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Agricultural Policy Research in Africa

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION IN NIGERIA

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Working Paper

WP | 29
March 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge Colin Poulton, Emeritus Reader in Development Policy, Centre for Development, Environment and Policy, SOAS, University of London and Ayoola Akinwole, Professor, Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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This research was conducted with funding from UK aid of the UK government. The findings and conclusions contained are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the UK government or the Department for International Development (DFID).

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ACRONYMS

ABP	Anchor Borrowers Programme
ADP	Agricultural Development Programme
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
APC	All Progressive Congress
APC	Arewa Peoples' Congress
APP	Agriculture Promotion Policy
ATA	Agricultural Transformation Agenda
BoI	Bank of Industry
CACS	Commercial Agricultural Credit Scheme
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
DFRI	Directorate of Food and Rural Infrastructure
EPTD	Environment and Production Technology Division
EWS	Electronic Wallet System
FEPAN	Fertiliser Producers and Suppliers Association of Nigeria
GAP	Good agricultural practices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESS	Growth Enhancement Support Scheme
ICT	information and communications technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ING	Interim National Government
LEEDS	Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MT	metric tonne

NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NES	Nigerian Economic Society
NGN	Nigerian Naira
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NIRSAL	Nigerian Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending
NNSC	Nigerian National Supply Company
NPK	nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	Nigerian Peoples Party
NSIA	Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority
NSPFS	National Special Programme on Food Security
OFN	Operation Feed the Nation
OPC	Odua Peoples' Congress
PASGR	Partnership for African Social & Governance Research
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PFI	Presidential Fertiliser Initiative
PLO	Presidential Liaison Officer
RIFAN	Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria
RTEP	Root and Tuber Expansion Programme
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCPZ	Staple Crop Processing Zone
SEEDS	State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
SHF	smallholder farmer
UAC	United African Company
YEAP	Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme

1 INTRODUCTION

Man and agriculture are as old as creation. Agriculture continue to play a primary role in the survival, reproduction, and development of the human race. As Dunmoye (1987: 145) notes, agriculture was the source of capital accumulation on which industrial take-off was founded. The need for increased agricultural productivity to serve Western industrial demand was behind the introduction of capitalist agriculture in the global South. Against the above background, this paper interrogates the trajectory of agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria since independence in 1960 – but with a particular focus on the period from 1999–2018 – *vis-à-vis* the interface of the pathologies of the post-colonial state, the political narratives by different actors, as well as the political interests and incentives behind agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria. These are, however, situated within the over-arching context of contemporary globalisation.

Three political economy theoretical frameworks; namely, post-colonial state theory as advanced by Alavi (1972); the narrative–actor–politics framework of Keeley and Scoones (2003); and the political contexts and incentives framework advanced by Chinsinga and Poulton (2014), serve as the theoretical lens for our analysis. This entails an analytical interrogation of the use and misuse of the post-colonial state powers by different social forces within and outside the nation's territorial borders, and which narratives as well as interests justify, determine, propel, shape, and give meaning to agricultural commercialisation policies in Nigeria. In this regard, our concern focuses on 'the chains of historical causation' (Moore, cited in Gutkind and Wallerstein 1976: 7) which underscores the trajectory of the nation's agricultural commercialisation.

The rest of the paper focuses on agriculture in Nigeria; an elaboration on the theoretical framework of analysis; a discussion of the political economy of the Nigerian state; an overview of how agricultural commercialisation was shaped under the military, the Second Republic, and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP); the trajectories of agricultural commercialisation under different administrations in Nigeria from 2000 to date; and draws conclusions in the final section.

2 AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA

Agriculture is a primary occupation of Nigerians. There is no comparable sector in terms of scope in Nigeria. Nigeria has experienced progressive rural to urban migration since independence in 1960. Its urban population (as a percentage of the total) has increased from 15 per cent in 1960 to 50 per cent in 2018. Nevertheless, 36 per cent of the Nigerian population remain engaged in agriculture. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from agriculture in Nigeria averaged 3,839,502.51 Nigerian Naira (NGN) from 2010 until 2018, or just over 20 per cent of GDP, reaching an all-time high of 5,288,339.21 NGN in the third quarter of 2018 (World Bank Group 2019).

Nigeria is blessed with immense agricultural resources with a large expanse of land estimated at 91 million hectares. Of this, 81 million hectares are arable and largely fertile. These are complemented with nationally well-distributed rainfall and good weather. This is a great incentive for different nationwide all-year-round agricultural engagements. As Iniodu (1993: 233) notes, 'The humid south, for example, is noted for tree crops (oil palm, cocoa, rubber, timber, etc.) and root crops (yam, cassava, etc.) while the north produces most of the grains, groundnuts, and livestock.' The role of agriculture in the provision of food, raw materials for industries, and foreign exchange is indispensable for national development. Cocoa, palm oil, and rubber are the leading agricultural exports of Nigeria with Cocoa top of the pack in terms of foreign exchange earnings. The contributions of the livestock and fisheries subsectors are also very significant. Beyond being the largest source of animal protein, between 1960–2011, an average contribution of 9.2 per cent came from livestock (CBN 2012, cited in Odetola and Etumnu 2013). The highest growth rate between 1960–2011 was from fisheries at 10.3 per cent. Fisheries also contributed an average of 4.3 per cent of total agriculture contribution to the nation's GDP in the same period (CBN 2012, cited in Odetola and Etumnu 2013).

The land tenure system in the country has a link with the productivity and contribution of the agricultural sector to the nation's fortune. Land, more than anything else, is basic to human existence. However, the demand for land has outstripped what is available. Across the world, different systems of land ownership have been developed to confer ownership or temporary usage of land to people. According to Dunmoye (1987: 179),

> Land tenure institutions constitute the legal and contractual or customary arrangements whereby people in farming gain access to productive opportunities on the land. These tenure arrangements determine the ability of individuals to gain access to the opportunities, and define in part the nature, dimension, and future security of such opportunities.

Traditionally, the land tenure system differs across Nigeria. Generally, in Nigeria, land was a communal resource. However, these different land tenure systems have, over time, witnessed both continuity and change. In Yoruba-speaking parts of the country (in the south-west), land is a communal resource. The village head holds land in trust on behalf of all members of the community and grants permission for the use of land to community members who approach him. Strangers are granted a lease to use community land by the village head in consultation and with the consent of the community elders (Oshio 1990: 47). The land tenure system of the Hausa (in the north) has striking similarities with those of the Yoruba. The land is also owned by the community. The Emir has the power to parcel out the land to community members for farming in return for the payment of tax. Unoccupied parcels of land are available for the usage of the Emirs and their family. While traditionally, land among the Igbo (in the south-east) is also communally owned, it displays the stamp of patriarchy. However, with modernisation and urbanisation in Igboland, women now have land through leases and purchases. Non-Igbos obtaining land in Igboland is, nevertheless, not an easy task.

Urbanisation, the associated population explosion, capitalist agriculture, cash crops production, and changes in agricultural technology have impacted the traditional tenure system radically, such that it has become a tradable commodity (Dunmoye 1987). With increasing urbanisation, some of the consequences of this development are 'considerable litigation and communal strife, often resulting in violent confrontation'

(Mabogunje 2007: 4). The appropriation of communal land in the name of development by the state is also a major fall-out of modernisation and economic necessities.

The military government in 1978 promulgated the Land Use Decree in order to resolve the land problems in Nigeria through a nationwide land tenure system. This was to free and provide access to land for government, individuals, and for business usage. The Land Use Act, 1978[1] (it became an Act of Parliament with the return to civil rule in 1979) entrusted state governors with the control and management of urban land. For rural land, local government chairmen are invested with the power of control and management. It is important to note that rather than putting an end to the communal land ownership system in existence prior to the Land Use Act, both systems continue to exist side-by-side, but not without operational tensions and crises in some instances.

The Land Use Act ensured that problems hitherto faced by government in the acquisition of land for public use have been largely resolved. However, not only were the hitherto customary owners of land reluctant to let go of their land, but the loyalty of migrants granted customary rights to land for which they had to pay annual tributes changed, with these migrants now claiming ownership of the land. This has led to several communal conflicts: notable cases were the Ife-Modakeke and the Plateau conflicts (Otite and Albert 1999). The Land Act also produced some unintended consequences for land ownership, alienation, and appropriation. As Bello and Mitchell (2018: 77) note, 'The introduction of the Land Use Act ultimately led to the politicisation, commercialisation, and centralisation of land.'

1 www.nigeria-law.org/Land%20Use%20Act.htm.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

An eclectic theoretical orientation weaved around the post-colonial state theory (Alavi 1972); the narrative–actor–politics approach (Keeley and Scoones 2003); and the political context and incentives approach (Chinsinga and Poulton 2014) are used for our analysis.

3.1 The post-colonial state theory

State is important and the place of the state in human society cannot be over-emphasised. As noted by Alatas (1997: 286), 'The state is an important determinant of what man and woman wish to and can achieve. While many are uninterested in the activities of the state, nobody remains unaffected by it.' In other words, the state is the engine of human life and national development, as even a market order exists and functions under state guidance and direction. Whatever its hues, colours, shape, and size, the state is primarily the instrument of power and order as well as a mechanism for authoritative interventions in society. However, the state cannot be taken for granted. Essentially, the difference among and between states are not in terms of their properties, functions, resources, sizes, and governmental systems, but in their origin and how they are formed, their power, capacities, and autonomy. These differences have implications for the use and misuse of power. Who controls state power and the interest state power serves are strong determinants of how states operates and who benefits the most from state activities.

The difference among states is rooted in historical trajectories, the nature of social classes, and the balance of forces, as well as the power of domestic social classes *vis-à-vis* the transnational class who may have been instrumental to the formation of the state, and who are still interested and benefiting from the exploitation of the resources of the state. It is against this background that the post-colonial theory explains the nature and character of the Nigerian post-colonial state, its difference from the state in Western societies,[2] its complex class conditions, and the weak and non-hegemonic nature of the domestic dominant classes *vis-à-vis* the hegemonic position of the metropolitan/transnational neo-colonial class over Nigerian society. This ultimately produces a dysfunctional post-colonial state.

The post-colonial state is an artificial state, in the sense of not being a product of the social consensus of the people nor founded by the dominant class of the post-colonial societies. The post-colonial state is a colonial carry-over in the form of a neo-colony; hence, it was created to further foreign interests. It operates under a complicated class arrangement with a multiplicity of class interests, cooperating, collaborating, yet competing with not one class clearly hegemonic. Alavi (1972: 61–62) opines thus:

> The central proposition which I wish to emphasise is that the state in the post-colonial society is not the instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and it mediates between the competing interests of the three propertied classes, namely the metropolitan bourgeoisies, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes, while at the same time acting on behalf of them all to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production.

Despite political independence, the post-colonial state remains economically dependent with its economic order responding to the dictates of the metropolitan capitals. Though the post-colonial state and the indigenous dominant classes have some measure of agency in its affairs, the metropolitan bourgeoisie indirectly controls its affairs. This control of the metropolitan bourgeoisie flows from 'the way in which international, world-oriented accumulation has been internalised into the political economy of most African formations' (Gana 1985: 127).

An important but not often emphasised attribute of the post-colonial state is its dual role in the public sphere. In this respect, Alatas (1997: 30) argues that,

> The relative autonomy of the post-colonial state is not simply derived from the separation of the public and private sphere but rather from the dualism of the public sphere; that is, both the public and private

2 Differences between the historical experiences of Nigeria and East Asian nations, and hence in the nature of states across these contexts, are briefly discussed below.

> moments take place within the public spheres. Private capital [Domestic] is weak and dependent upon state patronage. Post-colonial states are kleptocracies to the extent that money politics and clientelism involve corruption.'

To a large extent, therefore, in the post-colonial state, the public and private spheres are two sides of the same coin.

A pertinent fall-out of the above characterisation of the pathology of the post-colonial state is the nature of accumulation, where private accumulation takes pre-eminence over collective public accumulation. According to Cournanel (1983, cited in Watts and Bassett 1985: 4),

> The tension within the state bourgeoisie between collective accumulation (the creation and centralisation of state property as the basis of class accumulation without popular control) and individual appropriation (the prebendalisation and corruption of public office) results in an unmanageable and undisciplined public sector.

Watts and Basset (1985: 4) also note that African agriculture is impacted in a fundamental way by this ruinous accumulation and marginalisation process which flows from the logic of the dysfunctional nature of the post-colonial state.

3.2 Actor–narrative–politics framework

The actor–narrative–politics framework championed by Keeley and Scoones (1999: 19) unwrapped the forces that lie behind public policy choice and change. For the authors, whichever public policy directions and change governments settle for are functions of actor-networks and policy discourses. The actor-oriented approach to policy focuses on four key concerns: how actors interact and interface 'between contrasting knowledge domains'; the interaction of actors with policy 'through the creation of actor-networks'; epistemic communities; and, not least, the role of individuals in public policy.

Public policy, Keeley and Scoones (2003) opined, does not happen in a vacuum; neither is it value-neutral. There are several interests: within and outside the state, and within domestic and international space which are in competition over state policies. In their words, 'What different groups or categories of actors believe and do about a policy question is a reflection of their interests' (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 19). Therefore, policy choice and policy change are indications of the success of a particular group interest over other competing group interests.

Situating the place of knowledge in shaping and advancing group interests and the formation of policy networks in the policy context, Keeley and Scoones (1999: 19) submit that,

> Groups' interests are underpinned by knowledge and episteme that advances the position and supplies ammunitions for defending the position. The dynamic policy process is such that allow for different interest groups constituted as policy networks to relate with one another, confront and oppose one another, contest positions, cooperate, collaborate and 'make deals' with one another in the struggle to advance their group interests in the policy network.

The framework places particular attention on the roles of some actors. First, are individual bureaucratic actors, who exercise discretionary power and choice arising from accumulated knowledge and experiences from past policies. New insights, actions, practices, and directions are possible outcomes that the authors associate with the exercise of bureaucratic discretion and choice. According to the authors, knowledge enters and assumes dominance through individual actors. Actor-networks, they argue are as strong as the key individuals within them. Therefore, 'if key individuals or institutions withdraw their support from the network, then the power of the fact weakens' (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 20).

In terms of knowledge base in support of policies, Keeley and Scoones (2003) argue that there are no unassailable facts, but strong individual supporters. When they withdraw their support for a policy, it becomes unpopular. The third and fourth type of actor are the epistemic community and policy entrepreneurs. The episteme community is 'a type of knowledge elite… they share a similar basic assumption about cause and effect relationships' (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 21). The political entrepreneurs 'whose aim is to push policy in particular ways through the mobilisation of knowledge and expertise in particular ways' (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 21) are examples of these actors.

According to them, the dominant policy discourses which frame a problem and prescribe solutions to the problem are those in harmony with the ideas of the powerful actors' network comprising the epistemic community and political entrepreneurs. The discourses that are contrary to the dominant and powerful interests, no matter their logicality and soundness, are rejected.

They also argue for the importance of narratives. For Drysek (1997, cited in Keeley and Scoones 1999: 25),

> Key concepts in different policy areas, the way that issues are talked about is highly significant. Key concepts in different policy sectors do not exist in some neutral and purely technical sense. Concepts have histories, and they reflect types of knowledge: they empower some institutions and individuals, whose concerns and competencies they are associated with, and simultaneously they marginalise others.

The authors therefore succinctly declare that the 'language of discourse framing is as significant as the actual content' (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 26).

3.3 Political contexts and incentives framework

Another framework deploy for this study is the political context and incentives advanced by Chinsinga and Poulton (2014) and Poulton (2014). The framework opines that what drives government action is not altruism but vested interests and the need to gain political capital. The drive for political advantage and desire to retain political power looms large as an explanation of the policy choice of government. State policies are more likely to be focused to favour those segments of the political community who have critical electoral votes for incumbents' retention of political power. Chinsinga and Poulton (2014), however, found with respect to Africa that electoral votes and public policy choices are not always positively correlated. The central place of money in African politics ensures that those who have money and are willing to invest in politics through political sponsorship often have great influence on political incumbents regarding the attainment of power. Thus, these political sponsors largely determine public policy directions which may be opposed to the interest of the poor and rural populace.

In the context of our study, the political capital accruable to government for its investment in advancing smallholder farmers (SHFs) may be in terms of the continued legitimacy and support of the government or new mandates at the next polls. The rural population in Nigeria enjoys a demographic majority which makes them a focus of political incumbents at the approach of elections. Similarly, the majority of the urban population are from rural settings and of peasant origin. Theoretically, therefore, it is a smart political move which resonates with power calculus to invest in rural areas and their primary agricultural preoccupations. However, the nature of African democracy which is largely ritualistic and characterised by a high level of democratic deficit in the democratic process limits the utility of this approach.

To this end, the rural majority are faced with a democracy which not only disempowers them but makes for no choice in the context of elections. The ethno-religious orientation of politics is such that the people themselves are least concerned with policy benefits from incumbents; rather, the ethno-religious association with exploitative and manipulative politicians in the dynamics of group power struggles, plays an important role in electoral choices. Therefore, the incentive for politicians to deliver the dividends of democracy in order to attract votes, particularly amongst the rural population, is non-compelling. The fact that Nigerian politics takes the form of prebendalism and patrimonial exchange further complicates the possibility of rural voters' deployment of their majority power for electoral advantage, as votes are cast in favour of political patrons based on prebends and patronages received. It is to this end that monetisation constitutes a major drawback for democracy in Nigeria.

The discourse on globalisation provides context for an analytical understanding of our theoretical framework of analysis. There is an undeniably global coordinate to the orientation of the post-colonial state and the actors, narratives, and politics which underpin contemporary capitalism, as framed by globalisation. This is because yesterday's internationalised capitalism has been impacted by globalisation in a way that has made it not just extensive, but also intensive (Robinson 2016). Because of this, global capitalism has become all-encompassing and all-embracing, taking in every economy, including those that were hitherto ideological opposites. In all these, the boundaries of the state have proven incapable of holding back the ravaging forces of globalisation – not with economic globalisation achieving in the words of Robinson (2001: 159), 'worldwide decentralisation of production together with the centralisation of command and control of the global economy in transnational capital'.

Capital plays a central role in the global political economy. As Harvey (2010: iv) notes,

> Capital is the lifeblood that flows through the body politic of all those societies we call capitalist, spreading out, sometimes as a trickle and other times as a flood, into every nook and cranny of the inhabited world. It is thanks to this flow that we, who live under capitalism, acquire our daily bread as well as our houses, car, shirts, shoes and all other goods we need to support our daily life.

Globalisation is not just triumphant, it has remade the world according to the dictate of capital.

For this reason, there is a new global political economy cartography which calls for a new focus of analysis beyond statecentricism. This becomes inevitable in order to come to terms with the new pattern of capitalist accumulation. This new pattern of capitalist accumulation is transnational, by a transnational class, and an emerging transnational state structure (Robinson 1998, 2001; Robinson and Harris 2000). In this way, the analytical utility of the nation-state has become of little value for critical interrogation. This, as Robinson (1998: 545) argues, is because, 'the material basis of the nation-state is presently superseded by globalisation'. The nation-state is historically frozen, being a product of a far-gone era of capitalism.

Robinson (1998: 584) further argues that, 'nations are no longer linked externally to a broader system but internally to a singular global social formation'. While national destinies differ as a consequence of differential positions and roles in the global capitalist accumulation, globalisation has produced a global capitalist system which Robinson (2001: 160) argues foreclosed 'autonomous accumulation outside the sphere of global capital'.

A transnational capitalist class has developed out of this situation. Though this transnational class spreads across national boundaries, it has unbundled ties to states as we know it (Robinson and Harris 2000: 14). In terms of composition, the transnational class is made up of top managers of transnational corporations, state bureaucrats and politicians, professionals, and the mass media (Robinson and Harris 2000; Sklair 2002). The military-industrial complex has been added to the membership of the transnational class by Harris (2005).

How does this connect with our problematic and the theoretical framework of analysis? First, state power and capacity have become impacted by the transnational class and the emerging transnational state, such that its freedom of choice and autonomy are reduced. Not only are there transnational controls over the state, but considerations of transnational political economy interests have influence over state policies, as a consequence of the new unequal global power architecture established by globalisation (Robinson 2005: 318). As an instrument created to promote continued accumulation from the new independent nations, the post-colonial state finds ideological resonance for its raison d'être in the exigencies of globalisation.

Furthermore, globalisation realigns the cooperation and collaboration which hitherto existed under conditions of contestation and hegemonic instability between the domestic dominant classes in the post-colonial state and foreign capital. Thus, a single dominant class with roots within and outside the post-colonial state in the form of a transnational class is gradually emerging. This development is a consequence of the deterministic position of transnational capital in the global political economy, from which the post-colonial state has proved incapable of escaping or venturing to escape.

As a result, actors, narratives, and politics that shape policies such as agricultural commercialisation in the post-colonial state are rooted in globalisation. This is underscored by Robinson (2005: 8) thus:

> As these transnationally oriented elites have captured national states, they have used the political control and cultural and ideological influence that comes with their heightened material domination to push for economic restructuring and capitalist globalisation, integrating their countries into the new capitalist circuits of accumulation as well as into the global legal and regulatory regime (such as the World Trade Organization) that is still under construction.

The hegemonic dominance over the post-colonial state by the transnational class engenders a hegemonic discourse in neoliberalism which favours the market, trade, and financial liberalisation and deregulation champion by the epistemic community, of which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are at the top. As Harvey (2006: 25) opines, 'The fundamental mission of the neoliberal state is to create a "good business climate" and therefore to optimise conditions for capital accumulation.' The logic and thrust of agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria falls within the context of the hegemonic discourse of neoliberal globalisation.

4 A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

The state globally plays a central role in accumulation even under a market-oriented system. The importance of the state in Nigeria is associated with the underdevelopment of capitalist relations of production. Evans (1995: 3) is categorical that 'without the state, markets, the other master institution of modern society, can't function'. Despite its dysfunctionality and its economic dependence on metropolitan capital, domestically the state in Nigeria is powerful, such that those who control the state use it to their advantage. While the economy underpins politics within the state, politics gives direction, meaning, and order to the economy. This is intractably linked to the primacy of state accumulation, distribution, and development. For Toyo (1993: 13), 'economic hegemony usually goes with political hegemony, for one enhances the other'.

Though the state is universally the constitutive political authority in every nation, states are not all the same. States are products of history as well as of the internal and external contestations they face. This gives the state a heterogeneous character and power in terms of constitutive structure, relations to society, and position and possibilities in the global system. For Evans (1995: 11), 'Different kinds of state structure create different capacities for action. Structures define the range of roles that the state is capable of playing. Outcomes depend both on whether the roles fit the context and how well they are executed.'

Suffice to say, therefore, that the Nigerian state, like other African state formations, as a consequence of its colonial historical trajectory, differs in terms of structure and capacities for actions compared to the European state.

The Nigerian state is a creation of colonial imperialism. Thus, the Nigerian state was created not for the service of the Nigerian people but in the interest of foreign capital, as a mechanism for the exploitation and plundering of the resources of Nigeria and its people. To credibly perform this assignment, the Nigerian colonial state was imbued with the attributes of violence, arbitrariness, and autocracy in the service of colonial accumulation.

The colonial state in Nigeria existed in paradoxical relationship to the Nigerian people and metropolitan capital. In relation to the Nigerian people, the state was powerful and oppressive as a result of its overdeveloped coercive apparatus. The colonial state was, however, weak in relation to metropolitan capital which deployed it to its own advantage. As Gelinas (1998: 4) opines, 'The state has no heart, it only has interests.' The colonial state in Nigeria worked in the interest of colonial power and foreign capital; hence, its weakness in relation to its creator. What was handed over at independence to Nigerians was the colonial state with all its pathologies. Young (2004: 29) correctly notes that, 'some core elements of the colonial state ideology passed intact to its successor'.

At independence, control over the Nigerian economy was left effectively in the hands of foreign capital while Nigerians were given political control. In this way, the colonial state in Nigeria was merely inherited and never transformed. As a consequence, the Nigerian state was robbed of autonomy and faced a legitimation crisis which weakened the dominant class hegemony.

The continued prominence of the Nigerian dominant class is linked to their relations to and their control of the state and its power of accumulation. State power is used for the consolidation of their power and position as petty and comprador bourgeoisies. The relationship of the Nigerian dominant class is thus parasitic. Because of the rudimentary development of capitalist production relations, the continued foreign control of the Nigerian economy, and the institutionalisation of state capitalism, domestic productive accumulation is marginal. Preference is for primitive capital accumulation. What emerges, therefore, is a highly dysfunctional state deployed by the dominant class and foreign capital as a means of production and mechanism for primitive capitalist accumulation.

Questions may be asked as to why the Nigerian case is different from other post-colonial states such as Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia. Or better still, what is typical of colonialism in Nigeria that it is impossible to shake off colonial legacies and embrace development several decades after independence?

Several reasons account for the colonial continuity as neo-colonialism in Nigeria. It is important to underscore

the fact that Nigeria, like most African countries, experienced late colonialism. For example, Indonesia broke off the struggle from its Dutch colonisers in 1941; hence, the Dutch colonial power did not have the opportunity to institute the continuity of its colonial hegemony as a neo-colonial power over Indonesia. For South Korea, the Japanese coloniser shared the same culture, religion, and geographical proximity. Moreover, Japan was focused on the industrialisation of its colonies, given its vision of expansion to create a greater Japanese imperial presence all over Asia.

5 THE FIRST REPUBLIC

Following the path established during colonialism, Nigerian agriculture production during the First Republic was oriented towards cash crops as against food. Agricultural production followed the political geography of the country with groundnuts, palm oil, and cocoa from the north, east and west respectively. The Nigerian state at independence, like its colonial progenitor, was an extractive mechanism of surplus from peasant agriculture. The three regions continued the use of the produce marketing boards as institutional modalities for peasant exploitation.

The different regional governments created farm settlements and embarked on mechanised agriculture in order to increase agriculture revenue and productivity as well as accumulation. Price stabilisation, research, and extension services were some of the focus of the regional governments. Serious attention was paid to agriculture given that it was the supplier of food, employment for most of the citizens across the different regions, and the greatest earner of foreign exchange for the country. There were plans to use agriculture as the bedrock of the nation's industrialisation and development.

Politically, agriculture had the pride of place in the estimation of the political class because of farmers' electoral importance. This was enhanced by the organisations of farmers into guilds and cooperatives. The Agbekoya, in the western region was a very politically efficacious farmers' organisation put to political advantage by the Action Group in the region.

6 THE FIRST MILITARY AUTHORITARIAN YEARS: 1965–1979

In 1965, the first post-independence government was overthrown by a military coup. The nation then witnessed both a counter-coup and a bloody civil war which lasted 30 months. In the early days of military rule, as was the case under civil rule, agriculture was managed by states with federal government coordination. Agriculture continued to contribute the bulk of the nation's foreign earnings. The country's reliance on agriculture for foreign earning ended with the oil boom of 1968. A fall-out of this new accumulation orientation is that Nigeria became a victim of the 'Dutch disease'.

The 'Dutch disease' has been associated with what is known as the 'resource movement effect' (Jakob 2010: 7). As a result of the 'Dutch disease', labour and capital relocated to the resource rent-dependent sector from the real sector that can grow the economy. This negatively impacted on peasant agricultural production and national development.

The Nigerian military favoured industrialisation over agriculture although most Nigerians were still engaged in agriculture as a means of employment and sustenance. The First National Development Plan was instituted by a politician in 1962. Having ended in 1968, the military put in place the Second National Development Plan. Against the massive infrastructure destruction and carnage of the civil war, the development plan was oriented towards national reconstruction and social economic development. While the contribution of oil to the nation's foreign exchange was on the increase, that of agriculture took the opposite direction downwards. In 1974, for instance, oil exports rose to 92 per cent while agricultural exports nosedived to 2 per cent.

Politically, the need to ensure popular acceptance by Nigerians and the implementation of the post-civil war reconstruction programmes made the military favour wealth distribution rather than wealth production. The military embarked on the creation of new states, rural development programmes, the building of power stations, refineries, other massive white elephant infrastructural programmes, vanity foreign policy, the creation of new states, increased salary to public servants following the Jeremoh Udoji Commission recommendation, an indigenisation policy, import-substitution industrialisation, and massive importation of industrial inputs and food for local consumption. These provided opportunities for the use of the state as a mechanism for primitive accumulation.

The Land Use Decree, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), and the River Basin Development Authorities were some of the agricultural-focused programmes the military implemented. These programmes favoured the metropolitan capital still in control of the Nigerian economy as well as the military-bureaucratic class in control of state power and their cronies in the context of pirate capitalism that was developed (Schatz 1984).

Under this petrol-dollar boom, peasant lands were alienated through the Land Use Decree to prepare room for commercial capitalist agriculture by transnational capital and members of the domestic dominant class who had profited from their relations to the state. The World Bank readily supported the federal government on its commercial agriculture with the introduction of the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

With the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantity, Nigeria became a rentier state: a state depending on commercial rent as against productivity. As Poulton and Chinsinga (2014: 125) note, 'Rents can be thought of as the super-normal returns in excess of opportunity costs that an individual or firm obtains from a particular activity as a result of a particular policy intervention.' With the ability to continue class reproduction without taxation from the people, rents increased the non-accountability and corruption of an otherwise unaccountable military government.

As a result, public policy became increasingly self-serving and biased against the peasants and rural population. As Schatz (1984, cited in Ikpeze, Soludo and Elekwa 2004: 344) opines, wealth creation became unfashionable while the use of the state for unearned prosperity became the vogue. Hard work and industry soon took the back stage, with Nigerians generally after their share of the 'national cake'. Also, the nation started witnessing the gradual migration of its rural population into the cities in search of the

proverbial Eldorado. The effects on agricultural outputs and food supplies was devastating.

The state became a means of production with the military, bureaucrats, politicians, and their friends and cronies in the private sectors dipping their hands into the public purse and looting public funds in an unrestrained manner. Goffredo Caccia (1983: 82) poignantly observes that, 'Not only does theft go on in the state apparatus, but the state is itself the main apparatus of theft. In Nigeria, not only do officials steal, but stealing is official.' The result was a regime of unproductive accumulation, neglect of agriculture, rural–urban migration, and unemployment, non-diversification of the economy, mismanagement, financial indiscipline, grand corruption, and food crisis.

It was in the context of this food crisis, the urgent need to provide food for the urban populations, as well as the imperative of economic diversification to improve Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings that General Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) programme.

The focus of the OFN was not the peasant farmers. The concern of the OFN were transnational agriculture interests, indigenous capitalist farmers, bureaucrats, middlemen, and the big peasant farmers. OFN led to heavy investments in agricultural inputs such as seeding and fertilisers, as well as tractors and other farm equipment supplied by transnational interests.

Local beneficiaries were mostly the contractors that got the contracts for the imports of these agricultural inputs; the bureaucrats who issued and processed the contract and received rents; and the middlemen who acted as go-betweens between the state and the foreign suppliers in an illicit triangle of accumulation. Others were the capitalist farmers who were given these agricultural inputs for their farms; and members of the petty, comprador, bureaucratic, and military bourgeoisie, who benefited in multiple ways including receiving rents and allocation of these agricultural inputs.

Peasant land also came under attack during the period of the OFN programme. Under the pretence of freeing land for commercial and developmental use, peasants nationwide were robbed of their lands, which was the source of their livelihood. This land, hijacked from peasant farmers, was allocated by the state to senior bureaucrats, military generals, and their friends, business partners, and cronies. This condition of imposed landlessness aggravated the food crisis and rural poverty as farmers were turned into labourers or urban proletariats, with the implication that they and their families must now buy food to survive. A new class of absentee landlords was created.

The Land Use Decree went for the jugular of the Nigerian peasants in the interest of the commercial capitalist class. It concretised the alliance between the petty bourgeois class and foreign capital with their mutual interest in peasant land and accumulation.

Oil wealth and the neglect of agriculture made the peasant farmers organisationally weak and politically irrelevant. The strength and political efficacy hitherto exercised by peasant farmers was due to their central position in state accumulation in the Nigerian political economy. As noted by Beer (1976), it was heightened colonial exploitation of peasants' surplus through the marketing boards that unleashed and motivated peasant organisation and solidarity. It was therefore not surprising that with state recourse to petroleum for accumulation which shifted focus from peasant based-accumulation, organisationally, the political efficacy of peasants concomitantly waned.

Clearly, oil wealth is a curse to the Nigerian peasant and rural communities. As Usman (1979: 47) argues, 'The petrol-naira has not blessed them [peasants] with the essentials of existence; rather, its abundance is part of the process of denying them of the benefits of what they produce. They continue in their poverty.'

Both General Olusegun Obasanjo, the Head of State, and his deputy, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua left the military following the handover of power to a civilian regime on 1 October 1979, to a life of opulence as millionaire capitalist farmers, beyond what their means as retired military officers would have assured them. This explains why some Nigerians derisively referred to the OFN as 'Obasanjo Fooled the Nation'.

7 THE SECOND REPUBLIC: 1979–1983: ETHNIC POLITICS AND CORRUPTION

Nigeria returned to civil rule after 14 years of military rule on 1 October 1979 under a presidential system of government. The advent of constitutional rule therefore had the promise that the people would matter. Despite the best efforts in constitutional engineering and strict provisions for the formation of political parties to ensure a national outlook, the political configurations which took over power from the military were reincarnations of the ethnic-based political parties that led to the collapse of the nation's First Republic.

Expectedly, the 1979 general elections were fought along regional and ethnic political cartographies, with a carry-over of old animosities, bitterness, and acrimonies. After a highly disputed presidential election which was decided by the Supreme Court, the Alhaji Shehu Shagari-led National Party of Nigeria (NPN) entered a political accord with the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) under the leadership Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe to form the government at the federal level. This political alliance was weak and short-lived. To add to the problems of the NPN federal government who controlled only seven of the 36 states, the governors of the non-NPN states were not cooperative.

The Second Republic inherited the economic crisis which started under the military. Two years into civil rule, that is, 1981, the oil boom that led to the neglect of agriculture became history. Regrettably, political correctness rather than economic rationality informed most policies and programmes of the civilian government, funded through foreign loans at the federal level. The NPN-NPP Accord, while it lasted, was an arrangement for the distribution of patronage and primitive capital accumulation by the political elite of the two parties. Direct allocation of import licences to members of both parties was the order of the day. These party members also served as middlemen and commission agents for import licences and contracts from the federal government.

Agriculture was one of the key programmes in the NPN manifesto. To underscore the primacy of agriculture, the party symbol was maize. Under the federal government Green Revolution Programme, there was open discrimination against states where the opposition parties were in control. The opposition states were denied farm inputs such as tractors, seeds, and fertilisers. Where these were allocated, the federal government bypassed the state governments and appointed its own party members as Presidential Liaison Officers (PLOs) for the states. This is because of the electoral advantage and primitive capital accumulation related to the government agricultural programme.

In this way, the federal government ran parallel governments in these states. This promoted crises and divisions, and increased wastages, as funds that would otherwise have gone into agriculture were used for the service of duplicated bureaucracies. With avoidable political rivalries between the state governors of these states and the PLOs, cooperation and collaboration for agricultural development became impossible. There was also increased incidence of grand corruption as these PLOs diverted, mismanaged, and cornered funds and equipment meant for agricultural development.

Despite the government's Green Revolution Programme, the NPN government embarked on massive food importation. The Nigerian National Supply Company (NNSC) was set up for the purpose of commodity import. Members of the ruling party turned millionaires overnight through involvement in the activities, operations, and commodities allocations from the NNSC. Nigerian agriculture was worse off and the food crisis deepened.

This agricultural decadence as Oculi (1986: 151) notes led to the emergence of 'a new dependent class … whose chances of accumulation came out of the continued decay of Nigerian agriculture and the food-import boom'. The government courted the capitalist class both local and foreign to invest in the nation's agriculture. Credit lines and subsidised inputs for agriculture were provided for the big farmers under the programme. On the contrary, the requirements for accessing agricultural credits were unfavourable and skewed against peasant farmers.

The commercial agriculture drive of the government succeeded in aggravating the situation of poverty

Table 7.1 Food imports as proportion of total imports 1970–1981

Year	Total imports (N million)	Food imports (N million)	Percentage of food as total imports
1970	752,58	57.694	7.67
1971	1,075.07	88.254	8.18
1972	986.22	95.104	9.64
1973	1,220.95	126.260	10.34
1974	1,737.38	154.765	8.96
1975	3,717.38	298.805	8.01
1976	5,132.51	441.846	8.55
1977	7,91.70	781.190	10.38
1979	6,169.20	1,105.900	16.90
1980	9,095.60	1,480.000	15.60
1981	12,919.60	2,198.3	17.00

Source: Alamu (1984), cited in Attah (2011).

and hunger of the rural population nationwide but particularly in the states controlled by opposition parties. The Bakalori Irrigation Project in Sokoto State was a classic case of the Shagari government's agricultural commercialisation policy that rendered the peasant farmers landless, brutalised, abused, violated, exploited, and impoverished.

Bakalori was a village in Sokoto State. It assumed global prominence following the killing of several villagers by the Nigerian state between 25–26 April 1980, who protested the taking over of their land by an Italian company, Impresit Bakolori Nigeria Limited, in the name of an irrigation scheme (Momoh 1996). The Bakolori people were denied compensation for their land and cash crops destroyed for the irrigation scheme. A military coup brought the military back to power on 31 December 1983.

8 THE SECOND COMING OF THE MILITARY AND THE ADVENT OF THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME (SAP) 1984–1999

Major-General Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the new Head of State following the ousting of the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari from power. By the time the military took over power, the economy was badly battered and the corporate existence of the nation seriously threatened. Brigadier-General Sanni Abacha who announced the military putsch declared that,

> Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged; we have become a debtor and beggar nation. There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people who are now fed up with endless announcements of importation of foodstuffs; health services are in shambles as our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics without drugs, water, and equipment.
> (Kalu 1996: 235)

Major-General Buhari and his team in the Supreme Military Council sought to fix the battered economy with military fiat. The borders of Nigeria with its neighbours were closed for importation. The Naira, the nation's currency, was changed to prevent those who had stockpiled money looted from the public treasuries benefiting from their loots. Efforts made to renegotiate the nation's debt and seek financial accommodation with the IMF, so that foreign exchange could be available for imports, failed as the military government would not agree to the Fund's conditionality. The political cost of the IMF conditionality would have worsened the legitimacy crisis that the administration was immersed in.

Because of this, government spending was seriously cut, imports reduced, and foreign debts serviced. These policies had negative effects on the domestic economy and the livelihood of Nigerians. Barely 20 months in power, the Buhari administration was toppled in a palace coup led by the administration's Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. The new junta accused the Buhari leadership of being slow, rigid, and non-inclusive. Major-General Babangida became the new Head of State, assuming the constitutional title of president despite not being elected by the people. Babangida resumed the failed negotiation with the IMF in order to resolve the nation's economic crisis. After a government-championed national debate on whether or not to obtain an IMF loan, the government finally agreed to implement the Fund's conditionality without taking the loan. This signalled the advent of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria. The SAP was rooted in neoliberalism with emphasis on market orthodoxy.

The advent of the SAP was an indication that the Nigerian economy had entered the intensive care unit for life-sustaining oxygen. The SAP was the culmination of the crisis of the post-colonial state in Nigeria. Thus, the SAP was the consequence of the destructive accumulative pathology of the Nigerian post-colonial state and the desperate efforts by the domestic dominant classes to resolve the crisis. Under this economic regime, the era of state capitalism and social democracy gave way to the primacy of the market as the engine of accumulation and development.

The objectives of the SAP were: to end the dominance of oil in Nigeria's political economy through a shift in the economic orientation of the country to agriculture, manufacturing, mining, etc.; to develop the country's non-oil export; reduce inflation; liberalise the Nigerian economy and make it attractive to foreign investment; job creation; and to reduce wastages in public expenditure and promote financial discipline. These objectives of the SAP came under three major canons: trade and financial liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation.

In the implementation of the SAP, several reforms with far-reaching implications for agricultural commercialisation and the Nigerian economy were carried out. These included the liberalisation of the interest rate regime, the devaluation of the nation's currency, a reduction in government spending, the down-sizing of government personnel, the abolition of marketing boards, and a ban on the importation of food products such as vegetable oil, rice, wheat, and maize.

While this shift in attention to local production was a positive step, the high cost of foreign inputs as a consequence of devaluation of the Naira produced negative results. The high exchange rates which aggravated the costs of agricultural inputs, and the

stoppage of agricultural subsidies to farmers eroded farmers' profits. The rural economy in the country became comatose with the youth running to the cities.

The desperation for foreign exchange led the government to aggressively promote commercial agriculture oriented to cash crop production. Sometimes this was as a result of external pressure from the international financial institutions. In this regard, Hoogvelt (2001: 184) argues that,

> Both the World Bank and the IMF have used their leverage on the indebtedness to require that production be concentrated on commodity exports. The consequence of this has been a flooding of the commodity markets which forced prices downwards.

Focus shifted to commercial agriculture in order to reverse the heavy reliance by Nigerian industries for raw materials abroad, end food dependency, and diversify the nation's economic base. The state entered into partnership with private interests, both local and foreign. According to Egwu (1998: 10), 'This has taken the form of encouraging agribusiness concerns, agro-allied industries and a coterie of wealthy individuals with the host of incentives, including government guarantee of access to land on highly generous terms.' The commercial agricultural thrust under the SAP led to the high cost of land acquisition, land-based conflicts, and increased incidents of land-grab as several companies went into agriculture because of the generous government incentives and to access foreign exchange.

It has been empirically demonstrated that a major fall-out of the SAP was rural ethnicity rooted in struggles over land and water resources. As Egwu (1998: 10) argues, 'In other words, the agrarian question is central to the onset and escalation of rural ethnicity.' The debilitating identity politics and insecurity have continued to be a major national burden in Nigeria since then.

The SAP was highly beneficial for agriculture commodity speculators and capitalist farmers, especially those close to the government who earned higher agricultural incomes. On the other hand, peasant farmers were disadvantaged due to hyper-inflation. This was especially so with the abolition of the marketing boards which left the peasant farmers to the vagaries of market forces. With the withdrawal of agricultural subsidies, the high prices of agricultural commodities were offset by increased input costs.

However, unlike most commodities, cassava benefited from the removal of government subsidies on imported grains. In tandem with the traditional orientation of cassava as a famine crop, the government shifted focus to cassava as an alternative food for Nigerians (Nweke 2004). Government agriculture extension services were extended to cassava. New high-yielding varieties of cassava were introduced. The government promoted several diverse usages of cassava such as in bread-making and confectionery, among others.

With the marketing boards abolished, the nation also witnessed the emergence of 'emergency cocoa merchants'. These, mostly foreigners with Nigerian collaborators, swarmed on the rural cocoa zones, creating an artificial boom in cocoa. These emergency cocoa farmers were never into genuine agriculture business. The cocoa business was merely a cover for the repatriation of stolen public funds already converted into foreign exchange currencies during the preceding era when there was a lax foreign exchange regime (Fadahunsi 1993). Buying cocoa for export enabled them to take out these illicit funds from the Nigerian economy in which they no longer had confidence.

Out of their desperation to use cocoa exports as a cover to repatriate stolen money, these emergency merchants readily offered unreasonable amounts for the product. This drove the price of cocoa high in Nigeria, though the price of the commodity was falling in the international market. According to Fadahunsi (1993: 49),

> The activities of these cocoa merchants contributed a great deal to the rapid devaluation of the Naira which exchanged at the beginning of the cocoa season in September 1986 Naira exchange at about N1.6 to the dollar, at N4.3 to the dollar in September 1987, N4.8 in September 1988 and at about N7.3 at the close of the 1988/9 cocoa season in June 1989.

Two major programmes of the Babangida administration were directly related to commercial agriculture and rural development. First, was the Directorate of Food and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI), which was purported to open the rural areas for development and increase agricultural productivity through road construction, the provision of social amenities, boreholes and irrigation, and supplies of farm inputs. The other was the Better Life for Rural Women programme; the pet programme of the First Lady, Mrs Maryam Babangida. The programme was rooted in the important and indispensable role of women in agricultural production; the need to end the widespread gender inequalities and discriminations, as well as arrest the effects of the feminisation of poverty. While these two programmes failed to achieve their objectives, they provided opportunities for primitive capital accumulation for the military, the army officers' wives, civilian cronies, and political collaborators.

General Babangida complemented his administration's economic liberalisation programme with an elaborate political transition. This transition was patently non-transparent, given that it was deliberately structured to deceive Nigerians. Babangida's aim was to perpetuate himself in power. Despite the billions of Naira spent on the Babangida transition programme, deemed to be the most elaborate and financially wasteful democratic transition in Africa, it was eventually truncated following Babangida's annulment of the 12 June presidential elections won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola.

While the SAP brought about a consistent annual growth of 5.9 per cent between 1986 and 1988, the 12 June political crisis, among other factors, reduced the nation's annual growth to 2.9 per cent as at 1993. Popular pressure forced General Ibrahim Babangida out of power, leaving behind an Interim National Government (ING), headed by Chief Ernest Sonekan, a former Chairman of the multinational conglomerate, United African Company (UAC). The ING suffered serious legitimacy problems, particularly in the south-west, where both Abiola and Sonekan came from. General Abacha, the Secretary of the ING, took over power from Sonekan and became the new Head of State. Under Babangida's SAP, the Nigerian domestic dominant classes perverted the reform process for primitive capital accumulation, while ordinary Nigerians groaned under intense poverty.

The General Sanni Abacha administration formally terminated the SAP but remained committed to the ideology of neoliberalism. The government merely replaced it with a guided deregulation oriented to selective intervention. Abacha died on 8 June 1998 and was replaced by General Abdulsalam Abubakar as Head of State. The General Abdulsalaam Abubakar administration was brief, and with its focus majorly on a quick transition of power to civilian rule. Suffice to say, the administration remained faithful to the neoliberal development path by resuming the halted privatisation of public enterprises.

9 RETURN TO DEMOCRACY: 1999 TO DATE

A perceptive understanding of democratisation and democracy as well as the distinction between the two is germane in order to appreciate how they affect the socioeconomic formations, and particularly commercial agriculture in Nigeria. Momoh (2006: 63) notes that 'democracy is not the same thing as democratisation. Democracy has to do with representative government and empowerment, whereas democratisation is a process leading to liberal democracy prescribed for the Third World nations.' While democratisation is the transitional mechanism for democracy, the latter is the product which entails popular participation in the affairs of the state and choosing those who govern. For Chomsky, Barsamian and Naiman (2011: 64), 'According to the common-sense meaning, a society is democratic to the extent that people can participate in a meaningful way in managing their affairs. The public are to be only "spectators of action", not "participants".'

Since the return to civil rule on 29 May 1999, the involvement and participation of Nigerians in the affairs of the state has been marginal as a result of the high premium of money, and the low value of the people in the country's democracy. Against the realisation of the emptiness of democracy for ordinary Nigerians, Beckman (1989) posed the question, 'Whose democracy?'. Implied in this question is that 'there is no uniform notion of democracy anywhere in the world. Every democracy is historically specific and historically defined' (Momoh 2006). Mamdani (1987: 93, cited in Beckman 1989) argues that 'not only does it leave out... the large section of society, the bulk of its producers of wealth, the peasants. The resulting political competition is also limited to an arena defined by the demands of the bourgeoisie.' Huntington's observation (1984, cited in Beckman 1989) is perhaps apt when he points out that poverty and violence make democracy problematic in Africa.

Similarly, Gelinas (1998) argues that justice, freedom, and social equality are important ingredients of democracy. These ingredients are associated with social democracy which is often a product of collective action, popular empowerment, and the welfare of the majority. According to Gelinas (1998: 139), 'Social democracy tends to free individuals from the constraints that keep them powerless. Since the individual's economic condition is the root of all forms of oppression, social democracy will focus on the transformation of economic structures.' Robbed of popular representation and empowerment of the people, democracy is meaningless. What is common to both representation and empowerment within the democratic calculus is choice. Elections in Nigeria, particularly the 2003 and 2007 general elections, were largely mere political necessities, with the votes of the people not the determinant of electoral outcomes. However, there was a change for the better in 2015, with Goodluck Jonathan, the incumbent president, defeated by the candidate of the opposition party, Mohammodu Buhari.

Many retired military officers, with the looted money they made during the decades of military rule in the country, saw in civil rule another opportunity either to return to power or become politically relevant, and therefore joined the new political parties. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) that ruled Nigeria between 29 May 1999 and 29 May 2015 was the greatest beneficiary of the membership of these military-turned-politicians. For these military politicians, democracy was an opportunity to continue wielding state power, protect illicit wealth, and capitalise on fresh opportunities for primitive capital accumulation using state power.

Money historically from the Second Republic and during the military transition programmes played an important role in Nigeria's political outcomes. The military politicians had money in abundance and were ready to deploy it to get political power. These military politicians, given their huge financial chest, played important roles in the nation's politics, particularly at the inception of civil rule in 1999. The emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo, retired general and former military Head of State, as the presidential candidate of the PDP and ultimately elected president of Nigeria on 29 May 1999, was a testimony to the power of the military in the politics of Nigeria's new democracy.

With the monetisation of the political process and the parties in the firm grip of godfathers, internal democracy was stiffened in all the parties. Primary

and general elections were waged as warfare fought with all imaginable ammunitions. Issues, campaigns, and programmes were relegated to the background in the electoral process. To win elections, priority was given to the control and manipulation of the nation's electoral management body, and the unleashing of violence against political opponents using political thugs to hijack electoral materials. The support of the law enforcement agencies and the security officials was key to state capture through fraudulent elections in a democracy devoid of the democratic ethos.

Contrary to the conception of a political party in developed democracies as a platform used by people with common interests and ideology to capture state power, political parties of the new dispensation in Nigeria are more about being electoral machines composed of gangs with antagonistic interests. Politicians fight with all viciousness against members of their parties as well as other political parties.

The orientation of 'representation as tokenism' (Usman 1979), reduced democracy to a mere concern about power for the political coalitions and the disempowerment of the people perceived as outsiders. Political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic have serious internal democracy deficit. The anarchical political contest in Nigeria is defined by a lack of moral norms or rationalisations that should underpin a democratic atmosphere of political competition. On the contrary, scandalous intra- and inter-party crises as well as a lack of party supremacy were the order of the day.

Ayoade and Akinsanya (2013: xiv) illustrate this condition as follows:

> Typically, parties without philosophical identities obliterate political denominational boundaries and politicians roam around the political field like sheep without a shepherd. This was exemplified in the politics of Imo and Abia states where politicians changed political labels even faster than the weather. The kaleidoscopic alliances of former antagonists against former friends depict the politicians as mere rent seekers and politics as speculative 'business'.

Since 1999, the violence that characterised Nigerian politics has eclipsed the country's own enviable records of violence, rising to an unprecedented scale. President Obasanjo promised Nigerians that the 2007 general elections were going to be a 'do-or-die affair', and it lived up to the president's promise. While these parties banished political manifestoes during campaigns and made promises to Nigerians, in most cases these promises were forgotten immediately the politicians got to power, and did not transform into public policies. Poulton (2014: 115) is right when he notes that 'the lack of institutionalisation of most African [Nigerian] political parties militate against the repeated playing of games that would encourage enduring attention to policy'.

In the context of the economic reforms from 1999, despite the good governance mantra prescribed as the political recipe for development by the international financial intermediaries, Nigeria suffers a serious governance deficit. This is particularly evident in the perversion of the reforms as an instrument of primitive capital accumulation and state capture by powerful members of the domestic dominant classes.

As a result, the monopoly power of the state was challenged on multiple fronts by different power claimants. During the Obasanjo administration, this found expression and manifested in the proliferation of ethnic militias such as the Bakassi Boys in the south-east, the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) in the south-west, the Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC) in the north, the Egbesu Boys, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta People (MEND), among others, in the oil-rich south-south.

As Ferguson (2006: 39) observes generally about Africa,

> The institution of government is little more than an empty shell. It is not that the states have disappeared, or even simply that they are, as it is often put, 'weak'. It is, rather, that they have increasingly gotten out of the business of governing, even as they (or, rather, the politicians and bureaucrats who occupy their offices) retain a lively interest in other business. In this new era, it is not organisations of 'civil society' that are 'non-governmental' – it is the state itself.

It is important to reiterate that the choice of occupation of retired military officers since former Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd.) and his deputy Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (rtd.) retired to a life of commercial agriculture did not change in subsequent years. It remains commercial agriculture.

Since, as noted earlier, the military influence in and out of power continues to loom large in the nation's politics, particularly their influence as the leading lights of the ruling political parties, their individual and group interests significantly shape the direction of Nigeria's agricultural policies. The technological backwardness and food crisis of Nigeria also commends agricultural

commercialisation to members of the bureaucratic and political classes who had made money in government as a business. Finally, given the continued importance of agriculture as industrial inputs in the advanced capitalist nations of the West, as well as the monumental industrial progress that has transformed China as the new global industrial hub, there has been a new international interest and investment in Africa's agriculture with the World Bank and other international developmental partners offering various levels of support for agricultural commercialisation.

It is against the above political background that we analyse the agricultural commercialisation pathways in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999 to date. It is, however, pertinent to call attention to the paucity of data with which to map the discourses, interests, social forces, incentives, and political dynamics that drive agricultural commercialisation policy in Nigeria. To this end, the methodology used for this study combines the descriptive, interpretative, and constructive approaches.

9.1 Olusegun Obasanjo Administration: 1999–2007

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo is a retired military general and former Head of State (13 February 1976–1 October 1979) from the south-west, and the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who won the 1999 presidential election. He was sworn in as the second executive president of Nigeria on 29 May 1999. As noted earlier, after he handed over power to a civilian administration on 1 October 1979, Obasanjo retired to farming and is arguably one of the biggest individual private farmers in the country. The majority of the social forces that brought Obasanjo back to power were from the northern part of the country, where agriculture is a primary preoccupation of most of the population and the new elite.

President Obasanjo inherited a politically fragmented nation with a battered and prostrate economy. At the inception of his civil administration, there was a heightened foreign exchange crisis, acute food dependency, a high cost of living, decayed infrastructure, an energy crisis, and grand corruption. Occasioned by the unconscionable actions and human rights violations of the Abacha years, Nigeria was a pariah nation.

Thus, in his inaugural speech on 29 May 1999 (Obasanjo 1999), Obasanjo promised a highly traumatised people a new beginning. He deployed his vast experience in international diplomacy and goodwill to revive the nation's comatose economy. Most of his first term between 29 May 1999 and 28 May 2003 was used for shuttle diplomacy around Western capitals, courting Western governments and business interests for assistance and support to revive Nigeria's battered economy.

President Obasanjo listed 28 priority issues for the urgent attention of his administration: crisis in the oil-producing areas; food supply, food security, and agriculture; macro-economic policies, particularly exchange rate management, etc.; infrastructure, water supply, energy, telecommunication, ports, airways, national shipping, Nigerian railways, etc.; job creation and creation of a conducive environment for investment; poverty alleviation; and women and youth development. Most of these had direct or indirect implications for agricultural development.

President Obasanjo returned the nation to the path of neoliberal reforms that had been abandoned under General Sanni Abacha. With commitment to a market regime, the administration embarked on reforms in the public service to plug leakages, reduce wastage, and halt corruption in government business, particularly through the procurement system. To reduce the alarming poverty among Nigerians, the administration in 1999 introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The programme was largely 'money for the boys'; that is, it was used as patronage for the supporters of the ruling party nationwide.

Given the desperation to revive the nation's economy and the shortage of foreign exchange, Obasanjo's economic thrust was focused more on seeking accommodation and partnership with foreign capital. This desperation was compounded by the various ethno-religious crises and the rise of militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta which made oil exploration in the area almost impossible, with negative effects on the nation's foreign exchange earnings. This economic flat-footedness changed with the re-election of President Obasanjo for another term of four years in 2003.

During Obasanjo's time in power, there were some noteworthy initiatives of the administration in the area of commercial agriculture.

9.1.1 National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS)

Launched in 2002 and planned to last for four years, the National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) which operated in 109 sites across the 36 states of Nigeria spanned the two terms of Obasanjo's administration. The objectives were: to promote food

security, and to ensure consistency and stability in food production from year-to-year for Nigerians. To achieve these objectives, farmers were offered assistance towards increased outputs and income; research and extension services capabilities were enhanced through technology and modern farm practices; pilot and experimental projects were embarked on; farmers were trained and educated in optimising the use of land, water, and other resources and facilities; and international agricultural best practices were promoted to transform Nigeria's agriculture.

The NSPFS had five components; namely, food security; aquaculture and inland fisheries; animal diseases and trans-boundary pest control; soil fertility initiatives; and South–South cooperation. In its implementation, the NSPFS involved increased food production, supply of agricultural inputs on a cash-and-carry basis, irrigation and water control, agro-processing, and credits for rural farmers.

The NSPFS was funded in full by the Federal Government of Nigeria without external financial assistance. A total of US$67.5 million was spent on the programme by the federal government. Of this amount, US$45.2 million and US$22.2 million were expended on the first five components of the NSPFS and South–South cooperation respectively. Underscoring the importance the government accorded to the issue of food security, this component received 67.21 per cent; that is, US$30.4 million of the US$45.2 million spent on the first five components.

The programme was largely successful in terms of increased food production. Farmers involved in the NSPFS also reported increased agricultural yield. Smallholder farmers, among others, benefited from the programme supply of agricultural inputs. Farmers got fertilisers on a cash-and-carry basis which thus ensured that advances were recovered in full. However, in several cases, these inputs were not given to farmers in good time, thus reducing the contributions these inputs such as fertilisers and high-yield varieties would have made to the productivity of the farmers. Also, late commencement and inadequate publicity to farmers militated against the animal disease control project. The programme did not transform into the primary goal of food security, as massive food imports continued.

Rural famers benefited from the disbursement of credits under the NSPFS through farmers' organisations. The federal government distributed a total of N1.2 billion to farmers under the NSPFS (FAO 2008a). Efforts were made to build farmers' capacity through the transfer of knowledge, though the question of continuity and sustainability was doubtful (*ibid.*). The special interests of a minority of farmers in the north based on their connections and relationship with the state and control of the dominant party, the PDP, were served through the allocation of the irrigation and water control aspect of the NSPFS. According to FAO (2008b: 11), 'The irrigation and water control component increased access to irrigation structures and equipment to a minority of farmers located in the northern parts of Nigeria, especially to a new group of farmers in the country.'

On digitalised maps on the fertility properties of the soils across Nigeria, the benefits of this remarkable exercise were lost as the maps were not put in the hands of the farmers. Hence, farmers were unable to leverage on the associated knowledge to make decisions on agricultural locations. In the same vein, poor implementation bedevilled the agro-processing components which would have added value to Nigeria's agricultural products.

Two major sour points of the NSPFS were the control mechanism and South–South cooperation. On the former, FAO (2008b: 80) notes that,

> The NSPFS M&E system was deficient in many aspects, including lack of an efficient set of monitoring indicators, reporting upstream, under-utilisation of baseline data and lack of utilisation for management purposes of the considerable amount of data collected on inputs, productions and ADP support activity. No impact data collection was undertaken during NSPFS implementation.

South–South cooperation underscored the international dimension of the programme. This brought to the fore the controversies over whether the increased prominence of China in Africa implies that Western imperialism is being replaced by Chinese imperialism. Based on the comparative advantage of China in the areas of water control, crop intensification, and diversification, under the South–South component, five hundred Chinese technicians and experts were to teach and transfer skills to Nigerian farmers in these areas of agriculture.

Communication problems were experienced as most of the Chinese workers who were meant to teach largely illiterate Nigerian farmers spoke little or no English. Contrary to plan, most of the Chinese workers were technicians rather than experts who would have added more value. The US$22,245,600 expended on the programme took a large chunk of the total government expenditure on the NSPFS, with no commensurate result.

9.1.2 The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was launched in 2004 by President Obasanjo as a strategy to revamp the Nigerian economy, was essentially the same thing as the SAP. Unlike the SAP, there were efforts to domesticate the programme. New dimensions were introduced to aid cooperation and collaboration in the context of the nation's constitutional democracy, under which states are coordinate authorities with the federal government. This was achieved through the creation of the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the state and local government levels respectively. NEEDS was loudly proclaimed by the operational document as the 'Nigerian plan for prosperity'.

NEEDS was to ensure the diversification of the Nigerian economy from the over-dependence on oil, with a shift of emphasis to agriculture and other non-oil activities; to create jobs for the nation's army of unemployed; and to create wealth by opening a floodgate of foreign exchange. One of the strategies of NEEDS, the liberalisation of the Nigerian economy through privatisation and deregulation, was to make the private sector the engine of development, reduce wastages, create employment, and promote industrial development. Through reforms and privatisation in the power sector, transportation, and telecommunication, NEEDS hoped to unleash the creative potentials of the Nigerian people, and ensure rural–urban linkages for enhanced food production, distribution, and wealth creation under private sector leadership. The private sector, international donors, and transnational organisations involved in agricultural activities, as well as agricultural commercialisation, received a boost under the NEEDS programme. This is not to deny that small-scale farmers, because of their indispensability in the agricultural production chain of food, raw materials, and foreign exchange, as well as their utility for electoral advantage by the ruling party, also benefited under NEEDS, albeit minimally. Despite this, the high incidence of poverty remained as it was. The hope that NEEDS would promote integrated rural development to stem rural–urban migration was not achieved.

9.2 The Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration

In his inauguration address on 29 May 2007, President Yar'Adua declared unambiguously that his administration was a continuation of Obasanjo's administration, its policies and framework. This marked a commitment to the neoliberal economic thrust encapsulated by the NEEDS programme of the previous administration. President Yar'Adua hinged his administration on a Seven Points Agenda: power and energy; food security; wealth creation; transportation; land reforms; security; and education.

In the area of agricultural commercialisation, deliberate efforts were made to protect the smallholders and resource-poor farmers against nature, the market, and unfair foreign competitors. Technical and logistical assistance to enhance the ability of smallholders to break into the international commodity markets was introduced. Agriculture was strengthened by deliberately transforming it from a mere occupation to a professionally profitable business concern. Price support mechanisms, land tenure reform to free additional land for agricultural usage, promotion, and strengthening of farmers' support groups, restructuring abandoned irrigations, and water management for all-year-round farming, access to agriculture credits and inputs such as fertiliser which enjoyed a 50 per cent subsidy were some of the strategies deployed by the government in aid of commercial agriculture (Yar'Adua 2009).

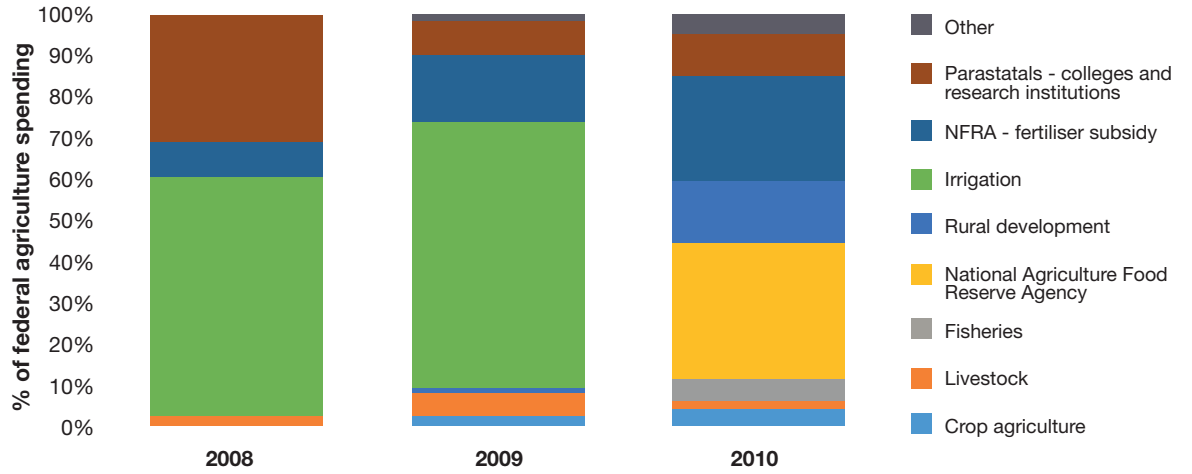
9.2.1 The Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP)

The RTEP, launched in 2008, was meant to combat rural poverty, enhance the incomes of rural farmers, engender household nutrition, and ultimately promote food security through increasing root and tuber production and productivity. The RTEP was also meant to stimulate demand for cheaper staple food such as cassava, *garri*, yam, potato, etc., given as a counter-measure to the nutritional problems caused by the sky-rocketing price of favoured carbohydrates such as rice.

To achieve the foregoing objectives, the programme was to empower small-scale farmers, including youths and women, with less than two hectares of farm land, in commercial root and tuber agriculture.

The programme sought to increase small-scale farmers' production and productivity with the introduction of modern and advanced technologies of root and tuber production. The issues of processing and marketing were also at the core of the RTEP. To disseminate and enhance farmers' knowledge on techniques and methods of achieving increased production and productivity, the government forged partnerships with NGOs for the training of farmers. Farming communities were supported to become owners of agricultural processing equipment with the marketing of their products enhanced. Increased production and high

Figure 9.1 Nigeria governmental key funding areas in agriculture, 2008–2010



Source: World Bank Nigeria Agriculture Public Expenditure Review.

productivity were achieved as a result of the access of small-scale farming households to improved root and tuber varieties for planting. The transformation in cassava production and productivity that has made Nigeria the largest producer of cassava in the world is traceable to the RTEP.

Another major boost to commercial agriculture under the Yar'Adua administration was the N200 billion long-term concessionary loan given to large-scale farmers. Under President Yar'Adua, budgetary allocations to agriculture increased from 3 per cent in 2007 to 8 per cent in 2008. President Yar'Adua died before he could complete his first term.

9.3 Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan Administration: 2010–2015

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, son of a poor canoe-maker, became the president of Nigeria by providence. He took over the presidency of Nigeria despite political manipulations of a powerful cabal following the untimely death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua whose first term he completed. On 29 May 2011, he was sworn in as president following an overwhelming mandate in the 2011 presidential election.

The Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration is best understood by examining the social forces that opposed him, and those social forces that rallied in his support in his ascendance to the nation's presidency. Also important was his poor background which he used to maximum political advantage during the 2011 presidential campaign, with his narrative and self-projection as a 'shoeless school boy'.

As a measure of his seriousness to leverage on agriculture to change the nation's comatose economy, President Jonathan appointed as his Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, a professional agriculturalist, Dr Akinwunmi Adesina, the son of a poor farmer from Ijebu-Igbo, Ogun State, south-west Nigeria. Dr Adesina was a former fellow of the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation and Vice President of Policy and Partnerships for the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) before his appointment.

9.3.1 Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA)

The Jonathan administration's policy on commercial agriculture in Nigeria was anchored on the ATA launched in 2011 with the primary focus of growing food, creating jobs, and ensuring security. The target was to ensure that domestic food production increased by 20 million metric tonnes (MTs) within four years and that 3.5 million new jobs were created in the agricultural value chain (Adesina 2013). Like presidents Obasanjo and Yar'Adua, the ATA became an imperative strategy to confront the nation's economic crisis. The administration believed that it was possible to transform Nigeria into 'an agriculturally industrialised economy' (Nigerian Farming Online Magazine 2018: 1), with agriculture subjected to market order and business orientations. With the success achieved in the reduction of corruption in the distribution of farm inputs, greater efficiency was achieved. The attraction of private sector investment into agriculture also contributed immensely to agricultural productivity.

Private sector orientation and investment were made central to the nation's agriculture. Uncoordinated agricultural practices were substituted systematically and integrated agricultural processes promoted. The 'Farm to Fork' drive encapsulated the ATA's focus on the whole agricultural value chain of food production, storage, food processing, and industrial manufacturing. Some other policy thrusts to promote commercial

agriculture were: the deregulation of seed and fertiliser sectors/inputs; marketing reforms and market structure; innovative financing for agriculture; new agriculture investment frameworks, etc.

The take-off of the ATA was the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS). This programme fitted into the deregulation of the seed and fertiliser sector under private sector management. This was to ensure ease of access of farmers to subsidised fertilisers and farm inputs such as seeds. Through the Electronic Wallet System (EWS), the high level of corruption, patronage, and capture system in the fertiliser distribution chain was terminated. Contrary to the 11 per cent of farmers that hitherto received a fertiliser allocation, 94 per cent of farmers benefited within the first 90 days of the new policy. In 2012, 1.5 million smallholder farmers received subsidised fertiliser and seeds, which translated to an impact factor of 7.5 million people (Adesina 2013).

The GESS which took place in all the local government areas across Nigeria included fisheries, livestock, and mechanisation services. Ten million farmers were registered and given identification cards as a way of reaching these farmers. The total expenditure on fertilised subsidies by both federal and state governments under the GESS was US$519.59 million by 2014, as against US$84.44 million in 2012.

The production and processing of agricultural products were other areas where the administration sought to promote agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria. In order to reduce Nigeria's unenviable reputation as the world's largest importer of rice, despite the fact that the products can be produced in commercial quantity all year round in the country, a target of self-sufficiency in rice production was set for 2015. The government gave support to rice farmers with the result that rice cultivation became a major preoccupation of farmers. The domestic rice boom became common and Nigerian local rice became popular with Nigerians. However, the target to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production was not met as Nigeria continued to import rice to meet its high domestic consumption.

According to Adesina (2015, cited in Omo-Oso 2015), Nigeria's 'parboiled rice milling capacity increased from 70,000 metric tonnes to 800,000 metric tonnage'. Adesina (2015, cited in Omo-Oso) further notes that,

> The Federal Executive Council [was] to approve a N9 billion fund to support private sector companies to acquire nine new 36,000 metric tonnes per annum factories to further raise the capacity to 1.2 million MT, leaving a national supply gap of 1.3 million MT that was to be met by controlled imports under the new rice policy.

As a consequence of government encouragement for rice production, large-scale farmers, such as Dominion Farms, Olam, etc. joined the rice production race. The Dangote and Elephant Groups, hitherto major rice importers, invested heavily in domestic rice production. More than ten large-scale integrated rice mills with capacity to process paddy into parboiled rice were set up between 2011 and 2013 by private investors.

umber of policies were put in place to achieve this objective. Some of these policy thrusts were the enhancement of irrigation to supply water for rice production, as well as the supply of free seeds, and a 50 per cent fertiliser rebate under the GESS. The establishment of the Stable Food Processing Zones, under which Adani in Enugu State and Omori in Anambra State so designated because of their potential for rice production, was another such policy geared towards achieving self-sufficiency in rice production by the Jonathan administration. A 10 per cent import duty and 100 per cent levy were imposed on imported rice.

Mention must be made of the administration's New Rice policy which used discriminative levies as incentives for domestic production of rice and as disincentives for rice importation. Under the policy, rice merchants were categorised as investors and traders. For the purpose of closing the rice supply gap, the policy provided that investors pay a 20 per cent levy as against a 60 per cent levy paid by traders. As noted by Ayinde *et al.* (2016: 15),

> Rice import quotas for investors and pure traders were to be issued if the gap was 80 percent or more of the national demand. It was also envisaged that the gap would be closed within four years through increased domestic rice production.

While the rice self-sufficiency drive was planned around the production of smallholder rice farmers whose paddy was to serve as inputs to the rice mills, the unintended consequences of some of the policies pursued to achieve the objective became counter-productive and inimical to the smallholder rice farmers. For instance, the generous levy for rice importation by investors and the permission for new investors led to an avalanche of new entrants whose primary objective was profit. As noted by *The Guardian* (24 January 2015, cited in Ayinde et al. 2016: 16),

> The increasing influence of the erstwhile rice importers in the rice transformation process caused disquiet in the sector, mainly because they, camouflaged as 'new investors', had hijacked the process and were reaping disproportionate benefits at the expense of pre-existing players, especially farmers and small-scale millers, although they

had contributed immensely to Nigeria's rice import dependency from the beginning.

A major fall-out of this was a surge of interest in rice production with the state playing a major role in the acquisition of land hitherto used by smallholder farmers. For instance, Dangote Group and Elephant Group, both major rice importers, in tandem with the conditions for the import waiver, transformed from pure traders to investors in domestic rice production, acquiring 150,000ha and 10,000ha of land for domestic rice production respectively (Ayinde et al. 2016).

Similarly, Olam Farm increased its rice cultivation by 10,000. Not least is the Dominion Farms' acquisition of 30,000ha of Gassol community land in Taraba State for rice cultivation. These large-scale land acquisitions resulted in the displacement of small farmers, land-grabs, alienation, and state violence against small farmers whose land was taken over and handed to large-scale farmers. In the cases of Dominion Farms in Taraba State and Wilmer in Cross-River State, the refusal to compensate local farmers for both crops and agricultural trees destroyed, exacerbated rural poverty, unemployment, and conflict.

Similarly, the nation's food dependency which drained it of US$4 billion per annum on the importation of wheat was confronted through the cassava flour substitution policy. This was meant 'to turn cassava into gold in Nigeria' (Iruobe 2014). Actions were taken to reduce the quantity of wheat in bread and confectionery with the inclusion of cassava flour, of which Nigeria is the largest producer in the world. The government provided access to cheap credit for the importation and set-up of 18 large-scale cassava processing plants to solve the problem of cassava flour inadequacy to meet domestic demands. These plants were to be run, owned, managed, and operated by private investors on favourable financial terms through the Bank of Industry (BoI).

Beyond cassava flour, cassava was also to be processed into new derivatives such as starch, ethanol, sweetener, etc. There was a US$60 billion cassava bread fund under the administration. Among the private companies that keyed into the cassava efforts were Cargill and Flour Mills of Nigeria. While efforts were made to reduce wheat imports through aggressive cassava production, under the ATA, domestic wheat production was addressed with the introduction of new tropical wheat varieties. With a yield of five to six tonnes per hectare, these new wheat varieties produced 500–600 per cent above the yields of the older varieties of wheat (Adesina 2013).

There was also the Staple Crop Processing Zone (SCPZ). The idea was to exploit the agro-ecological advantages of different sections of the country to leverage on those products in which they were better off than other parts of the nation. The crops embraced by this SCPZ were rice, sorghum, cassava, fisheries, cotton, onions, oil palm, maize, and livestock. A total of 14 locations were selected for the SCPZ. Anchor programmes for horticulture and rice SCPZs were also established. For horticulture, the states were Kano, Benue, and Cross-Rivers. The anchor states for rice were Kebbi, Kano, Niger, Ebonyi, Taraba, and Sokoto. The Ososa local government area in Ogun State was designated as an anchor for cassava.

To enhance agricultural marketing and trade development, there was a focus on key commodities (both crops and livestock) in different agro-ecological zones. The primary concern was to enhance farmers' market penetration, particularly with regard to the international market. To achieve this objective, high-quality and relevant information about international market conditions was made available to farmers so as to make them globally competitive.

Additionally, modern agricultural knowledge and innovation was also supplied to farmers under the ATA. The reintroduction of selected commodity marketing corporations and the Cocoa Marketing Corporation was relevant.

There was also a youth component of the ATA which was activated with President Jonathan's launch of the Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP) in December 2014. The five-year programme was to tackle the problem of rural unemployment in the context of agricultural value chains. Planned to create a total of 758,500 jobs for youth in five years, the programme was expected ultimately to create food security, promote commercial agriculture, and assist in the diversification of the Nigerian economy.

The youths were categorised into two classes; the Nagropreneurs, made up of youths aged 18–35 and the market-oriented Producers, made up of those aged 35 and above. While the Nagroprenuers needed to be graduates of tertiary institutions who may or may not have studied agriculture, they had to also be interested in agribusiness. On the other hand, education was not compulsory for the market-oriented Producer category. What is important for the latter was an interest in agriculture. The two groups were trained in value chains focused on sheep and goat production, poultry, aquaculture, bull fattening, rice, soya beans, wielding and fabrication, repair and maintenance of agricultural equipment, footwear and leather goods manufacturing, the production and processing of cassava, bee-keeping and honey production, horticulture, snail-keeping,

oil palm, wheat, sorghum, maize, and agricultural extension services. As an empowerment programme, credit facilities were given to the trained youths through commercial banks to start their own businesses. Trainees were to be the catalysts of the commercial agriculture revolution in Nigeria.

The Jonathan administration under its ATA programme offered and provided generous incentives to private investors, particularly foreign agricultural investors. These incentives included the removal of restrictions on areas of investment and maximum equity ownership in investment by foreign investors; the free transfer of capital, profits, and dividends; constitutional guarantees against nationalisation/expropriation of investments; zero per cent duty on agricultural machinery and equipment imports; pioneer tax holidays for agricultural investments; and duty waivers and other industry-related incentives, e.g. based on the use of local raw materials, export orientation, etc.

These incentives, which were far-reaching, showed desperation. It amounted to a blank cheque for exploitation by foreign capital. The attraction of the incentives led to an avalanche of private interest in Nigeria's agricultural commercialisation programme. Locally, Terago, Dansa Foods, Dangote, etc. invested heavily in agricultural commercialisation. For instance, while Terago established a US$6 million plant to produce concentrate from oranges, Dansa Foods invested US$35 million and US$45 million in tomato processing and pineapple plantation processing plants respectively.

The backgrounds of President Jonathan and Agriculture Minister, Dr Adesina, as well as the political capital to be harvested in the 2015 general elections, no doubt influenced in no small measure the commendable efforts made under the Jonathan ATA to unleash the agricultural potentials of Nigeria, in a way that was inclusive and beneficial to both the smallholder farmers and large-scale commercial farmers. According to Olomola and Nwafor (2018), the ATA through the value chain initiative made remarkable achievements in terms of the distribution of inputs to farmers.

However, given the orientation and ideology that drove the ATA, the administration's economic agenda, with its reliance on market imperatives, and the powerful international social forces pushing for greater market regime and openness, overall, the ATA programme largely favoured large-scale farmers. For instance, smallholder farmers were highly disadvantaged in terms of access to agricultural credits. The slowness experienced in the marketing transformation under the ATA was also a major disadvantage to smallholder farmers who were disadvantaged in terms of information asymmetry, education, research, and information and communications technology (ICT) capacity, as well as penetration of the foreign market.

9.4 The Muhammadu Buhari Administration

Like President Olusegun Obasanjo, President Muhammadu Buhari was a former military Head of State. He retired to a life of farming cattle, though not on a scale compared to President Obasanjo. Buhari, who came to power on an opposition coalition platform, is a cult-like figure in the northern part of the country, where agriculture is the dominant occupation. Reviving agriculture is a major component of President Buhari's party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) manifesto for the 2015 general elections.

9.4.1 The Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP)

The Buhari administration launched an Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) mid-year 2016. The APP, which builds on the ATA of President Jonathan's administration is aimed at creating employment, ensuring food security, eliminating poverty, and repositioning the nation's economy. APP's strategic thrust is aimed at increased productivity, the promotion of private sector investment, and strengthening institutions, as a basis for better service delivery and development (Olomola and Nwafor 2018).

9.4.2 The Presidential Fertiliser Initiative (PFI)

This programme was informed by the need to stop the importation of fertiliser and make use of the large supply of the locally available urea and limestone which formed 65 per cent of the raw materials required for fertiliser production. The PFI was based on the agreement in December 2016 between Nigeria, the Fertiliser Producers and Suppliers Association of Nigeria (FEPAN), and Morocco to supply Nigeria with phosphate. With funds provided by the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA), by 2017, 12 out of the 28 abandoned fertiliser plants became operational again (Olomola and Nwafor 2018). This initiative led to a drastic reduction in the cost of fertiliser. While a 50kg bag of fertiliser sold for N14,000 in 2016, it cost farmers N5,500 for a bag of NPK fertiliser as a result of the reactivated plants (Olomola and Nwafor 2018).

Agricultural Credits Initiatives: the Buhari administration introduced the Anchor Borrowers Programme, the Commercial Agricultural Credit Scheme (CACS), and launched the Nigerian Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) as

intervention funding for agriculture. The interest rates for these schemes are single digit. Despite the nation's economic recession, with a growth rate of 4.54 per cent, agriculture posted the best performance in 2016 (Opurum 2018).

Determined efforts were made to end rice importation by 2018. To this end, over 33,000ha of irrigation projects were completed. This had the effect of ensuring an increased supply of water for agriculture in places such as 'Ada, in Enugu State, lower Anambra in Anambra State and Gari, in Jigawa State' (Opurum 2018: 1).

9.4.3 The Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP)

The ABP was launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on 17 November 2015 as a way of providing credits for farmers. The objectives of the ABP are: a) to provide non-collateral loans with single-digit interest for SHFs; b) to increase agricultural productivity; c) the supply of feedstock to agricultural processors; d) to reduce Nigeria's food-import dependence; e) to conserve foreign exchange expended on the imports of food that can be produced locally; f) to provide access to markets for SHFs; and g) to provide training on good agricultural practices (GAPs) for SHFs.

The ABP is both a supply- and demand-based agricultural solution. First, the ABP was designed to solve the supply and capacity utilisation problems of anchor companies. It ensures that anchor companies whose operations were hitherto constrained by inadequate farm inputs are connected to SHFs. Second, it seeks to resolve the demand problem of SHFs who paradoxically have the problem of disposing of their agricultural commodities. With SHFs demand resolved, the ABP has increased the productivity of SHFs.

The Nigeria Bank of Agriculture was capitalised to provide credit for farmers. The ABP is based on a tripod institutional arrangement. The CBN, NIRSAL, and state governments constitute the anchor institutions powering the ABP. While the primary funding is provided by the CBN, with the NIRSAL as its fund administration and management organ, the state governments have the responsibility to provide extension services to the SHFs. There are three different participating institutions involved in the ABP: deposit banks, development banks, and microfinance banks. To be eligible for the loan, farmers are organised into farmers' cooperatives of between five and 20 members.

A broad spectrum of agricultural products such as rice, wheat, cotton, cassava, sesame, maize, soya beans, beans, groundnuts, fisheries, poultry, sorghum, palm oil, tomatoes, etc., was covered by the ABP. Fertiliser, farm equipment, seedlings, extension services, finance, insecticides, and herbicides are some of the agricultural inputs provided to SHFs under the ABP.

There is an agreement between the anchors; that is, the agro-processors and the SHFs, to accept the harvested products of the latter. While the terms of the agreement make it imperative for anchors to take all the produce of the SHFs, it is also mandatory for the SHFs to deliver their produce exclusively to the anchors. Thus, when SHFs harvest their agricultural commodities, they have guaranteed buyers; that is, the agro-processors, to whom they supply their produce. The anchors; that is, the producers, pay directly into the accounts of the SHFs, with no financial intermediaries, the monetary value of the supplied commodities. This way, the credits given to the farmers are recovered without stress.

Godwin Emefiele, Governor of the CBN, claimed that as at October 2018, some 2.5 million jobs have been created thorough the ABP, with a total of 862,069 farmers cultivating 835,239ha involving 16 agricultural commodities (Famuyiwa 2018). However, there have been reports that these claims of successful outcomes might be exaggerated as the programme is not without its own problems. Some of the identified problems are: late disbursement of funds and inputs, with negative implications for planting and harvesting; the supply of expired seedlings; limited farmer understanding of the workings of the programme, such that SHFs expect that the total loan will be disbursed to them in cash, as against some components as inputs; loans not being paid directly to the bank as planned but handed over to SHFs; sometimes the loans get to the SHFs after planting has ended, as was the case in Kaduna State; use of the ABP for political patronage with non-farmers benefiting; and inability to ensure the repayment of the loans given to the farmers (Admin 2018; Ibekwe 2018).

In a Special Report on the ABP for *Premium Times*, a newspaper known for its investigative journalism, Ibekwe (2018) quoted Segun Atho, the deputy national president of the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN), thus:

> Farmers collected loans and they thought it was national cake being distributed to them. There were some local government chairmen in the north that told them that they shouldn't bother themselves to pay the money because when they visited their farms, there wasn't anything to show for the money they got.

What cannot be denied, however, is that the ABP is a bold effort to empower SHFs by bridging their credit and funding gaps, in order to increase agricultural

productivity and reduce the nation's food dependency, as well as reducing foreign exchange wastages on food imports easily produced locally.

10 CONCLUSION

We have interrogated the trajectory of agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria with particular focus on 1999 to date. Underscored are issues and implications of the post-colonial state governability, the attendant political narratives and actors that shape agricultural commercialisation in Nigeria, and not least, the different interests and incentives that drive agricultural commercialisation pathways in the country.

Historically, agriculture has played an important role in capital accumulation in Nigeria starting from colonial times. In the years immediately after Nigeria's independence, agriculture continued to be the fulcrum of the Nigerian economy through the accumulation of peasant surplus using the marketing boards in the regions. This was to change with the oil boom of the early 1970s and the successive military regimes that took over political power in January 1965. With the political economy of oil, Nigeria became awash with gigantic rents which stifled productive accumulation. Having in power military administrations who were not trained to rule, and not accountable or responsible to Nigerians through elections, the oil windfall negatively impacted on governance. The administrative inadequacies and deficiencies of the military created room for bureaucrats to play a central and indispensable role in governance. The military depended heavily on bureaucrats for policy formulation and implementation. Some elements of the political class that were overthrown were also accommodated by the military, partly to boost regime legitimacy, and also to benefit from their experience.

Needless to say, the interest of these three (the military, bureaucrats, and the political class) were not necessarily the same. However, as members of the domestic dominant class in Nigeria, none of them were in control of the nation's economy which was still heavily under the control of foreign capital as a dependent neo-colonial economy. For this reason, the military, bureaucrats, and politicians in and out of direct control of the machinery of the Nigerian state, relied on the state for survival and as a means of production. Thus, there is a sense in which the line separating the public and private realms was blurred and almost indistinguishable.

The Nigerian post-colonial state is a continuation of the colonial state and imbued with the same extractive orientations, highly dependent, and under the indirect control of foreign capital. It was largely alienated from the people whose loyalty to the nation is tenuous. In fact, loyalty to primordial constituencies takes precedence over their loyalty to the state. The state is not only dysfunctional, it exploits Nigerians just as Nigerians seek and use every available opportunity to take advantage of the state for individual and group advantage. Thus, the military, bureaucrats, and politicians were joined by other segments of Nigerian society in the unproductive feast that the oil boom unleashed on Nigeria.

Thus, agriculture in Nigeria was supplanted as the dominant source of capital accumulation. For the majority of Nigerians outside the enclave of the oil economy, the choices open to them were to seek state employment or contracts as a basis of getting a share of the oil rent through both legal and illegal means. Corruption through different means has been a major mechanism of accumulation to achieve this objective by these groups of Nigerians. Either way, this impacted negatively on agriculture since it entails migration from the rural economy to the urban centres. The result was the neglect of agriculture and decreasing rural productivity.

For those who chose to remain in the rural areas and continue with the age-old agricultural occupation, they were left without or with inadequate government supports and had to contend with low productivity, lack of good roads, poor seedlings, pest and diseases, illiteracy, lack of access to the market, and poverty. This was despite government propaganda as to its commitment to agricultural development, improving the lot of the smallholder farmers, and promoting national food security.

Though smallholder farmers have consistently been the driver of agricultural production in Nigeria, the popular narrative of their backwardness and low productivity, and the challenge of increased agricultural production and productivity, the need to diversify the Nigerian economy and earn more foreign exchange has made agricultural commercialisation imperative. This orientation which started during colonial rule and jettisoned as a result of the oil boom in the 1970s resumed as a result of the nation's economic crisis exemplified

by food crisis, unemployment and under-employment, trade imbalance, foreign debt, and paucity of foreign exchange to pay for imports. All the administrations in Nigeria since the return to civil rule on 29th May 1999 have embraced agricultural commercialisation for the same reasons.

Events around the globe in recent years – climate change, and food and energy crises, particularly in Europe, America, and Asia – have shifted global focus to Africa as a source of agricultural raw materials and mineral resources. This has led to the increasing demand for agricultural land for agricultural commercialisation all over Africa, as well as a new scramble for Africa. With the support of the World Bank, powerful transnational corporations, Western epistemic networks and policy centres, and powerful non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the global North, hegemonic discourse encapsulated in narratives supportive of agricultural commercialisation has become dominant in Nigeria's policy and governance system, in line with the ideology of neoliberalism.

The post-colonial state within which the foregoing is taking place is weak and under the direct control of a non-hegemonic domestic dominant class which is beholden to transnational capital and a transnational class. Given the weak material base of this class, as well as the limited autonomy of the domestic Nigerian post-colonial state, the prospects of primitive capital accumulation through agricultural commercialisation is an incentive for political actors. The proceeds of primitive accumulation for agricultural commercialisation, as well as the political capital coming from the limited supplies of inputs such as fertiliser, seeds, and credits to smallholder farmers serves the political interests of those in control of state power. This way, the narrative encapsulated by the agenda of using agricultural commercialisation to end rural poverty and unemployment, as well as a basis for wealth creation and transforming the smallholder farmers into commercial farmers, has not been achieved.

The opportunity for primitive capital accumulation through agricultural commercialisation, the availability of large fertile agricultural land which is wrestled from smallholders using state power, subsidised credits, and other favourable incentives have increasingly predisposed the various administrations to that model of agricultural commercialisation which disadvantages smallholder farmers. This is particularly so, given the coincident of interests with those of the transnational class in that regard.

The need for a radical change in Nigeria's agriculture orientation in general and agricultural commercialisation in particular, and how these two affect smallholder farmers who remain the backbone of the nation's agriculture cannot be over-emphasised. All attempts to impact on the nation's agriculture through agricultural commercialisation has been hindered due to the dysfunctional nature of the Nigerian post-colonial state and its deployment as a mechanism for parasitic and primitive accumulation by the nation's dominant class.

The increasing preference to favour foreign capital interests at the expense of smallholder farmers in the implementation of the nation's agricultural commercialisation programme deserves urgent attention. A conscious policy thrust rooted and oriented to the advancement of smallholder farmers should be pursued in the national interest. This calls for a creative interrogation of received knowledge from outside as a basis of design and implementation of the nation's agricultural commercialisation policy. Experience from the implementation of the SAP has shown that uncritical adoption of a foreign policy recipe is capable of wreaking untold and irreparable damages on a nation's economic policy.

No one-size-fits-all policy in the area of agricultural commercialisation should be tenable. Rather, policy should be adopted with the specificity of the Nigerian condition and with the smallholder farmers in focus. Nigeria's agricultural commercialisation policy must therefore protect smallholder farmers against the forces of globalisation exemplified by aggressive drives for profit at all cost, and accumulation by dispossession that presently drives the nation's agricultural commercialisation. The need to strengthen state institutions as a basis of tackling corruption generally and the use of agricultural commercialisation programmes for primitive capital accumulation by politicians and bureaucrats must be accorded serious importance.

As it stands presently, smallholder farmers are the losers in Nigeria's agricultural commercialisation programme. Reversing this trend requires deliberate actions, given the continued importance of agriculture and smallholder farmers to the nation's political economy and economic viability. Therefore, Nigeria needs to shift its focus from the orientation to agro-business to the traditional focus of agricultural development. To strengthen agricultural production and the contribution of smallholders, there is need for effort to provide access to the market to enhance the agricultural value chain. The practice of land-grab and failure to compensate smallholders whose land is taken over for agricultural commercialisation without compensation should end. Giving agricultural supports to smallholder farmers in the form of credits, inputs, extension services, market access, and infrastructure are not favours to the smallholder farmers.

Agriculture must be valued in itself, rather than being an escape and coping strategy for managing economic crisis and primitive accumulation. Deliberate efforts should be made to ensure that agricultural commercialisation promotes capital accumulation, rather than the present scenario of primitive accumulation. This will not be possible if state actors are not interested in productive accumulation and ready to forego the old ways of leveraging on the state as a means of production.

Finally, as stated earlier, the agricultural commercialisation policy in Nigeria, despite claims to the contrary, is not driven by the interest of smallholder farmers who are indispensable in the nation's agricultural pathways. One way of doing this is to put the people at the heart of the nation's development and democracy. This will only be possible through the democratisation of not just politics but of development. For this to happen, elections must go beyond rituals of electoralism under which the people are disempowered through fraudulent elections. The people's votes must count and they must be the ultimate giver of governance mandates to political incumbents. This way, both democracy and development will be oriented towards mass empowerment, while agricultural commercialisation programmes will work for the smallholder farmers, create wealth, generate employment, empower the people, and guarantee food security, as against the gluttonous accumulative appetite of the few within and without the nation's borders.

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Citation is: Odukoya, A. (2020) *Political Economy of Agricultural Commercialisation in Nigeria* APRA working paper 29, Future Agricultures Consortium.

ISBN: 978-1-78118-619-0

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The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme is a five-year research consortium. APRA is funded with UK aid from the UK government and will run from 2016-2021.

The programme is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK (www.ids.ac.uk), with regional hubs at the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), Kenya, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa, and the University of Ghana, Legon. It builds on more than a decade of research and policy engagement work by the Future Agricultures Consortium (www.future-agricultures.org) and involves new partners at Lund University, Sweden, and Michigan State University and Tufts University, USA.

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