus value by paying pittance as wages/salaries to the workers. Surplus value is the value created by the labour of wage workers over and above the value of their labour power, and gratuitously appropriated by capitalist (Ryndina, Chernikor and Khudokormor, 1980). The difference resulting from the exploitation of labour power is surplus value. The appropriation of the surplus value by the capitalist forms the basis for the alienation of the worker from the product of his labour power and class struggle which exerts revolutionary pressure for the transformation of society into non exploitative, harmonious, fair and egalitarian where peace reigns for sustainable economic development. It should be noted that the exploitative and oppressive tendencies of the capitalists is not limited to a formal production organization; their nefarious exploitative and oppressive behaviour is also replicated in the state, communities, families, institutions of learning and other organizations.

In fact, there are capitalists everywhere who appropriate and feed fat on what is socially produced; and this unfortunate condition makes them (the capitalists) to swim in ocean of affluence while the masses (i.e the “wretched of the Earth”, the Hoipoloi and the Talakawas) wallow in seemingly abysmal hunger (food deprivation or insecurity), poverty and underdevelopment.

Furthermore, the Marxist Political Economy is also predicated on dialectics. It explains the development of society from one mode of production to the other i.e from communal mode of production through slavery, feudal, capitalist, socialist to communist mode of production). This is encapsulated in historical materialism, which holds that all societies move inexorably in the direction of the liquidation of class control to a more democratic control and distribution of material values or wealth of the society (Amadi, 2018; Afanasyev, 1996).

Thus, dialectic is an approach to the world that focuses on interaction and change. It is opposed to reductionism (i.e reducing all explanations to one factor such as psychology or economics, with all other factors being derivatives), and encourages a holistic or relational approach as one of its most basic aspects. According to O’ Hara (1999), the holistic approach means that one treats society as a unified organism consisting of a set of relationship within which everything is tied to everything else. In such a conception we do not begin our investigations with separate things, but with relations. For example, one cannot understand a slave as an isolated human being with certain physical and psychological characteristics; rather this person must be considered as part of the relation of EXPLOITATION between the slave and the slave owner.

Although, Marx borrowed from Hegelian dialectics, he is of the opinion that instead of ideas, it is the material condition that influences man’s consciousness. Thus, dialectical materialism is dialectics which affirms that matter exist independently of thought and that it develops by successive negations or contradictions. This explains the thesis – antithesis – synthesis logic which is the driving force of societal development from one era (mode of production) to the other. In the views of Ake (1981, P. vii),

dialectical materialism assumes that material conditions, particularly the economic system, are the decisive formative influences on social life, and constitute the essential point of departure for discovering the laws of motion of a society and for exploring it.

To corroborate the above fact, Marx and Engels also noted (as cited in Ryndina, Chernikor and Khudokormor (1980, p. 15) that

production relations are the economic basis of society, while political and legal views and ideology, and appropriate institutions make up its superstructure. The superstructure is determined by, and acts on the basis, but the character, extent and effects of its reaction are also determined by the basis. The most important part of the super-structure is the state. Political economy studies the economic role of the state, its influence on the basis, and the socio-economic effects of this influence.

In the same spirit of change, Ekekwe (2009) noted that political economy as a science of history and social change helps us understand the relatedness of the historical process and general social phenomena, how any one part gears into the other, but alone is incomplete and incomprehensible without the other.

Cardinal to the study and understanding of political economy is also labour process. Labour is the purposeful human activity aimed at adapting natural objects to satisfy human wants. It acts on objects of labour such as the earth and its top soil, river etc. Means of labour are the things used by man to act on objects of labour. They include the instruments of labour, Marx called the instruments of labour the bone and muscle of production. Man’s labour began virtually with the manufacture of instruments of labour. The level of their development is the main characteristic of each historical production epoch and they include but not limited to stone

axe, the modern machine. Means and objects of labour form the means of production. The means of production and people with their production experience and skill are called productive forces. Since the instruments of production are made and improved by the people, the people are the chief productive force. It follows that the people should be equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge, have food security, improved instruments of labour and conducive environment devoid of exploitation, oppression and negative ecological conditions in order to enhance sustainable economic development. This is in tandem with the understanding in development discourse that man is the fulcrum around which development revolves. The level of development of productive forces explains the level of development of society and indeed its sustainability.

From the foregoing, it is crystal-clear that while political economy is about the influence of politics and economics on each other to determine basic societal issues, it goes beyond economic laws to also take into consideration intervening variables. This makes political economy to be holistic in its approach as a way of avoiding mere abstraction in its analysis. It is this holistic perspective that forms the pivot around which our study revolves in a bid to understand the dynamics of interaction among the Nigerian state, food security and sustainable economic development and the change it brings to the fore in the socio-eco-political calculus of Nigeria.

### **Food Security**

The relevance of food for survival has been demonstrated by the inexorable quest for food security. Food security is defined as a situation that exists when all people at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2002 as cited in Peng and Berry, 2019). The 2009 World Summit on Food Security added a fourth dimension of food security—stability – as the short – term time indicator of the ability of food systems to withstand shocks, whether natural or man-made (FAO, 2009 as cited in Peng and Berry, 2019). The concern for food security came to the fore when in early 1970s, the globe was hit with food crises. During this period, the concept of food security initially focused on ensuring food availability and the price stability of basic foods, which was due to the extreme volatility of agricultural commodity prices and turbulence in the currency and energy markets of that time (Bevy et al, 2015 as cited in Peng and Berry, 2019). The FAO definition of food security was expanded to include securing access by vulnerable people to available supplies. Thus accessibility became a condition for food security. People should have both economic and physical access to food. Economic in terms of effective demand and affordability while physical accessibility is with regard to good network of road and other means of transportation. Food may be available but lack of accessibility can impede food security. The next dimension of food security is utilization which means that the individual must be able to eat adequate amounts both in quantity and quality in order to live a healthy and full life to realize his or her potential. Food and water must be safe and clean, and thus adequate water and sanitation are also involved at this level. A person must also be physically healthy to be able to digest and utilize the food consumed (Peng and Berry, 2019). The fourth factor is stability which deals with the ability of the nation or community, household or person to withstand shocks to the food chain system whether caused by natural disasters (climate, earthquakes) or those that are man-made (wars, economic crises). The stability of food security in a way suggests that food security should be sustained. It is germane to note that the different dimensions of food security – Availability, Accessibility, utilization and stability must be upheld if food security must be achieved. A neglect of any one of them hampers food security. There is therefore some kind of interaction among them for a positive change – food security. There is also the evolution of the dimensions of food security for a better understanding and achievement of food security. The

evolution and interaction are in tandem with the holistic approach of political economy couched in historical and dialectical materialism.

In considering the dimensions of food security, it is necessary to add the fifth domain, which is variety. It is possible that some food that belong to the same nutritional value – like carbohydrate – yam, rice, cassava can satisfy the dimensions of food security, yet the people will be under nourished. This is because the other food which contain other essential food nutrients needed by the body for a healthy living are not available and accessible by the people. The fear is that under nourishment will set in which refers to the proportion of the population whose dietary energy consumption is less than a pre-determined threshold. The undernourished are also referred to as suffering from food deprivation. Lack of variety of food consumed can also lead to malnutrition which results from deficiencies, excesses or imbalance in the consumption of macro and/or micro nutrients. Malnutrition may be an outcome of food insecurity, or it may relate to non-food factors, such as; inadequate care practices for children, insufficient health services; and an unhealthy environment.

The absence of food security, of course leads to food insecurity. Food insecurity results when the conditions or dimensions of food security are not met. Food insecurity can be chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity is long-term or persistent and occurs when people are unable to meet their minimum food requirements over a sustained period of time. It is caused by extended periods of poverty, lack of assets, inadequate access to productive or financial resources and deleterious environmental perturbations. Chronic food insecurity can be overcome with typical long term development measures also used to address poverty, such as education or access to productive resources, such as credit. They may also need more direct access to food to enable them raise production capacity. There is the need to regulate harmful anthropogenic activities on the environment.

On the other hand, transitory food insecurity is short-term and temporary. It occurs when there is a sudden drop in the ability to produce or access enough food to maintain a good nutritional status. Transitory food insecurity results from short-term shocks in food availability and food access, including year-to-year variations in domestic food production, food prices and household incomes. Natural disasters like earthquake and drought can also be responsible. It is overcome with different capacities and types of intervention, including early warning capacity and safety net programs.

Food insecurity leads to hunger. Hunger is usually understood as an uncomfortable or painful sensation caused by insufficient food energy consumption. Scientifically, hunger is referred to as food deprivation. It should be noted that all hungry people are food insecure, but not all food insecure people are hungry, as there are other causes of food insecurity, including those due to poor intake of micro-nutrients. This, in a way underscores our earlier position that variety should be included as one of the dimensions of food security. Poverty is undoubtedly a cause of hunger, lack of adequate and proper nutrition itself is an underlying cause of poverty. It follows that hungry people lack the necessary energy and favourable psychological and emotional disposition to engage in economic activities that can guarantee food security which leads to poverty. Poverty robs the people the economic wherewithal to engage in economic or productive activity that can eliminate hunger. The implication is that hungry people are poor and poor people are hungry. Poverty and hunger are interwoven and reinforce each other. Ojo and Adebayo (2012) corroborate the above fact when they noted that the twin problem of hunger and malnutrition is closely linked with poverty. In all this, it is instructive to note that sustainability should be factored in the discourse and understanding of food security.

## **Sustainable Economic Development**

Sustainable food security demands sustainable economic development. Generally speaking, sustainability means the utilization of resources or any other phenomenon necessary or salubrious to human survival in the present without undermining the future utilization of the resources. It simply means development today, and in the future. In the views of Thiele (1999) “sustainability simply refers to the capacity of a practice, relation, or process to be carried on indefinitely without undermining the environmental conditions of its viability”. Thiele (1999) also noted that to live sustainably is to maintain the integrity of the environment such that the opportunities for future generations to live well are not diminished. Sustainability is about preserving the quality and diversity of life over time. According to Hasan (2007),

Sustainability is a process which tells of the development of all aspects of human life affecting sustenance. It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals, and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity.

Thus, sustainability has been applied in the study of development of society. As man keeps on surmounting life-threatening challenges that emerge almost on a regular basis for better living conditions, there is no end to development.

Development is a continuous process and needs to be sustained. According to Brundtland Commission (WCED) 1981 report, sustainable development is the development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs (OECD, 2007). Wonah (2018; pp. 1016-1017) avered that

The activities of man aimed at ensuring his survival have ostensibly caused distortions in the ecosystem and the biodiversity of the natural environment. Thus, the more the activities of man affect his natural environment, the more reduction in the carrying capacity of the earth in meeting the needs of not only the present generation but also the future generation. It follows that in carryout his (man) activities on the environment, the natural resources must be protected in such a manner that can guarantee their sustainability in meeting the needs of the present and future generations.

Economic activities which lead to development should be sustainable. This means that there should be ‘development without destruction’. Thus, economic sustainability forms an important component of sustainable development. Economic sustainability is the maintenance and sustenance of a high real growth rate of the economy to achieve the development of economic objectives (Erhum, 2013). However, we submit that in achieving economic sustainability, the needs of future generation should not be compromised. Sustainable economic development, therefore, is the totality of economic activities that can protect the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generation. The essence of sustainable economic development is to preserve the environment which is capable of enhancing generational justice (Wonah, 2018).

## **Nigerian State, Food Security and Sustainable Economic Development**

The state, generally speaking, is a political organization concerned with the authority to make laws, decisions, formulate public policies and implement same in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial, peaceful, egalitarian, self sufficient and conducive society. Consequently, in tandem with the Aristotelian teleology, the state is the highest form of development of society where individual potentials can be achieved. In affirming the sacrosanct nature of state and its importance in ordering society, Hegel sees the state as “the march of God on earth” (Guaba, 1981, p. 24). It follows that the state is the driving force for eco-socio-political development of society. The attainment of food security and indeed sustainable economic development is a function of the reasonability of the state as exemplified in the behaviour of the

political elites. The state is expected to carry out direct interventionist role – a situation where the state is directly involved in economic development in partnership with the invisible hand of the market. (Pillay, 2002). One of the roles that the state has to play is to protect the vulnerable and ensure equitable distribution of income, both intra temporally (between people at a point in time) and inter temporally (between generations over time (Thirwall, 2006).

Nigeria is blessed with huge human and material resources and the role of the Nigerian state in harnessing these resources for the achievement of food security and sustainable economic development cannot be over emphasized. However, the massive importation of food and the alarming rate of poverty interrogates the credibility of Nigerian state in securing food and achieving sustainable economic development. Aside from the imposition of Nigerian state on the people via colonialism with its concomitant fissiparous tendencies, the Nigeria political elites (Actors of Nigerian state) are inundated with primitive accumulation mentality as they see the state and its apparatuses as means of enriching themselves. The effects are that corruption has become the order of the day and ascendancy to public office has become a do-or-die affair which negates democracy and relegates good governance to the background.

In addition to poor funding of economic activities, lack of political will to implement economic policies and programmes also hinder food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria. For instance, Nigeria has formulated and initiated some agricultural policies and programmes (Ogbo et al., 2017; see also Ojo and Adebayo, 2012), but it thus appears that the more Nigeria formulate and initiate agricultural policies and programmes, the more Nigerians wallow in seemingly abysmal hunger and poverty. Budgetary allocations to agriculture have been on the low ebb. This is not in conformity with 10 percent allocation in federal budget which is the minimum requirement according to Maputo Declaration of sufficient food production. The highest the sector has received is about seven percent in 2008 budget (Newswatch, May 5, 2008; 27 as cited in Ojo and Adebayo, 2012). Up to 2007, budgetary provision to agriculture was three percent (Ojo and Adebayo, 2012). The greatest challenge in achieving food security in Nigeria, no doubt, has been inadequate funding. The effect of the underfunding of agricultural sector is the unfavourable massive importation of food items. For example, Nigeria spent \$2.85 billion dollars in the importation of various food items as at 2006. A breakdown of this figure showed Nigeria imported 36 percent of its rice need costing \$267 million dollars, sugar, 99 percent costing \$1 billion, wheat 99 percent totaling \$500 million dollars (Newswatch as cited in Ojo and Adebayo, 2012). Apart from the reduction in Nigeria's foreign exchange reserve which by extension drastically reduces national income and per capita income, the middle men and political elites make huge profit from such irrational importation.

As a corollary to underfunding of the sector, the New Nigerian Agricultural Policy document which was launched in 1988 and formalized in 2001 paid little or attention to sustainable environmental management. But the same policy document paid more attention to agricultural production for domestic market. This means that the greatest concern of the New Agricultural Policy is to enhance increased agricultural production for local consumption. This appears to be a contradiction of sorts. The contradiction stems from the fact that the achievement of increased agricultural production for domestic market may become illusory when the environment is not adequately sustainably managed.

The poor state of agriculture in Africa was noted by Gopep, Dada and Kayode (2012) when they said that agriculture in Africa is predominantly by human power. In their words, they also observed that:

Investment in Agricultural Sector in most of the African countries is still grossly underdeveloped considering the fact that agriculture is backed with good policy documents and statements, implementation of such policies is the case. Most

African countries are very good in policy making but poor in policy implementation.

Again, the prevalent subsistence agriculture as against mechanized farming hinders increased agricultural production needed for food security.

The massive acquisition of land by the Nigerian state for non productive ventures not only throws the people off the land but also limits the availability of land for products agricultural activities for instance Army barracks at Elele-Alimini in Rivers State.

Poverty reinforced by environmental perturbation can lead to mass exodus and the attendant land squeeze can cause crises and insecurity which adversely affect sustainable economic development.

Furthermore, the inability of Nigerian state to control population growth rate makes the demand for food to exceed that of food. The Nigerian population is growing rapidly at an estimated growth rate of 2.8% per annum. The last collected population data by the Nigeria's National Bureau of statistics in 2012, revealed a total population of about 166.2 million people. By 2045, it is projected that the population of Nigeria will surpass that of the US and will reach 390 million by 2050. When Nigeria declared independence from England in 1960, the estimated population was only 45.2 million people. That figure represents a growth of about 268% from the year 1960 to 2012 (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017). Also dispiriting is the mass exodus of people from the rural areas to urban centres as a result of 'urban bias' which has led to urban criminality, congestion and the asphyxiation of the fragile rural economy. The inability of Nigerian state to conduct reliable census for some decades now is a serious setback to beneficial economic planning and implementation. The reason for the lack of reliable census figure is because population is politicized as a result of structural imbalance and inequities which distort or negate the tenets of federalism. Thus, the more populated your region is, the more local government areas and states your region has which attracts more revenue from oil from the federation account. The abandonment of agriculture in preference for petroleum economy not only infuses the mentality of indolence in most Nigerians but also exposes the Nigerian economy to fluctuations and shocks from the international markets.

Of note also is neglect of the pathways to sustainable economic development and food security by Nigerian state. The pathways are; Environmental protection, Social and Economic development. The continuous degradation of the environment in the face of National Policy on Environment and the institutional arrangement for the protection of the environment is paradoxical. No doubt, the environment is supportive of life. But its continuous degradation through unregulated anthropogenic activities makes food security and sustainable economic development a sham in Nigeria. The environment becomes over exploited beyond its carrying capacity and the environment fights back in what looks like a reprisal attack in the form of flood, erosion, climate change etc. Such unfriendly environmental practices like bush burning, deforestation, gas flaring, blocking of water ways, indiscriminate discharge of industrial effluents not only truncates the ecosystem but also distorts the biodiversity.

From the social development point of view, the inability of the Nigerian state to adequately provide social services of basic education, functional health care, employment for youth, clean water, security of life and property, and access to quality infrastructure is a matter of great concern. Good governance is an integral part of socio-political development which demands that the people be given a sense of belonging and participate in making and implementing decisions that affect their lives.

The inability of Nigerian state to tackle economic challenges such as poverty, low per capita income, inequitable distribution of income, low capital formation, inefficiency in the mobilization of resource, over-dependence on a singular commodity oil- as a major source of income, unemployment, inflation (Adejumo and Adejumo, 2014) makes food security and sustainable economic development unrealizable.

### The Way Forward

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Nigerian state is the epicenter for the achievement of food security and sustainable economic development. There is therefore the need for Nigerian political elites to absolve themselves of primitive accumulation mentality and corruption. They should rather be civic minded and uphold the values of democracy;

Public policies and programs, particularly, Environmental policies should be formulated and implemented using the Bottom-top development paradigm. Institutional arrangements for the protection of the environment should be rejuvenated and fortified. There should be conscious and realistic poverty-eradication programme devoid of corrupt practices. This means that corruption should be curbed if not totally eliminated.

Large mechanized farms should be established in each of the 36 states of Nigeria to complement the efforts of individual farms. Caution should be exercised by the Nigerian state in the massive acquisition of land for non productive ventures. Population growth rate should be checkmated and population should be de-politicized by practising the tenets of federalism especially as it concerns the actual devolution of functions to the different tiers of government.

### Concluding Remarks

Political economy studies social events or phenomena from the holistic point of view taking into cognizance the inter relatedness of social events or realities. The understanding and indeed the achievement of food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria can be feasible when we understand and apply the nexus among the Nigerian state, food security and sustainable economic development. Primitive accumulation mentality and corruption coupled with the anti democratic behaviour of political elites in Nigeria adversely undermine the achievement of food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Nigerian political elites should therefore rule with the interest of the people at heart and promote good governance needed to achieve food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

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