

The Political Economy of Agricultural Development in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract— *The paper critically examines the political economy of agricultural development in Northern Nigeria. The agriculture resource has been a significant sector in the Nigerian economy in the past decades, and is still a key sector regardless of the oil boom; principally it provides employment opportunities for the teeming population, eradicates poverty and contributes momentarily to the growth of the economy. The Agricultural sector suffered neglect during the hey-days of the oil boom in the 1970s. However, sustained economic development cannot be achieved without economic growth. Consequently, economic growth is necessary for sustained economic development. In the same vein, given the enormous resource endowment both in human capital and natural resources available in Nigeria, the performance of the Northern Nigeria economy has been far below expectation. Consequently, the contributions of agriculture to economic growth can be examined through the roles of the sector in the economy. The most direct contribution of agriculture to economic growth is to increase in incomes of smallholder farmers and therefore their purchasing power. The economic growth in Nigeria depends to a large extent on growth in the agriculture sector. However, the article reveals some factors that negatively impacting agricultural development in Nigeria include land tenure systems; increasing populations and constantly decreasing farmland size; inadequate of capital particularly for the adoption of improved agricultural technology; never-ending conflicts in the Northern Nigeria; throng rural-urban migration; low level of education; systemic corruption of government officials; excessive dependence of oil economy to the exclusion of agricultural economy; unfavourable economic development policies; inadequate infrastructure among others.*

Keywords— *Political, Economy, Northern Nigeria, Oil boom, Agriculture, Development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Northern Region Nigeria is a region that contradicts its natural endowments. In spite of the existence of several economic resources such as tin, kaolin, a variety of agricultural products and a huge fertile land, the people remain in abject poverty leading to plethora of crisis in forms of insurgency, electoral violence and crime (Titus, *et al.* 2017). Out of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, three are in the northern part of the country and they have the worst indices of poverty compared to the other zones. The Northern Nigeria, occupying 70% of Nigeria's land mass, with its huge solid mineral deposits, growing mining industry. The Northern region has 50 million Muslims, one of the largest Muslim populations in Africa. These Muslims are of Hausa/Fulani ethnicity, which is the largest ethnic subgroup in Africa and Nigeria.

The Northwest with 77.7% North-central having 67.5% and Northeast with 76.3% (United Nation, 2012). Northern Nigeria becomes a hub of joblessness, crime, illiteracy, maternal mortality, early marriage and recently, farmer herdsman crisis. The political economy of agriculture in Northern Nigeria, this has been developed over the past four decades and has been important not only in the study of agriculture in Sub Saharan Africa but more widely. Nigeria has long been a case of interest for the study of political and economic development. The political economy of the Nigerian society has suffered pitfalls resulting in an economy powered by visionless leaders, known for reckless spending, over-invoicing, diverting state finances into private account, thereby plunging the country into economic, social and political wretchedness (Ganiyu, *et al.* 2014). It is

a common knowledge to many across the globe that the Northern region performs at a level of productivity far less than its full potential and other part of the country. This is further exacerbated by population increase which outpaces food production per capita the latter of which is in decline; this situation also results in the concomitant effect of increased importation of food in the region (Nwachukwu, 2016).

Nigeria is a great example of a post-colonial developing nation and its developmental history encompasses very important lessons on the political and economic obstruction of the developing world (Ugwuanyi, 2014). The country as a colonial entity enjoyed thriving and boom in the agricultural production and the mining of mineral resources such as iron ore, tin and coal. The Nigeria foreign exchange was earned from the aforementioned resources. Each region had a proportional advantage through which it made its significant contributions to the centre/federal government. The Northern Nigeria for instance, was known for groundnut production, the West for her cocoa while the East produced palm oil. During the British colonial era, the politics of development was already manifested even with the construction of railway line through those areas that had products that could yield some revenue to the centre (Osita-Njoku, 2016).

According to Njoku (1998), the British political economy in Nigeria was along the line of economic exploitation of the colonized by foisting it into the path of the European capitalist economic system. Ezeanyika (2010) argued that the overall subordination of colonized nations by dominating foreign power is to “keep the colonized people in complete political subjection, and to maximize local human and natural resources”. However, there are some factors that negatively impacting agricultural development in Nigeria include land tenure systems; increasing populations and constantly decreasing farmland size; inadequate of capital particularly for the adoption of improved agricultural technology; never-ending conflicts in the Northern Nigeria; through rural-urban migration; low level of education; systemic corruption of government officials; excessive dependence of oil economy to the exclusion of agricultural economy; unfavourable economic development policies; inadequate infrastructure among others.

In October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained her political independence from the British colonial master, the production of crude oil had changed the dynamics of the Nigerian political economy. Oil boom production is now the mainstay of the economy. Luqman and Lawal (2011) stated that hardly could anything be written about the political economy of Nigeria without reference to its history of oil production. Despite the fact that the oil industry remains the mono-economic fulcrum of the Nigerian economy, its contribution to economic development and improvement of the living standards and welfare of Nigerians remain doubtful. This was because Nigerians case is simply a situation of poverty amidst plenty. Instead of our visionless leaders reinvesting the resources from excess crude oil sale into development of infrastructure like power, education, health, public transportation, water, housing, good roads and national security, among other sectors, what the country witnessed is a political class deeply entrenched in corruption and siphoning oil income abroad, whereas country like Indonesia turned crude oil income into productive investment for the benefits of the citizen (Luqman and Lawal, 2011; Ganiyu, *et al.* 2014). This unpleasant situation can not augur well in the development of a stable political and economic institution necessary for building a strong and successful nation.

II. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

The political economy of agriculture has long been a puzzle and the concept is not new in sociological and political discourse. Political economy can be understood as the art or study of the management of a country in the sense of macro or public household but taking into account political, economic, social, cultural, institutional and other factors that come into play and not forgetting the complex interactions between them (Swinnen 2010; Nwachukwu 2016). The term emerged as a distinct field of study and was developed in the 18th century as the study of the economies of states, or politics (Groonwegen 2008). In the present day, political economy, where it is not used as a synonym for economics, may refer to very different things including Marxian analysis, applied public choice approaches emanating from the Chicago School and the Virginia school, or simply the advice given by economists to government or public on general economic policy or on specific proposals (Groonwegen 2008).

However, political economy is applied here as the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute and impact the production, distribution and consumption of resources in agricultural development. According to Maier (2008), political economy approach interrogates economic doctrines to disclose their sociological and political premises. Basically, the term is refers to as economic ideas and behaviour, not as frameworks for analysis, but as believes and actions that must themselves be explained. Consequently, it deals with the interactions between economic policies and their social and political context. Eboh (1999) maintained that political economy is an approach-cum-subject concentrating on the structure of markets and government, the incentives, abilities and behaviour of economic agents, policy makers, civil

servants and society at large. Fundamentally, political economy provides a more critical understanding of the foundation upon which all social and political life is built. Hence, offering a more distinct analysis than that offered by mainstream approaches that are patently failing a majority of people at the behest of a minority (Aregbeshola, 2011).

III. POST-COLONIAL SITUATION OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria became independent nation in 1960. At this point, it was the expectation of the citizens that the country will turn around for good. The nation was led to believe that following independence in Nigeria in 1960, the nation would continue to progress into greater magnitude of prosperity that would usher in quality standards of living for the citizens. This believe was not just a mere wishful thinking simply because of the much foreign exchange earned through agricultural exports and both cash and food crops were massively produced. It was very convenient for the world to perceive Nigeria to be the future giant of Africa (Osita-Njoku, 2016). The citizen strongly believed that indigenous leaders who have taken over the mantle of leadership had an answer to the way forward from where the British colonial masters left the country. Indeed, the different regions of the country experienced financial explosion till the late 1960's from engaging in the agricultural production and export of agricultural produce they cultivated under colonialism (Iwuagwu, 2008). At that time, through concerted effort of the organisation of land and labour by peasant farmers, Nigeria was one of the world's major producers, not only of palm oil, but also of cocoa and groundnuts, as well as cash crops for domestic consumption.

However, in 1970's the country experienced the abandonment of the aforementioned agricultural resources with all attention focused on oil income which now made the crude oil the mainstay of the Nigeria economy, that is, a mono-product economy (Dodo, 2009; Osita-Njoku, 2016). As a result, all the developmental programmes initiated at different points in time by different administrations could not be implemented to achieve anticipated results. At this juncture, a close attention will be given to the developmental programme implemented after independence; their level of success and the reasons for their failure. Post-colonial development strategies in Nigeria were articulated under the various national development plans namely, the first National Development Plan (1962-1968); second National Development Plan (1970-1974); the third National Development Plan (1975-1980); the fourth National Development Plan (1985-1990).

The main objective of Nigeria's National Development Plan was to preserve and possibly, to surpass the average rate of growth of 4% per year of its gross domestic product at constant prices. To achieve the aim, government planned annually investment of approximately 15% of Nigeria's gross national product. Given that agriculture was the major strength of Nigeria's economy, and which was largely identified with the rural areas, policy attention and governmental investment in it were seen as direct and indirect avenues of developing the rural areas.

3.1 First National Development Plan Period (1962-1968)

The first National Development Plan was strategically put in place. The Plan succeeded at first raising the rate of economic growth, and to increase control of the economy. Looking at the first plan critically it was simply a continuation of the British colonial development policy that placed emphasis on transportation and communication, such as facilitating the movement of raw materials out and finished product into the country (Ibietan and Ekhosuehi, 2013). As a result, instead of moving the nation forward in her developmental effort in terms of achieving the main objectives for which it was set up, the nation experienced some structural inconsistencies (Dodo, 2009; Ugwuanyi, 2014). The plan itself did not articulate any clear statement or policy on rural infrastructural development. Instead, emphasis was placed on encouraging the assemblage of agricultural produce for export purpose, without strengthening the real agricultural base of the country by providing necessary infrastructures such as good road network, electricity, agricultural processing facilities, and potable water, among several others.

3.2 Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)

The second National Development Plan (1970-1974) came as a post-civil war development ingenuities. It was also during this plan period that Nigeria had the 'phenomenon of oil resource boom'. Principally, the plan was aimed at: a) building a united, strong and self-reliant nation; b) building a great and dynamic economy; c) building a just and egalitarian society; d) building a land of bright and full opportunities and; e) building a free and democratic society (Marcellus, 2009; Ikeanyi, 2009). The plan placed high priority on reducing the level of inequality among the social classes and between urban and rural areas. Basically, one important feature of the second National Development Plan as perceived by Marcellus (2009) was its democratic content, having emerged from a participatory process that involved stakeholders at every level of governance. According to Leonard (2006), the discovery of oil in the 1970's the nation's economy has been a mono-economy because of the over dependence on the oil sector, which provides 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 80% of budgetary

revenues. He further stated that, the oil boom, as it has killed other resources of revenue for the country. 'Oil boom' soon translated into struggle for 'oil rents' which led to massive corruption at every levels of governance (Oyefusi, 2007; Akinyetun, 2016). Huge spending and import of food characterized the state activity while agriculture that served as the mainstay of the economy was relegated to the background. Given the consistent poor funding of agriculture with rural development in Nigeria, government massive dependence on oil revenue during this period meant that all policies on rural development could no longer be on the agenda of government. Moreover, oil boom has been key to Nigeria's political economy since 1970's, giving rise to syndrome called the 'resource curse'. This includes a revenue monoculture, endemic corruption, political uncertainty, communal tension and heightened conflict (Akpan, 2012).

3.3 Third National Development Plan (1975 – 1980)

The third National Development Plan (1975-1980), rural development was reconsidered based on government egocentric conviction that such investment will make substantial contribution in closing the yawning gap between the demand for food and the supply capacity of the home-based industries. Consequently, government developed interest in modernizing agriculture and introducing original initiatives to strengthen the agricultural and food base of the nation (Lewis, 1977). Even though the objectives of the plan looked similar to those of the second national development plan, there was a considerable and comprehensive approach as the plan give emphasis to the need to lessen regional disparities with the intention of promotes national unity through the adoption of unified rural development. Increased budgetary allocations were provided to fund diverse and interrelated rural development sectors as the provision for nationwide agricultural programmes (Ugwuanyi, 2014). However, during the third national period, some agricultural development programs were initiated include:

- Operation Feed the Nation (1976).
- River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (1976).
- Agricultural Development Project (ADP) which was funded by the World Bank.
- Green Revolution Programme (1980).

It is imperative to note that from the first to the third national development plans, there was observable progressive budgetary improvement to boost agricultural productivity. Olorunfemi and Adesina (1998) observed that there were increasing financial allocation for agricultural development; and the third national development plan had the highest allocation for agricultural development. However, such inconsistent development interest was not enough for transforming rural communities without corresponding investment in rural infrastructures such as motorable roads, electricity, health care, pipe borne water, among several others (Leonard, 2006).

3.4 The Fourth National Development Plan (1981 – 1985)

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985): This was a civilian government development plan which emphasized among other things the need for balanced development of the different sectors of the economy and of the various geographical areas of the country. Unfortunately, the fourth development plan period was threatened by fall in oil revenues and equally delays in agricultural modernization due to decline in funds in-flow and consequently an increase in the quest for imported foods (Eneh, 2008). The plan laid emphases on the need for rural infrastructural development as a means of increasing the standard of living in the rural communities. As a result, the following allocations were made:

- ₦924 million was released by Federal Government for eleven River Basin Development Authorities towards construction of boreholes, dams, feeder roads and jetties.
- Federal and State Government's allocation of ₦645 million and ₦700.4 million respectively for electrification purposes.
- For rural water supply schemes, ₦2, 805 million was allocated while the local governments in some states allocated a total of ₦311, 824 million for water projects (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005).

Many local governments and various states governments stated numerous policy issues that could improve the standard of living of the rural dwellers. However, the Fourth national development plan was characterized by huge debt servicing which resulted from various foreign loans obtained in the previous years; increased import bills in the midst of a drastic fall in crude oil export revenue (Iheanacho, 2014). However, it is imperative to note that the overthrow of Nigeria's second civilian administration, the Second Republic headed by President Shehu Shagari, at the end of 1983 and of the military government

of General Muhammadu Buhari in 1985 brought to an end the fourth development plan (Eneh, 2008; Ikeanyibe, 2009; Lawal and Abe, 2011).

IV. WHY NIGERIA DEVELOPMENT PLAN FAIL

Although Nigerian developments plans have assisted in moving her forward positively change, however the plans still have various defects:

4.1 Misplacement of Priorities

Like the colonial ones, the policies of the post-independent plans also demonstrated a basic lack of urgency. For instance, the iron and steel industry that was in the first and second development plans and was initiated for projected completion during the fourth plan. This characterized a lag of twenty years; however this project was repeatedly acclaimed the cornerstone of Nigeria's industrialization (Ejumudo, 2013). Another good example closely related to the aforementioned includes petrochemicals, fertilizers, the petroleum refinery, liquefied petroleum gas and other heavy industries.

4.2 Systems Corruption

Nigeria is a country where corruption has been institutionalized and raised to the level of a structural parameter. As a matter of fact, corruption has become part of the value-system of a society, a condition par excellence. It could be stressed that from the strategic corruption of the cement armada to the mega tonic corruption of the second Republic the nation have consciously or unconsciously, created systemic corruption in every sphere of the sector and the trend has continued through the third and fourth republic (Ejumudo, 2013).

4.3 Absence of Relevant Data

Planning relies essentially on accurate data. It is unfortunately however to note that accurate data is a very scarce commodity in Nigeria due to problems arising from the inadequacies of the federal office of statistics, the disinclination of Nigerians to reveal information and the outright manipulation of data for financial or other gains. Furthermore, due to the challenge of relevant data since independence, government has not been able to as answer the simple question "How many are we in Nigeria?" Unfortunately, a nation that does not know its population would certainly not be in position to determine the other important statistics essential for strategic planning (Ejumudo, 2013).

4.4 Flaws in the Strategies adopted by the Government, particularly in Rural Infrastructural Development Programmes

The fusion of government activities reveals that since independence, several developmental programmes have been initiated the government to combat rural infrastructural problems, which are far from solving the problem due to flaws in the strategies adopted by the government including; (1) using only the development plans as an instruments for programming resource allocations for different sectors of the economy hence failing to recognise the facts that various rural communities having different ecological situations in Nigeria, differ in the nature and degree of their needs (Okafor, 1985); (ii) duplication of programmes between the different tiers of government (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005).

4.5 Inadequate Executive Capacity

This is one of the greatest problems of development plans in Nigeria in the area of implementation. In reality, it is frustrating to plan the execution of programmes which require the availability of organization, institutions and skills which the economy does not possess and cannot normally be expected to generate during the plan period. Executive capacity also encompasses the existence of knowledgeable contracting firms and basic socio-economic infrastructure including competent hands to run the civil service and allied government machinery (Ejumudo, 2013).

V. BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Since 2009 Nigeria has been in the grip of a violent Islamic insurgency by the extremist sect widely known as Boko Haram. More than 25,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram attacks across Northern Nigeria with thousand displaced. The insurgency has negatively impacted on agricultural productivity and distribution networks from the north to the southern part of the country and vice versa (Adebisi, *et al.*, 2016; Kah, 2017, Adelaja, *et al.*, 2019).

Boko Haram literally means "*Western Education is divinely forbidden*" and therefore should not be allowed to prevail among nations; particularly, Muslim dominated states. This evil group has attacked and destroys churches, mosques, schools, police stations and private and public owned facilities. In fact, Boko Haram is the most dangerous insurgent group in Nigeria

which has led to the displacement of smallholder farmers in Northeast of Nigeria and subsequently affects the agricultural development of the region. This insurgency has made many farmers relocate to other places where there is peace in order to save their lives, causing them to leave their farmlands behind as it is not mobile (Adetiloye, 2014; Mustapha, 2015). The activities of Boko Haram insurgency and the Fulani herdsmen has negatively influence agricultural development in the Northeast of Nigeria and its environs. Honestly, the destructive effect of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East Nigeria continues to be a source of worry to all and sundry.

The menace caused by Boko Haram insurgency in the North has been a great threat to the Nigeria business environment as farming and other business activities are being harmed. Nomadic cattle herders who have been taking their cattle out for grazing have abandoned their businesses, as the environment is no longer safe for them. The lives of those that are still involved in the agri-business are also at stake, because an attack of Boko Haram can occur at any moment. This has led to decreases in milk production, meat production and by extension an increase in the price of the cattle (Kah, 2017). Poultry farmers in the region also do not find their business lucrative anymore, as the people purchasing the goods have been displaced. As a result, this has led to poor transportation, high transport cost, displacement of properties and high risk to lives (Babagana, *et al.*, 2018).

The evil activities of Boko Haram are not only felt in Nigeria but in some other parts of the Africa. Particularly, the neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Niger Republic other countries sharing border with Nigeria in the North East part are also affected. Traders from these countries can no longer come to Maiduguri (Nigeria) to buy or sell. The border was closed some time ago, restricting importation or exportation from the countries which affected their economy (Adebisi, *et al.*, 2017).

VI. CONCLUSION

Insecurity is one of the major impediments to agricultural development in Northern Nigeria. The local economies in the North were especially disrupted by the surge in insecurity allegedly cause by Fulani herdsmen, banditry and Boko Haram insurgency. In fact, Nigeria has been consistently ranks as one of the most unsafe country in the world. The current security crisis and political instability already posed serious challenges to agriculture and disrupt major economic activities in the region thereby making Northern Nigeria a geographic disadvantage. The impact of Boko Haram and Banditry on the Nigerian economy is localized for now, but the instability has had an effect on agricultural products from the North and has severely reduced cross-border trade with neighboring countries. Insecurity in Nigeria has four main effects on agricultural development and investments along the agricultural value chains:

- 1) Reduced human mobility;
- 2) Reduced access to inputs and markets;
- 3) Increased theft of various assets;
- 4) Increased prices of inputs and products.

The effects of insecurity on the Northern agricultural sector are largely due to the risk of being attacked by insurgents and banditry.

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