

# Public Bureaucracy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Identifying the Normative Challenges and the Way Forward

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## Abstract

Sustainable development and sustainability in Nigeria still remain a project far-fetched. Structural disarticulation of public bureaucracy role in sustainable development vitiates the Nigerian project. Sustainable development and sustainability are all encompassing. Within the framework of statism and over-developed state theories, an eclectic approach, the article examined the role of public bureaucracy in sustainable development and sustainability. To address the issues raised, the article utilized qualitative research approach to gain an insight into the nature and character of the Nigerian state towards sustainable development and sustainability. Subsequently, relevant sources of this research were fairly and professionally scrutinised, understood and tested with the available literature for the purpose of the research. Inter alia, it included scan-reading, comprehensive and critical reading and writing down ideas. Authoritative scholarly sources were reviewed, during a desktop study. This article argues that Nigeria is yet to understand the central concerns of sustainable development. Although, development is an ongoing project, marginal improvement being recorded in various areas of the society need to be sustained and consolidated upon over time. For Nigeria to entrench sustainable development and sustainability, government has to champion development, while corruption in both public and private sectors of the economy needs to be cured. The bureaucracy is the channel through which all these ideas and activities can be coordinated and delivered in Nigeria efficiently and effectively.

**Keywords:** Accountability, development, civil service, service delivery, sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Government everywhere in the world has a universal goal which is, to promote the welfare and well-being of the people under its jurisdiction and control. It aims at ensuring the realization of the full potential of the people under its jurisdiction through the judicious use of resources at its disposal – human and material to create a united, strong, stable, peaceful and prosperous nation. One sure way of achieving these goals is by consciously promoting socio-economic and politico-cultural sustainable development and sustainability in the polity. Theoretically while these values are easy to articulate, operationally, they are more complex and difficult to attain due to several intervening variables. According to these include<sup>[1]</sup>: the level of a country's political culture, resource endowment and utilization, the quality and quantity of human resources, the degree of political stability or instability. In recognition of these challenges, nation – state put together institutions made up of men and woman with special skills and experiences to manage groups demands for the peace, order and good governance of the society.

The special skills and experiences they have or trained to possess, equip these group of people for the present and future challenges in the domestic and international settings that they interact <sup>[2]</sup>. Given the enormity of the task before it, the civil service as an institution, is constantly expose to

new ideas, trends and methods of tackling varied tasks and challenges besetting the modern state. The degree to which the public bureaucracy can handle and address these concerns will go a long way in determining the level of national development and its sustainability in a given country. Viewed from this perspective, sustainable development will represent the totality of changes going on in the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of the society. After many decades of development administration in most African countries, the score card on sustainable development remains not plausible. What accounts for this trend? What is the nature of the challenge? Can they be managed for the realization of sustainable development within the purview of good governance? These and other questions, this article seeks to address.

To address the issues raised, this article is divided into seven parts. Aside introduction, the first part explores the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings. The second examines the interface between sustainable development and public bureaucracy in Africa. The third x-rayed the role of bureaucrats in sustainable development and sustainability. The fourth provides an overview of bureaucracy and national development in Nigeria. The fifth x-rayed the normative obstacles to bureaucratic roles in sustainable development, while the sixth makes prescriptions for resolving the identified problems.

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## 2. Methodology

This study, which is the oretical in the nature, drew its arguments mostly from secondary data, which included, textbooks, journal publications and internet sources. Subsequently, relevant sources of this research were fairly and professionally scrutinised, understood and tested with the available literature for the purpose of the research. Inter alia, it included scan-reading, comprehensive and critical reading and writing down ideas. Authoritative scholarly sources were reviewed, during a desktop study. The purpose was to identify the relevant publications and apply them in the research.

## 3. Conceptual and Theoretical Insights

In an enterprise of this nature, in order to avoid a ambiguity in interpretation of certain terms, conceptual and theoretical analyses are embarked upon to clarify, illustrate and provide a road map for navigating the contour of social phenomena. [3] In this section of the article, we shall attempt to effectuate this endeavor. This brings us to the vexed issue of sustainable development and sustainability. However, before moving forward, it is imperative to understand the concept of development. The term development has endured conceptual and methodological shift over the years. In the 70s, development was associated with issues of growth in the economy, rise in per capita income and increase in Gross Domestic Products (GDP). Todaro [4] provides a parameter for interrogating the question of development. For Todaro in [5,6], development entails: life sustenance in the area of providing food, shelter, health and protection; achievement of self-esteem through provision of those things that can generate respect for and from others; for example, wealth and technological development; and attainment of freedom through emancipation from material and intellectual poverty, social servitude, ignorance, dogmatic belief etc.

Flowing from the above, development should be look at holistically to bring to the fore its multifaceted (sustainability) nature. It does mean that development should be sustainable. Sustainable development can therefore be seen a process of empowering the people to continually bring about a state of being where each stage is progressively better than the previous ones, using their cultural values as a platform for these changes in an environmentally sustainable manner without damaging the future generation. [7,8] This all-encompassing and eclectic view of sustainable development, however, brings to the fore the centrality of the people as the basis of sustainable development goals and objectives.

This is in line with Gboyega's [9] view on sustainable development as "an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. Such improvement includes: material well-being of all citizens not a privileged few in the society.

In the same vein, Naomi [10] argued that sustainable development involves not only economic growth but some notion of equitable distribution of health care amenities and services, education, housing and other essential services, with a view to promoting individual and collective equity of human life. Indeed, these definitions show that sustainable development and sustainability is not a one stop gap thing but a continuous and painstaking process whose end is life abundance for the people. However, James, Igbokwe-Ibeto, the Chrisman [10,11,12] takes a multi-sectoral approach to the concept

of development when (2018), Igbokwe-Ibeto, the Chrisman takes a multi-sectoral approach to the concept of development when they avers that development is a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of the people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is clear from the foregoing that development is not just an economic exercise but a process that encompasses socio-economic and politico-cultural issues that pervade all aspects of societal life. Certainly, for development to fully realize its impacts on the citizenry, it needs to be sustained. In the context of developing countries, sustainable development must be examined in relation to resource endowments in order to facilitate systematic development without disruption of social, economic and ecological systems. [13] Lele defines sustainable development as: [14] A new way of life and approach to social and economic activities for all societies, rich and poor which is compatible with the preservation of the environment. It suggests to us that the pursuit of the goals of development should not leave the environment in a state it cannot renew and recreate itself for the present and future generations. Therefore, sustainable development and sustainability can be seen as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This role refers directly to socio-economic policies and activities which take place in the course of development but have deleterious effects and endangers global environmental security. These actions and activities according to World Commission on Environment and Development (NCED) [15] should be well managed so that finite and non-finite resources can be used for both present and future generations. Sustainable development as a composite process entails socio-economic, political and cultural advancement of a country or nation. Every nation from time to time has its development agenda that it consciously pursues with both human and material resources at its disposal. Sustainable national development is best achieved through development planning that usually encompasses the development strategies to be deployed for the purpose of development.

## 4 The Nexus between Sustainable Development and Public Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy as an indispensable outcome of modern organizations is perhaps the most significant instrument for achieving efficiency and effective control in large organizations. Even when it has been described in pejorative terms, it remains an invaluable instrument for organizing workplace activities to optimally achieve organizational goals. Weber [16] catalogued the referents of the bureaucratic administrative mode thus:

The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of materials and personnel costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration. These anticipated outcomes of bureaucratic organizations have endeared it to many devotees of organizational efficiency and effectiveness even when the much-vaunted technical superiority over other models of organization have not been substantially domesticated in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Yet, as key institution of modern government particularly the executive arm, it remains an invaluable instrument for the pursuit of the goals of sustainable development. The pursuit of the goals of sustainable development was declared the primary objectives of development administration in new States in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the post independent years. Fred Riggs describes development administration as “organized efforts to carry out programmes or projects thought by those involved to serve development objectives” .<sup>[17]</sup>

This coheres with what the United Nations in the 1970s identified as the mandate of public administration<sup>[18]</sup> in developing countries to include: managing an accelerated process of change in public administration systems from the traditional trial and error to the effective use of modern management techniques and approaches.

No two organizations do the same thing continually and expects different results. Definitely, public administration must keep abreast with the latest management techniques and best practices across the globe. But this certainly depends on the level of development in a given country and the attitude of public servants in particular and the people in general. Both factors combine to determine the level of development in a country at any given point in time.

Two theoretical platforms may prove heuristic for our analysis here. These are the theories of statism and over-developed state. the former came against the backdrop of the imperative need to fast-track the process of development in new states following years of socio-economic and political underdevelopment under colonial rule. As Igbokwe-Ibeto, Nwobi and Nnaji Repley<sup>[19]</sup> has argued, “colonialism left behind immature capitalist classes. Where capitalist existed, their members were usually limited, and they most often confined their activities to trade and services”. Essentially, the productive sector was neglected. In the third world, to speed up industrialization, state intervention followed the path of “Legislation to nurture emerging industries and to create public ones where the private sector had failed to do so”. In the absence of a capitalist bourgeois class that can jump-start private sector driven industrialization, the state stepped in by mobilizing foreign and state resources drawn mainly from sale of agricultural export crops.<sup>[2]</sup> The strategy adopted was Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). This strategy did not really pay off rather it led to a state that was wasteful, by throwing a lot of money around that could not be managed properly. It created market for foreign capital while Africa economies became a dumping ground for all kinds of goods and services stifled local production. Consequently, unemployment for the local population.

The theory of the over-developed state took its theoretical stand point from the position that the European nation – state arose from the development of capitalism that had its root in civil society. Therefore, it is natural that is connected to the society from where it came from. However, the states created by imperialism in Africa were different from that of their parent state in Europe because they were imposed on the society thereby, have no relation with it. For these theorists, at the point of independence, “the new ruling elites took over a state that was over-developed, suspended above society, and separated from it.”<sup>[1]</sup>

In order to control the “captured” people, the imperialist endowed the emergent state with strong civil and military bureaucratic apparatuses. This structure and elite formation have their base in faraway land making them estranged from

the society they serve. This probably explains why they are hardly responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people. However, the theory of the over-developed state is not flawless. The theory overlooks the fact that there are always class conflicts arising from interests pushing for better bargain and share of state power and resources. Civil society in Nigeria has to be very strong to control the totalizing tendencies of an over-developed state. Civil society should not draw away from the state but rather penetrate it. The question to be answered is how can a strong society produce a strong rather than a weak state? The answer may be found in interest group politics. To this we shall return shortly.

## 5.The Role of Bureaucrats in Sustainable Development

What do the generality of Nigerians want in foreseeable future? The answer must surely be that we seek to enthrone the welfare of the individuals through providing better educational facilities, housing, health facilities, more jobs and a rising standard of living for the people as a whole.<sup>[20]</sup>

These are very good wishes which one paper sound plausible and easy to articulate, but difficult, operationally to actualize. For as the popular dictum put it, if wishes were horses’ beggars would ride. This and many provisions of its kind in the Nigerian Constitution would remain mere principles if they are not activated and doggedly pursued by the state and its agencies. It is therefore, in pursuance of these goals that special crop of individuals are brought together in the executive branch of government, called the civil service or civil bureaucracy. The ideal type bureaucracy as articulated by Max Weber is made up of a body of more or less permanently appointed or selected not elected skilled personnel, whose remuneration are paid out of the public purse. It is designed to accomplish large scale administrative task of the government by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals.<sup>[1]</sup>

Weberian model of bureaucracy and its operational dynamics, migrated from Western Europe where it was conceived and grafted into African socio-cultural milieu without adaptation. Civil servants are appointed and trained to work within this administrative set up. The institution and doctrines that came with it are in dissonance with the African cultural values.<sup>[3]</sup> Yet, higher civil servants are considered equipped to lead the process of transformation of new state and emerging democracies. Indeed, bureaucracy is an important ingredient that influences all kinds of transformation in the socio-economic or political life in developing countries.<sup>[3]</sup> This point is persuasively made by Lapahombora (1967) thus: The time is evidently past when public officials are expected to sit on the developmental side lines, limiting their roles to the fixing of general rules and to providing certain basic services and incentives for those private entrepreneurs who are the major players in the complicated and existing game of fashioning profound changes in economic and social systems. Undoubtedly, bureaucracy’s roles have transcended the traditional law and order duties to that of intervening concretely in the socio-economic and political life of the citizenry. This becomes apt because it is being increasingly called upon to tackle a myriad of problems confronting society: from collection of taxes, to

flood and disaster management. Indicators points to the fact that more of these roles will fall into the purview of the bureaucracy as the population in developing countries continue to grow with its attendant challenges to the state and government. <sup>[2]</sup>

In pursuance of transformation goals, the bureaucracy has attracted many interests because of the leadership role it plays in the transformation of new states and developing areas of the world. It is said to have great capacity relative to other groups in the society, to engineer and fast track growth in line with the aspirations of the people in this part of the world. <sup>[21]</sup> This capacity is assumed to derive from its organizational characteristics and descriptive attitudinal dispositions of bureaucratic institutions. This include: “an abundant supply of technical skills; a capacity for large scale management; a disposition to accept and try new ideas; a time sense that makes management more interested in the present and future than in the past; better sense of punctuality; a great concern for planning; and organization and a tendency to see the world as a calculable.

A faith in science and technology and a belief in distributive justice as the ultimate goal of the state”. <sup>[22]</sup> Flowing from the above, bureaucrats are seen as being in a vantage position to fast-track national development for the common good. How can they do this? In several ways – in the course of time these roles are expanding by the day due to expansion in the scope of its activities. Some of the roles bureaucrats or higher civil servants play in developing countries include but not limited to: mobilizing the people for central roles in socio-economic and political transformation. This becomes necessary after the departure of the colonialist who restricted the people’s participation in the colonial administrative system. In this regard, France was better because of its policy of assimilation and later association. But the British indirect rule system was limited to some areas, even then it was aimed at partrimonialism than of genuine efforts at participatory governance.

Also, bureaucrats harvest and harness the vast professional, technical and entrepreneurial resources available in a state in line with its commitment to social change. In many ex-dependencies, these resources were very few relative to the demand for them. This made the take off stage of their development complex and problematic. Where they were available, their capacities were low thereby serving as disservice to the course of rapid development that was required at the point in time. The civil service therefore, has to take these challenges head on.

It was also an ideological commitment to bring about development, be it at the level of welfarism or mixed economy model of development. The goal is to accelerate the process of growth and development in all facets of societal life. And the bureaucracy has this onerous obligation to achieve this task. In the pursuit of this goal, the collective and or sectional interests of the members of the civil service is to cohere with or indistinguishable from those of the Nigerian State. This is intended to put the national interest in the fore-front of state activities and actions. Developing countries have a lot of social overhead capital that requires the full application of political and bureaucratic capacities to handle and surmount. Increasingly, bureaucrats are being called upon to handle these challenges. Without such public participation, other plans for social change in social or economic structure may not be achieved. Till date, the private sector in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular remains nascent and, in many cases, relies on the public sector to carry out its business

and other activities. This leaves the public sector powered by the civil service as the dominant player in the transformation agenda of African states. Therefore, it is clear from the foregoing analysis that public bureaucracies in developing countries are not only involved in rule application together with other “output” functions, to use the words of Gabriel Almond but likewise those of the “input” variant such as interest articulation and aggregation. For these and other functions bureaucracies play, one can summarize that they have enormous influence over the direction of development in developing countries. With specific example of Nigeria, what is the nature of sustainable development under the leadership of public bureaucracy? To this, we shall focus attention in the section that follows.

## 6. Public Bureaucracy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: An Overview

The focal point in any analysis on sustainable development is the economy. Countries with strong economies, have a stable political administrative system. This is why countries would strive hard to build a strong and virile economy. Most developing countries started their developmental processes as primary produce-based economy. They produced for exports, mineral and agricultural products such as: coal, tin, diamond, copper, gold and uranium. On the one hand and cocoa, rubber, palm produce and groundnut on the other. These goods were exported in their raw or semi-processed form in exchanged for capital goods from Europe and North America such as: Cars, trucks, aircrafts, tractors, etc. For many years, third world countries remained at their level of economic development because they were made to understand that they had comparative advantage over the West countries in the production of raw materials for industries in Europe while the East has advantage in the production of capital goods. <sup>[3,4]</sup> To a large extent, this structure of the world economy has continued to the present day with Africa still largely underdeveloped.

In Nigeria, agriculture was for many years the main stay of the country’s rural economy accounting at a point for over 70percent of its foreign exchange earnings, created job for over 65percent of the population, provided sources of raw materials for its flagging industries and food for the growing population of men, women and children. The enterprise of agriculture was aggressively pursued to the extent that each region in the country specialized in the production of at least one cash crop for which it became known worldwide. At this level of development, the people were able to meet their needs and government was able to discharge its responsibilities.

However, the economic structure in the country changed with the discovery and exploitation of oil in commercial quantity, first in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa State in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Presently, oil accounts for over 90percent of the country’ foreign exchange earnings. Oil, one would expect should serve the country well, that is, kick start her industrialization and eventually join the league of economic giants in the world. But then, the civil war that erupted was not unconnected with the struggle to control the source of oil that is to dominate the economy. The civil war was fought and won by the Federal government in 1970,

but in the euphoria of the victory, the Federal government failed to tighten its hold on the financial management of the country. Money increasingly lost its value as too many of it was in the hands of political office holders, civil servants, petite bourgeois elements in civil society and their cronies in the corridors of power.

Expectedly, oil became a mix bag of blessings and curses to the nation state. Yet, since independence, oil revenue has been used to drive the process of national and sub-national developments. Development has spread out to different parts of the country, from three regions at independence to thirty-six states today. Oil remains the driving force of the economy. Numerous educational institutions from primary to tertiary levels, have been established even though the quality of their products is doubtful. A lot of roads have been constructed, particularly in the 70s, and more are expected. So also, are health facilities and industries. Communication and technology have brought the people and the world closer in contact and relationship with each other. The present globalization movement has avail everyone the opportunity to leverage on its potentials to make the people and their societies better. But how they take advantage of what it presents would depend on a lot of factors that are sometimes exogenous to them.

Presently, the economy has shown signs of weakness as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic confronting the world economy. Increasingly, the country is attracting foreign direct investment, perhaps we are getting to make the country truly an investment destination to the world business community. The economy is said to be growing at 6.18percent rate per annual with inflation rate put at single digit of 8.2percent. And reports show that it is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Its population put it in a vantage position to attract investments particularly those whose primary motive is to reap profits. Given the challenge posed by growing population: the phenomenon of jobless youths and the shrinking industrial base, has brought the Bank of Industry (BOI) into making efforts to fund small and medium scale enterprises. So far, it has done commendably well though challenges remain very mammoth, given the neglect of the past. But these efforts of the BOI if sustained will go a long way in addressing the unemployment problems in the country.<sup>[23]</sup>

Social development has progressed endogenously with the dignity and pride in the African culture. Authoritarian rule in many African countries diverted the energies of the people from social development. Before long, the people began to lose their sense of social well-being that had kept their rather rudimentary way of life going. There was dignity of labour, love for one another in the spirit of brotherhood propelled by duties and obligations to the community. And in response, the community ensured that the people live in peace, stability and good governance. The globalize era avail the peoples of the world bigger opportunities to leverage their potentials for personal and corporate development.<sup>[24]</sup> The educational system is expected to raise human capital that will bring about social change in the right direction. Health and housing sectors have not gone without government attention. And is commonly argued that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation, human resources need to be healthy to produce the wealth of the nation. Many health institutions have been set up by successive governments, but funding has been an issue couple with the number of available funds vis-a-vis the growing population. Same can be said of the housing sector in the country. While government over the years have addressed their minds to this imperative, their

efforts as in many areas of national life did not and continue not to keep track of the speed in which society is evolving. It ought to be a step ahead of the challenge to overcome it.

Cultural development struggle to maintain its relevance in the face of the onslaught from the West in what has become known as cultural imperialism. Only very few cultures have retained their original form over time. While the Western missionaries particularly the Christian ones, helped in putting a stop to certain barbaric practices in some African societies, they equally propagated their own culture as superior to that of the blacks. This has become tragic for Africans because what is seen today as development has its cultural base in Europe. Also, African governments did realize the need to promote the African culture when in 1977 the Festival of African Arts and Culture (FESTAC) was held in Lagos. It brought African States together to showcase their rich cultural heritage. In Nigeria, there is a national festival of Arts and Culture held rotationally amongst the states. Indeed, Nollywood, the umbrella body for performing Arts in the country is helping to promote African cultural values within and outside the country. The youths in the country have also taken to entertainment: singing and dancing as occupation. Apart from the official ministry of Information and Culture that has responsibility in this area, government at the federal and state levels are sponsoring programmes to promote the country's tourism potentials.

Also, sport has long been seen by the government to be a veritable instrument for national development. To this end, successive governments have pumped and continue to put a lot of money into sport development. This has yielded some dividends with successes the country's contingents have recorded in international sport competitions like the Commonwealth Games, the Olympics and the World Football competitions like the World Cups for male and female footballers. These events have given the country positive image in the international community. Perhaps, these are evets that unite all Nigerians irrespective of language, religion, sex or creed. The country can reap socio-economic and political capital from these sectors if properly managed by sport professionals. The energy and time of most unemployed youths can be channeled into this area for sustainable development.

The country has registered some levels of political development since independence though such development has been a mixed bag. Before proceeding into the nitty-gritty of development in this area, it is propitious to address again, the issue of what political development is all about. Ibeanu (1998) identifies three ways political development can be defined. These are: political development as developments in politics. This perspective recounts events in the country's political history, especially important milestones in the development, for example, the Aba Women Riot or Constitutional changes prior to 1960. At this stage, there was no attempt to present a theory of political development, but attention was more on style of presentation, language used etc. Although, this stage was not characterized by rigorous scientific investigation that could lead to theory building, it nonetheless presents a good starting point for data gathering on certain phenomenon and description of events.<sup>[25]</sup>

The second perspective is defining political development

as the political aspect of “development”. This was the era of the modernization school in social science discourse. Political development is seen as an event to be explained and does not constitute an explanation. To use the words of Ibeanu <sup>[25]</sup>, “it is an explanation of why political systems are ‘backward’ and how they can overcome backwardness and become developed”. Under this development paradigm, classical sociologists explain the movement of society from simple to complex ones, from traditional to modern societies. A second strand in this classical sociology developmentalist paradigm, makes a correlation between society and biological organisms. Social systems like living organisms grow through the interaction or interfacing between their internal form and their environment. <sup>[16]</sup>

Suffices to say that attempt by developmentalist to separate aspects of development as if they have no linkage amongst them, dominate this period. Each of the aspects they identified could not be considered in holistically. The dominant mode of production in society determines its socio-economic formation and other forms of consciousness such as: social and political consciousness. Thus, the present level of political participation in the country is in tathem with the existing mode of production which is governed mostly by primitive accumulation rather than the quest for national development. Political development can therefore, be seen as the role of the state in the quest for development. It involves the use of instrumentalities of state power to further development as a man-centered process. Its central concerns should be to address the elimination of specific contemporary disabilities which the people collectively suffer, that is, all those conditions that alienate (social forces) in the society. <sup>[10]</sup> For these purposes to be realized, political structures and institutions are created in the state realm to produce these goods for man in the society. by virtue of the colonial interregnum, the liberal democratic system of the Anglo-American variant was bequeathed to the colonial creation, called Nigeria. But while it is relatively easy to transform its forms, the cultural and behavioural patterns that makes liberal democracy work is still largely absent from the Nigerian polity. Nigerians have the shadow not the substance of democracy. The country has been practicing multi-party system partly because of the multi-ethnic and sectional nature of the country where tribes and tongues defers. But this political order has been difficult to sustain. The military by reason of its self-imposed puritan and correctivists nature has had course to intervene in political governance, as it were, correct the wrongs of civilian politicians. Yet, before long they became part of the problem of political development rather than solution to it. Thus, the natural evolution of stable political society has often been scuttled by military intervention and military rule. The militarist culture fostered on society by virtue of its intervention in government still remains a major obstacle to democratic rule in the country.

Although military incursion into politics has been condemned, but to its credit, the military’s pan-Nigeria philosophy and ideology have kept the country one in spite, of threats to its corporate existence. How it has done this is another kettle of fish. To this end, a thirty months civil war was fought to keep the nation – state together. Though, the military in government was reluctant to relinquish political power for many years, it was eventually disgraced out of power in 1999, following a hasty transition to civil rule that inaugurated the country’s Fourth Republic. Although, electoral democracy has since endured with six general elections already carried out which is a commendable feat, substantive

democracy still remain far-fetched (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019a, Akhakpe, 2014). With the return to civil rule however, the political space is increasingly being opened creating on its heels various sites of power and contestation of ideas. Unlike what happened in the past, the civil service is gradually returning to its professionalism, as an institution formed to use its creative talents to serve the government in power and the people faithfully.

## 7. Normative Challenges to Bureaucratic Roles in Sustainable Development

Several challenges besetting the course of sustainable development in Nigeria can be identified. In what follows; we shall highlight some of them with a view to finding workable recipes for ameliorating, if not eradicating them.

First, lack of policy continuity. In most the third world countries, public officeholders tend to personalize public offices and policies emanating from them to the extent that when they are no longer in office, the person that comes in jettison what he/she inherited for his/her own. This situation is made worst by the highest rate of turnover of government personnel in what can be regarded as government instability. Second, failure to managed Nigeria’s diversity to bring about sustainable development as other plural societies have succeeded in doing is the bane of sustainable development in Nigeria. It nonetheless presents the country with a major challenge that must be addressed if the country is to join the league of developed countries.

Third, is the incongruence between the ideology of the civil service and the state. Where they are not congruent, as is the case today in Nigeria, good governance of society remains a theoretical possibility. Poor administrative capacity in the civil society to pursue the goals of development administration and administration of development has affected sustainable development in the country (James, 2018, Riggs, 1974). Perhaps, this may not be unconnected with the wrong developmental paradigm that was foisted on and applied by the state and its various agencies since independence. Development paradigms such as: modernization, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and globalization have not helped the course of development in Africa. If the African continent has struggled, many years after political independence, it is because its natural course of development was halted by the transitional conjuncture of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. The implications of all these for sustainable development in the South-South is rather imagined than described.

Fourth, economic crisis has been endemic in the country. The country’s developmental challenges have tended always to be above its developmental roles. While citizens’ demand will continue to increase, the economy should be ahead of them. Economic crisis weakens the ability of government to meet the short- and medium-term needs of social groups in the society. The power elite has not been able to revolutionalize the mode and relation of production to be able to bring about a stable polity where it can pursue both its interest’s and those of the larger society.

Fifth, the devaluation of the peoples’ cultural values for Western culture and behaviour have robbed the people of their natural basis for sustainable development. Every

country has its own culture that encapsulates the virtue it needs to create and innovate in the environment it finds itself. European development pattern is a product of its culture and environment. That is why; it is easy to replicate its developmental patterns with high degree successes. Six, poor political culture does not allow for system maintenance and political order. When a polity is unstable, it affects other sectors of the society and make the pursuit of sustainable development difficult. What has become dominant in the Fourth Republic is politics of impunity under which politics remain "Hobbesian" and zero-sum. This culture of violence and intolerance is exacerbated by long years of military rule with its lasting legacies of militarism and militarization. Even top civil servants share a lot in common with the military bureaucracy such as: command and obey, hierarchical ordering, pursuit of corporate interests, to mention but a few.

### **8. Public Bureaucracy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Way Forward**

On the prima facie basis, factors enumerated above would appear enormous, complex and insurmountable. Yet, they are resolvable. With concerted efforts, careful planning and dedication to the course of national development, what look like an ugly situation can be turned around for the good of all. These problems were not created in a day, so it would take what I may refer to as the three Ps: Patient, Persistence and Perseverance to over-come. What are the remedial steps that could be taken? Some of them are discussed below.

To begin with, the corporate interest of the public bureaucracy should be made to align with that of the larger society or common good. Inasmuch as they do not align, civil servants can hardly use their creative talent and abilities for the benefit of the common good. As Olugbemiin puts it: "the thesis is submitted that insofar as the interests of the Nigerian state are distinguishable from the collective and/or sectional interests of the members of the civil service, Nigeria's higher civil servants will exploit its roles to further and protect its corporate interests". In such circumstance, sustainable development will always suffer immeasurably.

Also, there is need for social planners and developmental experts to look inwards for indigenous strategies for sustainable development rather than borrowed precepts and concepts from Europe. As Balogun (1981) has rightly observed: "it is fatal mistake to expect management problems in one country to be effectively tackled by concepts and techniques developed in a completely different setting. Most of the concepts and policies we use in tackling national problems are not suitable for the environment they are applied. In addition, the problem of administrative capacity should be quickly addressed if government will continue to spearhead the quest for sustainable development. Given the nature of the demands being placed on government and the consequent expansion of public bureaucracy, more skilled and experienced hands are needed to bridge what Balogun calls managerial credibility gap. This gap seems to be widening by the day due to falling standard of education in Nigeria and attitude of public office holders towards education.

Thirdly, consistent and sustainable public policies should be pursued irrespective of the government in power. Government is not time bound. It is a continuum. Therefore, its policies should not suffer summersault the way they have been over the years. Indeed, a rolling stone gather no moist for government policies to yield expected dividends, they must be pursued with zeal

and enthusiasm where necessary. Policies should not be a one stop-gap thing. Government should strive towards bringing stability to its administrative system. The issue of unsecured tenure of office has given way to insecurity which has consequently damped the morale of civil servants and vitiates their commitment to sustainable development. The Great Purge of 1976 ab initio had a patriotic agenda to it, but it was later hijacked by some people to pursue personal vendetta or scores. Also, General Babangida attempt through the Dotun Philips Commission report to introduce professionalism into the civil service led to the sack of many skilled and experienced public servants. These exercises were misconstrued and resisted by entrenched forces because of the so-called corporate interest of the bureaucracy. Till date the public service has not recovered from these exercises. The civil service should pursue the national interests not ethno-religious and sectional agendas.

Fourthly, only a virile, strong and robust civil service or bureaucracy can pursue a consistent programme of sustainable development. The public service should be made attractive to members of the public in terms of remuneration, motivation, work environment and privileges to enable it attract the best brains in the society. Recruitment and selection into the public service should be based on merit rather than nepotism and favouritism. The Federal Character and quota system are in need of review in the light of emerging facts about their abuses.

Fifth, the economy holds a lot to the development in the country. central to the economy, presently is oil. The discovery, exploration and exploitation of oil have been more of a curse than a blessing to the nation. Oil has become the only business in town and the government has joined in the struggle to expropriate funds through the exercise of collecting rents from its sales and distribution rather than regulating its production and sale for the good of all in the country. The scramble for revenue that comes from distribution rather than production activities in the oil and gas sector has made government to neglect other sectors of the economy and distort the economic structure of the country. The long-term solution to these challenges is the pursuit of diversification of the economic base and self-reliance through the aggressive exploitation and production of indigenous agro-allied resources for the good of the generality of Nigerians. Oil is a finite resource that is expendable. The earlier the country begins to look inward for sustainable growth and development in the economy, the better for it for the project of sustainable development. Evidently, the Bank of Industry (BOI) is assisting many indigenous enterprises to keep afloat and expand their businesses to absorb the increasing number of the unemployed and challenges caused by Covid-19 pandemic. But the phenomenon of growth without development is fast evolving in the country. The much-vaunted claim of economic growth has not positively impacted on the lives of Nigerians. Statistics from the human development index is not flattering at all. For example, many Nigerians are living below the poverty line. According to World Bank figures, "about 70 million Nigerian adults are poor while the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020) says 61.2 percent of Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day in 2011.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that a sustainable development in Nigeria still remains far-fetched. Structural disarticulation from the civil service role in sustainable development to the socio-economic and political systems in the country vitiates the Nigerian project. The article submits that the country is yet to understand the central concerns of sustainable development. Dudley Seer (1970) provides a concise parameter of genuine sustainable development by asking the following germane questions: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of sustainable development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "sustainable development". It follows that sustainable development is all encompassing. It must take place on all fronts for it to be effective. It is clear from the analysis carried out that the situation in all sectors of society has not improved substantially to enable us conclude that sustainable development is going on. The marginal improvement being recorded in various areas of the society need to be consolidated upon over time, for us to safely say sustainable development is going on. Corruption is a cancer that needs to be cured for the country to develop. Perhaps, more importantly, the private sector must provide opportunity or wealth creation to reduce the pressure on the State and government to champion sustainable development in Nigeria. The bureaucracy is the channel through which all these ideas and activities can be coordinated and delivered to Nigerians efficiently and effectively.

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