

The Political Economy of Poverty: Lack of Political Will or Poor Economic Policy In Africa (A Case Study of Nigeria)

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Political economy as a concept has shaped the understanding of human society in relations with different social structures that functions to the betterment of the status-quo. Inequality formation of why some are rich and some are poor, some ruled and few are rulers, the class analysis in the society and its effects brought about the social responsibility of the state, and the underlying forces and motives behind government policies, actions and inactions that affects the mode and means of production.

African political economy has been greatly affected by its political and economic elites through the indices of dysfunctional economic growth, unequal income distribution, negative international economic system and high poverty level which has limited the expected growth through a dysfunctional economic policy, economic inequality and hegemonic economic elite's domination that plagued the development of Africa as a continent and Nigeria as a nation.

The objective of this paper therefore, was to articulate the poverty dimension that characterizes underdevelopment in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular through a Marxist political economy approach and dependency theory principles. The examination of basic thrust of capitalism, viz, labour wages, surplus and its corresponding influence on African development, growth and poverty level was part of the milieu that shaped our understanding of African classical political economy.

The study recommends policies based on the need for African leaders to separate politics from economics considering political bankruptcy in Africa and direct interference of investible capital out of Africa play fundamental roles of restricting the prospects of growth and development in African nations. It is also important for policy-makers in Africa to have people-centered economic policies especially as it pertains to lowest class of the society. Preventing sharp drops in economic growth resulting from shocks and economic adjustments will reduce the political economy of poverty on the continent.

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Introduction

Political economy is a concept and a field of study. It is the branch of social science which studies the inter-relationships between political and economic processes. It is a technical and yet quite useful tool of scientific analysis. This academic discipline aims to explain the economic phenomena through governments' decisions both at domestic and international level. Political economy has evolved over time. Before being raised to the present discuss, in the 18th and 19th century, it was used to designate what is now known as economics. At that time scholars held the view that economics and politics were inseparable. Political economy was discussed in detail in the works of philosopher John Locke (1632 to 1704), the economist Adam Smith (1723 to 1790) and social scientist Karl Marx (1818 to 1883). Smith for instance postulated that when individuals pursue their own ends, they can work for the general welfare of the community while John Stuart Mill (1806 to 1873) highlighted the close relationship between political economy and social philosophy. (Verburg, 2006)

Today, there are basically two modes of production simultaneously applying to the political economy approach, viz capitalism and socialism (Remi and Francis, 2015). The study and understanding of political economy was marked by the use of the term *laissez faire*, where state intervention is reduced to the minimum and private players are left to act with minimal, if any, interference. The *laissez faire* doctrine calls for regulatory restrictions, taxes and tariffs to be minimized. Adam Smith thus used the metaphor the "invisible hand," to describe the involvement of government and the role of economic self-organization. The theory of political economy has been significantly influenced by the founders of modern socialism and communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1820 to 1895), and in particular their ideas of class struggle, which was developed as a response to *laissez faire* capitalism.

In his analysis on political economy, Engels affirmed that, "Political economy came into being as a natural result of the expansion of trade, and with its appearance elementary, unscientific huckstering was replaced by a developed system of licensed fraud, an entire science of enrichment." Moreover, political economy analysis became used for improving state aid effectiveness. As it bridges the traditional scopes of politics and economics, it can reveal the underlying interests or in-

centives for phenomena. Political economy can be said to be first both normative and empirical. Second, it is policy-oriented but not simply a branch of policy analysis. Third, it incorporates both structural and behavioral levels of analysis. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of international as well as national political-economic structures.

There is no facet of human endeavor that does not need to relate with one another, and for any meaningful development to take place, there must be a synergy between all the structure that make up a society, and the exchanges among self-interested persons or groups. For example, citizens consent to obey laws in exchange for governmental protection of their rights. Politicians provide particular programs or laws in exchange for votes or money. Indeed, with the possible exception of establishing a constitution, government activity can be viewed as a series of exchanges in a political market. Government also functions as an economizing agent when it seeks to achieve public goals at minimum cost and directs resources toward their optimal use. (Barry Clark, 1998)

Conversely, the market has various political dimensions. The prevalence of the corporate form of enterprise demonstrates that economic activity is often pursued by large groups of people collectively focused on a common goal. Within a corporation, workers are subject to the sometimes arbitrary power of their employer. Just as governments punish those who violate the law, employers rely on sanctions such as dismissal or demotion to maintain control over workers. Corporate executives establish goals and rules with little input from workers, and corporate power is often exercised to influence government policy. In addition, many market activities have public consequences and, therefore, become political issues of concern to the community as a whole. Finally, when income and wealth are highly concentrated, the power of the rich to command others resembles the prerogatives of a political dictator. Based on these observations, sole reliance on distinct institutional arenas does not provide an adequate basis for distinguishing between economics and politics.

From this perspective, economic activity is pursued by persons acting as autonomous individuals, while political activity represents the efforts of an entire community to collectively pursue goals. This distinction is observable in the origins of the words “economics” and “politics.” While prosperity/justice, market/government, and individual/community may be interrelated, they are not identical. Therefore, despite the

considerable overlap between politics and economics, they can initially be analyzed as distinct processes but together they form a basis of analysis for political economy.

The focus of this paper therefore is to present an argument on political economy of poverty as an economic issue, and to x-ray the effect it has on the development matrix of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular with a view to harnessing the economic ability of poor communities to compete and thrive in the emerging global economies in order to increase their ability to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Review of Literature

Overview of Political Economy and Poverty

It is evidence all over the world that economic inequality is rapidly increasing in the majority of countries. In fact, one percent is experienced by the rich while on the other hand, 99 percent belong to the poor class. The World Economic Forum has identified this as a major risk to human progress. Extreme economic inequality and political capture are too often interdependent. Left unchecked, political institutions become undermined and governments overwhelmingly serve the interests of economic elites to the detriment of ordinary people. Realistically speaking, extreme inequality is not inevitable, and it can and must be reversed quickly. Extreme economic inequality is damaging and worrying for many reasons: it is morally questionable; it can have negative impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction; and it can multiply social problems. (Remi and Francis, 2015)

In many countries, extreme economic inequality is worrisome because of the malicious impact that wealth concentrations can have on equal political representation. When wealth captures government policymaking, the rules bend to favor the rich, often to the detriment of everyone else. The consequences include the erosion of democratic governance, the pulling apart of social cohesion, and the vanishing of equal opportunities for all. Unless bold political solutions are instituted to curb the influence of wealth on politics, governments will work for the interests of the rich, while economic and political inequalities continue to rise. As US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously said, 'We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, but we cannot have both.'

The concept of the culture of poverty may help to correct misapprehensions that have ascribed some behavior patterns of ethnic, national or regional groups as distinctive characteristics. Reflecting on the influence of political economy of poverty Gilpin defined international political economy thus:

“The parallel existence and mutual interaction of ‘state’ and ‘market’ in the modern world create ‘political economy’...In the absence of state, the price mechanism and market forces would determine the outcome of economic activities; this would be the pure world of the economist. In the absence of market, the state or its equivalent would allocate economic resources; this would be the pure world of political scientist (sic)” (Gilpin, 1987: 8).

However, this exclusive dichotomy between economic and politics is now seen as deeply unsatisfactory in many countries. Corresponding to this theoretical trend, empirical work has concluded that various transmission belts, epistemic communities, or institutional practices and norms of behaviour have a more potent impact on the distributional benefits and geographic exclusion zones associated with globalisation processes than does any structural inbuilt process of market relationships.

Arguably, of more significance for areas containing the chronically poor are the remittances from migrants. Appadurai (1990) introduces the idea of a ‘financescape’ into a model of global networks and flows, as one component of social relationships linking people and places. This was contextualised within wider ideas of the role of migration in the lives of the chronically poor by Kothari (2002, 20-22; DeJong *et al* 2002, 22). Financescapes are joined by ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes in the larger model of networks and flows. This model is of use to explain financial flows that are not in the official domain, although they may be recorded in banking transactions or conversely, travel invisibly. They are nevertheless important to the sustenance of the poor, and the pattern of their flows is derivative from all the ‘scapes’ provided for in the framework. For example, where a financial diaspora exists it is most likely to be in another space linked by ideas and ethnicities that is in an expanded ‘ethnoscape’, such as its former colonial power. Those sharing similar ‘technoscapes’ involving modern internet-based communications will sustain relationships

within the diaspora better, which is likely to enhance monetary flows. In sum, bilateralism in monetary flows can then emerge as both a vulnerability and a strength to the poor left behind by processes of migration (Kothari, 2002, 14-16, on the significance of those who stay behind as a likely category of the chronic poor).

According to Reed (2004), to effectively manage the political economy of poverty, the following three analytical standards have been suggested:

1. Analyze and document the dynamic between poverty and the environment at the local level in selected communities and localities;
2. Establish linkages between the local poverty-environment dynamics and factors originating at subnational and national levels;
3. Analyze the influence of economic policy, institutional arrangement and ecological factors across the local, subnational and national levels.

In addition, government should be clear in introducing the three assumptions presented below underplaying the intervention processes:

1. The poor are generally relegated to the margins of national political processes and have comparatively negligible influence over factors that shape their lives. Therefore, fundamental change in their political influence is needed to improve their livelihoods and promote sustainable natural resource management in rural areas.
2. Strengthening the influence of the poor requires active interventions so that they can compete effectively in markets and influence policy and institutional dynamics at the local, subnational and national levels.
3. Building alliances, partnerships and stronger working relations between the rural poor and urban institutions and individuals, government offices as well as international organizations and agencies, is central to changing the relative influence of poor people on matters that affect their lives. Though varying from locality to locality and country to country, these assumptions seemed to hold true throughout the course of the interventions initiated by country partners.

Poverty, economic growth and income distribution

The policy of poor economy has been defined as “occurring when an individual experiences significant capability deprivations for a period of five years or more” (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003: 6). The distinguishing feature here is extended duration, people who remain in poverty for much of their life course. Chronic poverty is generally passed on to subsequent generations. Capability deprivations are here seen as multi-dimensional, going beyond the usual income and consumption measures, to include tangible and intangible assets, nutritional status and indices of human deprivations (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003: 1-17).

The links between poverty, economic growth, and income distribution have been studied quite extensively in recent literature on economic development. From the various literatures available, poverty can be alleviated if at least two conditions are met: economic growth must occur or mean income must rise on a sustained basis; and; economic growth must be neutral with respect to income distribution or reduce income inequality. The pattern and stability of economic growth also matter. On the one hand, traditional capital-intensive, import-substituting, and urban-biased growth induced by many government policies has generally not helped alleviate poverty in many economies but has added to poverty increase. However, agricultural growth where there is a low concentration of land ownership and labor-intensive technologies are used as almost always helped reduce poverty in the agrarian economies.

The burden of political economy of poverty is further observed in economic inequality, also known as income inequality, wealth inequality, gap between rich and poor, gulf between rich and poor and contrast between rich and poor which all refers to how economic metric are distributed among individuals in a group, among groups in a population, or among countries. Economists generally think of three metrics of economic disparity namely: wealth (wealth inequality), income (income inequality), and consumption. The issue of economic inequality can implicate notions of equity, equality of outcome, and equality of opportunity.

International economic system and African poverty level

In spite of the assumptions, and articulated perceptions that characterized the African structure, which by no means are natural or traditional, it was rather seen as a direct consequences of the phenomenon of Atlantic slave trade and colonialism which took a

better part of the continent for about six century. Moreover, as a result of the dimensions in African's underdevelopment and lack of stable political institutions that has given rise to the question of why it has been impossible for the continent to move forward after over 60 years of political independence (Mimiko, 1998), two perspectives contended as a response to this question.

The first, suggested that the principal obstacle to political and economic development in Africa lies within the African countries themselves. Dimensions of this obstacle; in the Liberal view, consists in policies of state interventions and the violations of the basic laws of neo-classical economics. As a panacea, protagonists of this school suggest the removal of the distortions of state intervention to allow "the magic of the market" to run its course. A contrary stand of opinion perceives the international economic system as the main sponsor of the African crises. It contended that, the structures of the international economic system are such that scuttle every genuine attempt at development in Africa. Structural conflict theory as postulated by Mavalla, 2014 subscribed to this idea when he asserted that conflict is inherently built into a society through its structure and organization. The theory looks at social problems such as political and economic exclusion, poverty, injustice, exploitation, disease, and inequality, as sources of conflict just as Marx maintained that conflicts would eventually occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, domination of one class by another (Remi and Francis, 2015). This school of thought believes that hope for improvement in the African political economic condition does not exist unless the global system is restructured to guarantee the mutual benefit of both ends of the development continuum. The position of Mavalla as justified above is of great relevance in stating the dichotomy between the hegemon dominating powerful states in the international system as well as the vulnerable poor-disadvantaged African states when he asserted that " the gap that exist between the poor, (proletariat-African states) and the rich, (bourgeoisie, hegemon dominating states) due to socio-political and economic factors directly influence conflict. The solution is not however, revolution, in the sense of overthrowing others but rather a revolution that destroys all structures that promotes physical and economic violence while preserving relationships. Hence, conflict transformation stands out in providing a framework that is capable of restoring relationships, while at the same time transforming the

structures that influence structural violence thus this paper aligns itself with this structuralist position and that of Mavalla. In doing so, it elucidates the ways in which the present international system reproduces underdevelopment in Africa. The central propositions are:

1. That the basis of continuing underdevelopment of Africa lie not so much in the internal dynamics of the continent but in the structure of the international economic system into which the continent was incorporated against its wish (Strange bed fellow).
2. That no matter how much each African country strives, there is no hope of development coming its way as long as the structure and alignment of the international system which exist to promote the underdevelopment of Africa remain unaltered.

The current socio-political equation that runs through all the variables put in place in the contemporary international economic and political system encourages the extraction for onward transmission abroad from Africa, of real and potential resources, and the wholesale frustration of all genuine local attempts to break this cycle, transparency and good governance.

Of vital in this system of mistreatment and underdevelopment are western political model as against African adaptive system, the direct transference of capital out of Africa; the manipulation of the prices of the continents' commodity products both in general terms and in relation to industrial manufactures; and the systematic opening up of the African economic policies.

Capitalism, Labour, Profit and Political Economy

From the five epochs in human history, or what Marx referred to as five stages of economic development, viz, primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and communism, only the first and the last were said to be characterized by non-exploitation (Abubakar & Taiwo, Subrata and Sushila). In each of these stages (except for the final one), there were forces of contradiction which made revolutions inevitable. This according to Marx would be the thesis for conflict(s) symptomatic of an antithesis, and a solution in the form of a synthesis. The synthesis in turn would become the thesis, and the process will continue till a perfect society is attained.

Marx sees capitalism as an understanding of the working of bourgeois society, which created unavoidable suffering and ought to be replaced. Capitalism is an economic system where the means of production and exchange are in the hands of private individuals. Societal development can be systematically analysed by political economy, and specifically because it addresses the production of goods and services as a system of production and exchange or what Claude Ake (1981) called labour and the labour process. Man is above all else a worker or a labourer. Work is the primary condition of his existence. If man does not work, he cannot live.

To Marx, capitalism can be understood through two perspectives. Subrata and Sushila say these are one, the use of wage labour which was the basis for capitalism and so he posited in *the capital* that, "it arises only when the owners of the means of production and subsistence meet in the market with the free labourer selling his labour power". The second characteristic, he said was private ownership of the means of production, which was distinct from personal property, like household effects and home. This however, is restricted to a few while those who do not own anything were forced to sell their labour power and became wage earners.

While Ake was writing on Marxist position on capitalist monopolization of the means of production, he said it has two main features. The first is that the means of production are very unevenly distributed to the point that we have, for all practical purposes, a society divided essentially into a small group of people who monopolise the means of production and the rest of the population who have no means of production. The second according to him, is the commodity production, which gives capitalist society of the characteristics of a market. This assumption was buttressed by Marx as postulated by Subrata and Sushila when he observed that:

The man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men, who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. He can work only with their permission, hence live only with their permission.

The major implication of this uneven distribution of means of production was as a result of the effect of the struggle for the social surplus product. Labour power is useless for production without objects of la-

bour and means of labour. Those with only labour power and no means of production must produce to survive. The implication of this is that the buyer uses the labour for his purposes and in return pays wages to the owner or the labour power. The exchange is however, a very unequal one whereby the ruling class buys the labour of the ruled by giving them what needed to survive and perpetuate themselves in the same category but take away the surplus in order to rule the ruled for ever.

Ake (1981) in explaining the exploitation under the capitalist mode of production assert that the proletariat class which has nothing but labour power lives only by the permission of the bourgeoisie, for if the bourgeoisie refuses to buy its labour, it will soon starve. When the worker sells his labour power he submits to exploitation. Marx stressed that, the member of the bourgeoisie who hires him (ie, buys his labour power) does so only on expectation that the value of the product of the employee's labour power will be higher than what he pays for the labour power, that is the wage he pays to the employee. On the final output, Marx says the difference between the exchange value of the proletariat's labour power and the value of its products goes into the pocket of the member of the bourgeoisie who employs him as unearned income or, more accurately by Ake as, surplus value.

A stringent consideration of labour, wages and profit under capitalism will, however reveal their distorted character of economics and real society. Marx concept of surplus gives insight into the true nature and workings of capitalism.

Theoretical Framework

Political Economy

Political economy as an approach or tool of analysis, although had its robust status under Marxism, it is, in the main, not an offspring of its historical and dialectical materialism. As an approach it probes into the depth of issues, the interconnection of phenomenon, policies, etc, with a view to knowing their class origin, character and composition and logic of their existence and future. It does not examine issues superficially (Remi and Francis, 2015). Political economy is therefore, is not and cannot be reduced to the study of capitalism.

The basic thrust of political economy is how the economic system operates within the framework of social system in the understanding of economic structure and other social structures. The theory of politi-

cal economy has both bourgeoisie as well as radical variants. While the bourgeoisie variant is traced to classical economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the Marxist or radical view originated from Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. According to Abdullahi (2006), the main difference between these schools of thoughts is ideological. He posited that while liberal school holds that market forces are the basic determinants of demand and supply and paramount in the allocation of scarce resources, the Marxist orientation emphasizes that the production of materials of life is fundamental and that change is brought about through contradictions.

As an approach, it has been used by scholars with Marxian persuasion to undertake various studies but its emphasis had been to penetrate deep into processes and policies, lay bare their essence and then explain concrete forms of their manifestation in everyday life. Although I did not intend to dwell much on the analysis and investigation of political economy as a global mirror, it is however, important to categorise its basic features of issues, phenomena and policies to the understanding of the economic structures in any society. The two concepts of political system and economics are dependently related and influence each other, in fact, in ancient society; no distinction was made between the two. If the economic system of a country is not sound, it has its adverse effect on the political system. Both are inter-dependent. (Vidya, 2013) The question of why some people are rich while others are poor, the problematic and the urge for primitive capital accumulation, the domineering role of capital in society, the control of developing countries by Bretton Woods institutes (World Bank and IMF), the hegemony of the Euro-dollar, the social responsibility of the state and underlying forces and motives behind governments policies, actions and programmes, the social relations of production, distribution and exchange in a particular social formation, etc. can only be understood by political economy paradigms (Remi and Francis, 2015)

However, this paper shall engage the Marxist or classical view to the understanding of interdependence between political system and economic system in the society. Marx applied his dialectical method to the material or social world that consisted of economic production and exchange. While analysing the political thought of Marx, Subrata and Sushila affirmed that Marx believe that each generation inherited a mass of productive forces, an accumulation of capital, and a set of social rela-

tions which reflected these productive forces. To him, the mode of production is the economic base, the real foundation of society. However, Marx sees the mode of production as consisting of means or techniques of production, and the relationships that people entered into with one another for production of goods and services. Thus the economic base conditioned and determined the superstructure. Moreover, Marx was quick to observe that “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their existence. (Subrata and Sushila, 2014 pp 444-447)

The believe that the rich are rich because they are rich and the poor are poor because they are poor is a tautological claim which Marxian political economy approach disapproved as unscientific, a historical and politically faulty. The fundamental difference between bourgeois political economy and Marxian political economy is that the former sees labour as a commodity, a “burden”, cost and one of many “instruments” of the capitalist for production purposes. In other words, it treats labour as a lifeless object or tool. While the Marxist political economy approach condemns this as alienation because it reifies labour, amounting to commodity fetishism. The approach insists that labour-power is the basis and at the heart of all production; the producer of all instruments of production-capital, machine, etc. it calls them abstract or dead labour i.e. labour embedded or previously used up in other tangibles. According to Remi and Francis (2015) this approach states that labour should be humanized and not separated or alienated from its products. That profit and wages should be merged and paid to labour and not the capitalist because the capitalist is idle. To the Marxist, they further stated that justice and fairness in any society means adequately paying and compensating only producers or workers and not non-producers.

Dependency Theory

The second theory to buttress the understanding of this paper is dependency theory principles as suggested by Barrow and Clyde (1998) to underpin the understanding of the topic under consideration. The dependency principle has gained wide acceptance among political scientists and sociologists as an important concept for explaining the symbiotic relationship between state elites and the capitalist class. They classified it into segment, one, that the dependency principle asserts that the decision-making power and policy capabilities of the state in capitalist

society are, for various reasons, dependent upon the success and continuity of the capital accumulation process. Therefore, state elites must adopt policies that enhance “business confidence” in the short run and that promote a favorable business climate over the long run. Two, In more stringent applications of the principle, he argued that the state’s dependency on capital is “so absolutely compelling as to turn those who run the state into the merest of functionaries and executants of policies imposed upon them by ‘the [capitalist] system. Thirdly even in less stringent formulations of the concept, he suggests that the “privileged position of business” in a market economy systematically promotes a natural alliance between state elites and the capitalist class. Where state elites promote a favorable business climate with public policy, they will be rewarded with high rates of private investment, economic growth, and employment stability. (Barrow, Clyde W. 1998)

Interestingly, even though the dependency principle has been formulated by liberal and radical state theorists, its explanatory power relies on the assumption that policies such as increased state expenditures, high taxes, business mandates, environmental regulations, and pro-labor legislation systematically undermine business confidence and therefore lead to an unfavorable business climate. Conversely, it is assumed that low state expenditures, low taxes, the absence of mandates, weak environmental protections, and right-to-work legislation will sustain business confidence and therefore promote a favorable business climate.

However, some of the weaknesses of this postulation are that it relies on a highly oversimplified and, in many ways, over-rationalized conception of the relation between state policy and the business climate. Dependency principle thus exaggerates the automatic functioning and the uniform rationality of the market’s trigger mechanism (i.e., private disinvestment), and thus it misrepresents the degree to which policy makers are prisoners of the market. Consequently, there is no single set of policies that automatically produce a favorable or unfavorable investment climate for all businesses.

The explanatory power of the dependency principle rests on the belief that the model accurately conceptualizes what business firms and capitalists need from the state (i.e., to be left alone). This concept makes it virtually “impossible to conceive of a state functioning against the interests of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, this view leaves us with policy options that evidently are restricted to the antinomies of *laissez-faire*

capitalism or a command economy such as communism as observed by Barrow, and Clyde.

Methodology

Research Design: This paper would use theoretical approach to analyse the political economy of poverty as an economic policy issue and its attendant effect on the development matrix of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. There will be no manipulation of variables and the researcher will not attempt to control the research setting in this study.

Method of Data Collection: The study will adopt the document review method in data collection. This involves a systematic data collection from existing records.

Sources of Data: Secondary data sources would be used. This will include books, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines and other materials that are relevant to the topic under study.

Method of Data Analysis: Document analysis will be used for this study. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed (Bowen, 2009). For this study, document analysis entails interpretation and understanding of documents pertaining to the political economy of poverty in Africa.

Findings

Successive Nigerian governments have over the years formulated policies and adopted strategies and programme supposedly to combat and reduce or eradicate poverty. Ironically, most of the same governments contributed through faulty and inappropriate political, economic and social policies mismanagement, corruption and inaction to the poverty status of the country, which is not only frightening and worrisome, but also structural and endemic. For instance, the Obasanjo military administration (1976-1979) and the Shagari government (1979-1983) launched the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution Programmes assumedly to improve nutrition, enhance healthy living and reduce poverty through agricultural revolution and productivity. Although the Buhari administration (1983-1985) did not ar-

ticulate any clear cut and specific poverty alleviation programme, the Babangida government (1985-1993) made some unannounced efforts expectedly meant to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. The critical issue is whether such bold and ambitious efforts and a welter of poverty alleviation programmes which included the Peoples and Community Banks that sought to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas (Oladeji and Abiola 1998) and without collateral requirements, the Directorate of Food, Roads Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) that was supposed to open up rural areas through the provision of basic social amenities that would turn them into production centres for enhanced national development and the Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) which was meant to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture and provide a catalyst for the infusion of large scale commercial farming and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) that was to design and execute programmes geared toward combating mass unemployment precipitated largely by the Shagari dispensation and the global economic crunch which then had its toll on the country. The Obasanjo civilian administration introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2001 and 2005 respectively. While NAPEP which was designed to cover youth empowerment, rural infrastructure development, social welfare service and natural resource development and conservation schemes produced insignificant impact on Nigerians and was not distinguishable from the motley crowd of other previous failed poverty alleviation programmes introduced in the country (Akinbode 2003), the rather ambitious and supposedly promising NEEDS which was expectedly meant to lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value orientation appears to be a bogus poverty reduction strategy despite Soludo's (2005) claim and assertion that NEEDS is a realistic appraisal of what is feasible within the medium/long term frame work and it is more focused, realistic and reform based. As a consequence, Nigeria, which was one of the richest 50 countries in the wake of the 1970s, has slide to become one of the 25 poorest countries in the present century. In fact, it is ironical to note that Nigeria that is the sixth largest exporter of oil is equally the host of the third largest number of poor people after China and India. Even though the 2004 statistical report of the National Planning Commission (Federal Office of

Statistics 2012) show that poverty using the rate of US \$ 1 day, increased from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1985 and declined to 42.7 percent in 1992 only to increase again to 65.6 percent and decreased to 54.4 percent, Nigeria still fare poorly in all development indicators.

Besides, the seeming increase in economic growth in the last few years has not significantly narrowed the gap between the rich and poor in Nigeria. Although economic growth is a necessity, but not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction, it is obvious that the gains from the so-called peripheral growth have not significantly or sufficiently tricked down to reduce poverty in Nigeria; rather, it has resulted in increased inequality. Moreover, the experiences of the scattered poverty reduction and eradication strategies and programmes in Nigeria as far as the well being of the poor is concerned have been evidently disappointing. Equally worrisome is the fact that the country has the resources necessary for the attainment of human development targets, yet it is not meeting them, an indication that it is plagued not only with human development effort deficit, but that there is a deliberate design to ensure the abysmal failure of such misplaced efforts. The efforts are misplaced partly because the policies and programmes are not genuinely pro-poor, especially as such pro-poor policies and programmes will succeed if the power relations is sufficiently diffused (Kimenyi 2005) so that all members of the Nigerian society have significant leverage over the type of policies that are enacted and programmes that are executed.

The trend of poverty in Nigeria indicates that poverty is not really reducing, let alone on the part of eradication. Rural poverty increased from 22 percent to 68 percent, while urban poverty increased from 17.2 percent to 55.2 percent. The poverty situation in Nigeria is precarious not only in income but also in terms of food (Ijaiya 2011). On income poverty, the nation witnessed a worsening income inequality, while on food poverty, the proportion of the underweight children stood at 30.7 percent in 1999. The figure for rural food poverty stood at 34.1 percent, while that of urban food poverty was 21.7 percent. Similarly, Nigeria's rank in the Human Development Index remained low, being the 152nd out of 175 countries. This low HDI score reflects the situation with regard to poor access to basic social services in the country (UNDP 2011). The use of socio-economic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth (year), access to health-care services, safe water, education, sanitation facilities and electricity, also depicts the extent of poverty in Nigeria.

In the face of the plethora of poverty reduction and eradication policies, programmes and efforts in Nigeria, the country is still enmeshed, entangled and embroiled in poverty. This does not only bring into fore the paradox of a rich country and a poor people, but it exposes the inevitability of a political economy explanation for the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication efforts. From the stage of conception through policy formulation to programme design and execution, the underlying problematic in the failure and inefficacy of poverty reduction and eradication efforts in Nigeria is the manipulation of the political structure and process for the economic benefit and personal aggrandizement of the rich and the disadvantage and pauperization of the poor and down-trodden who are the presumed targets.

The so-called poverty reduction and eradication programmes are not pro-poor right from the conception and design stages. The real targets therefore, by design, are not the poor Nigerians, but the rich and their army of beneficiaries. Moreover, the programmes are mostly politically motivated and not appropriately constructed to satisfy the economic needs of the poor and the social requirements of the Nigerian society. The malfunctioning and failure of the so-called pro-poor policies and programmes are largely due to the design and content deficiency as well as the corrupt enrichment and empowerment drive of the Nigerian elite and their cohorts. This shows the manipulative process that expresses the relationship between the means (design and content deficiency) and the end (corrupt enrichment and empowerment drive of the programme initiators and designers).

Conclusion

The importance of the economic development of Africa as an aid in promoting contentment and peace hardly needs elaboration; the united action for peace resolution passed by the assembly specifically urged member states to intensify individual and collective efforts to achieving condition of economic stability and social progress-particularly by aiding under-developed countries and areas. Africa and indeed Nigeria need for their economic development capital equipment and finance as well as technical assistance; and in both these respects the methods which have been tried and found suitable in the industrialised countries of the west must be considerably modified to suit the African countries.

So far, Nigeria has formulated and adopted a multiplicity of pover-

ty reduction policies and programmes and has embarked on a journey with the appropriate road map, but without genuine commitment so much so that the journey is perilous, foggy and tortuous. For instance, instead of a short-term, piecemeal approach to poverty reduction in Nigeria, the design, packaging, execution, monitoring and evaluation of poverty should transcend the realm of short-term relief and the satisfaction of basic human needs and incorporate the development of strategies for increasing the long-term productive capacity and potential and as a result the incomes of the rural poor. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to synthesize and integrate macroeconomic policies, sector planning, sound programme and project interventions with an eye to achieve the long-term goal.

Recommendation

This study does not in any way seek to absolve the African leaders in particular and other internal variables in general of guilt in the deepening crisis of African political economy. Rather it underscores the fact that external variables such as dysfunctional economic programme on Africa, manipulation of commodity prices, political bankruptcy in Africa and direct interference of investible capital out of Africa play fundamental roles of restricting the possibilities of growth and development in the African nations. It is doubtful if a positive change of the internal variables can guarantee development given the structural barriers already entrenched against the African economies in the global political-economic system.

The government must adopt a pragmatic approach that will facilitate poverty reduction in rural and urban areas and this will require facilities that can enhance the people livelihood, productivity and incomes. Such inputs and facilities will include equipment, machines and input in different productive and entrepreneurial sectors, credit facilities, human and skill development programmes and other significant social welfare schemes.

Finally, the need for encouraging, strengthening, harnessing and exploiting the community-based development organizations and associations through relevant sensitization and practical result-oriented seminars and workshops that will engender their effective participation in poverty reduction and eradication programmes and activities cannot be over-emphasized. This grassroots approach and arrangement will re-

quire the active involvement of sub national governments in the conception, formulation and execution of relevant, workable and attainable local poverty reduction and eradication policies and programmes. This also underscores the imperative of a balanced, well-coordinated and decentralized approach that will adequately and effectively address the poverty reduction and eradication concern at the various levels of governance.

From the information presented above, it is worth emphasizing that sharp drops in economic growth resulting from shocks and economic adjustments may increase the incidence of poverty. Even when growth resumes, the incidence of poverty may not improve if inequality has been worsened by the crisis. Policy makers in Nigeria and other developing nations need to give an urgent attention to the needy and the poor by looking inwardly to such policies and programmes that would be African and for Africans so that political economy of poverty can be reduced to a bearable level.

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