SOCIAL SCIENCES PERSPECTIVES IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN POST-SUBSIDY REGIMES

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Protocols.

This keynote address on Social Sciences Perspectives in Development Planning in Post-Subsidy Regimes seeks to analytically x-ray the use of various social science tools and perspectives in understanding development planning in comparative subsidy benefiting nations in Africa and beyond; and would further interrogate subsidy within the historical context of Nigeria's experience with a view to establishing the fallacies, myths and realities unleashed by the embrace of subsidy and its removal on the country's development dynamics.

Concept Definition

Conceptually, social science differs from the natural and physical sciences. Its focus is on the social relationships that exist amongst the population in a given milieu and the dynamics of this relationship. It uses various empirical tools such as observation, questionnaire, interview, focused group discussions and others as well as the use of inductive and deductive logic in the analysis and evaluation of its results. While the social sciences are compartmentalised into various disciplines such as Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Geography and even Psychology because of the emotive strain of the human element, it is in practice very integrated. In practice, social sciences would view a policy as the subsidy regime in varied, but holistic terms reflective of the particular tendencies of their specialisation.

A cursory glance at the application of this inter-disciplinary social science perspective will suffice. For example, a classical economist would seek to view subsidies from the standpoint of resource generation and allocation and how these respond to the forces of demand and supply as well as promotes efficiency. How does fuel subsidy benefit the different income groups? The economic planner projects removal of subsidy and the reallocation of resources to other competitive sectors that directly impacts public welfare, including education, health, defense and physical infrastructure.

The political science perspective will focus on examining how the governance structure and various political actors have used the policy of subsidy as tools of political relevance and patronage to deepen their hold on power. Thus, the political science perspective will seek to understand and mediate the entrenched interest of marketers, importers, the bureaucratic elites and the consumers, while emphasising adherence to the rule of law, transparency, participative inclusion and accountability as the essential factors to drive development planning.

The Sociological perspective will primarily address the issues of how subsidy affects class relations. Who is benefiting more and how does the issues of disproportionate beneficiation impact on price of goods and services in the market and family incomes, in addition to the social tension that could be thrown up. Hence, development planning as it relates to subsidy removal must include social safety nets, such as cash transfer scheme to promote balanced income distribution and guarantee the welfare of the lower class of citizens.

The Anthropological perspective will demonstrate concerns for cultural beliefs and informal practices that shape perception of government. How does public perception of Nigeria's rich hydrocarbon heritage affect their response to fuel subsidy; and how do they react to shocks from the removal of fuel subsidy as some may resort to the use of firewood as an alternative to high cost of kerosene and gas, in complete disregard of deforestation.

The standpoint of Public Policy and Administration Perspectives is that subsidy regimes are symptomatic of deeper institutional weakness, corruption, lack of transparency and poor monitoring systems that undermine policy effectiveness. Hence, the prioritisation of reforms, capacity building and stakeholder engagements. The institution-centric framework as postulated by Acemoglou and Robinson (2012 whereof the prioritization of strong institutions was projected as the basic and concrete success factors of development among nationalities, rather than geography, culture and ignorance buttresses this perspective. This was clearly illustrated with the contrasting development of Nogales, Arizona (USA) and Nogales, Sonora (Mexico), two cities sharing a common border, geography and culture, but vastly different institutional frameworks.

The Geography perspective would look at the spatial distribution of resources and development projects across the component parts of the polity, for example, urban and rural and between the different geo-political zones to ascertain whether or not this would project balanced development. The Geographer would emphasise development planning that prioritise comparative advantage in resource endowment as well as the diversification of the economy through the exploitation of alternative natural resources, for example mineral resources, to scale up revenue and public welfare. It addresses such issues as population dynamics in resource access and utilisation.

This discourse on subsidy regimes illustrates the urgency for the integration of a multidisciplinary social science discipline. Disaggregated application of social science perspectives in the analysis of societal relationships and development outcomes has since come under scrutiny. Claude Ake (1979) observed that the Social Science perspectives contradict the drive for development in the African continent. Describing Social Sciences as ideologically and methodologically imperialist, he pontificated that social sciences are being hugely influenced and distorted by imperialist structures. Hence, social scientists and their development counterparts have been socialised, trained, conditioned and structured to ape and copy western development paradigms. He stated that social sciences is an imperial tool to justify colonial rule and post-colonial dependency, hence this genre of science has been tailored to produce development models that maintain neo-colonial structures in post-colonial Africa.

Thus, he postulated a reorientation of social science towards genuine African-centered historical and cultural aspirations that would produce self-reliant academic institutions that prioritise African development over Western validations. The thoughts of Claude Ake are deeply in alignment with earlier concerns to decolonise education. In his critique of education and its goal of promoting social justice, Freire (1970) critiqued the cultural oppression of education based on the "banking education" model and likened it to a "pedagogy of the oppressed". He argued that for education to be meaningful it must be humanistic and capable of promoting critical consciousness and praxis and rooted in anti-oppressive and liberation-oriented perspectives. His thoughts are evocative of critical reflections on the historical legacies of colonialism and their perpetuation to impact on development trajectories.

The above finds further elucidation by Preiswerk & Pierrot. (1978) in their critique of development models rooted in Western experiences and values that fail to take cognisance of the unique historical, cultural and social context of the developing countries. While encouraging the development approaches that are sensitive to and respectful of diverse cultures, values, and historical experiences, these scholars encourage development planning to critically analyse the language, assumptions and underlying ideologies within development discourse itself, recognising potential Eurocentric biases embedded in them as well as recommend the prioritisation of local community participation and empowerment in shaping their development.

These concerns find expression in scholarly reflections on the choice of Nigeria’s development trajectory and planning. Nnoli (Ed) (1981) presents a collection of arguments on various aspects of Nigeria's development challenges and pathways and critiqued conventional development models as unsuitable for Nigeria's development. These synopsis of contributions highlighted the pervasive influence of colonialism and her impact on the character of the post-independence state. It inquired into the role of Western oriented political structures, governance and leadership models in facilitating and obstructing development, especially addressing the issues of inequality, poverty and social justice. It recommended locally rooted development strategies that consider Nigeria’s unique circumstances and resources.

Indeed, attempts were made in the past and are still ongoing to have a unified advanced social science using the political economy approach as the veritable methodology to actualise this vision. Thus, while I appreciate the multi-disciplinary nature of the social sciences, I would rather recognise its organic advancement that seeks to glue these compartments into one integrated science of societal relationships under the methodological framework of political economy. Therefore, having established this compass as the thrust of my analysis, I seek your indulgences to undertake a conceptual definition of the other key terms in this discourse. These are Social Sciences, Perspectives, Development Planning, Subsidy Vis a Vis Post Subsidy and Regimes. We have discussed previously the Social Science(s) as a concept. We shall proceed to define the term "Perspective".

The Oxford Languages dictionary defines Perspective as "a particular attitude towards or way of regarding something; a point of view". The Cambridge Dictionary defines perspective as "a feeling or opinion about something or someone". It further qualifies it as attitude, approach and viewpoint towards an issue. Both dictionaries are in sync with their perceptions of the term "perspective". We subscribe to the words viewpoint and approach. Semantics as they are, viewpoint would apply more to academics, policy analysts and their adherents, while "approach" seems to cut across academics and policy implementation, it is more in the trajectory of state actors in their choice of solution to development.

Development on the other hand has been variously defined over time. From being perceived as mere economic growth (Lewis) and prescription of mandatory stages a society or nation must pass through or attain to be classified as 'developed' (Rostow), it currently assumes a much more comprehensive social meaning woven around increase in standard of living, creating the necessary conditions for social esteem and recognises individual freedom to choose from a wide range of economic and social options in respect of issues that affects their governance (Todaro, 1977).

Globally, the concept of "development" has been expanded to include sustainable development, focused on prioritising the interest and wellbeing of future generations in the utilisation of national resources (UNCED). The shift from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals is aimed at further strengthening the actualisation of this idea. Thus, far from an abstraction, development is a social goal achievable through the deliberate initiation and implementation of concrete policies and strategies. In this context therefore, planning occupies a central position. Otto (2024) identified development planning as a major strategy that Nigeria has experimented in her quest for economic development. Nathan and Uche (2023) corroborated Otto, stating that “to promote economic growth and development in Nigeria and other emerging nations, planning is needed to improve and strengthen market mechanism”. Thus, they highlighted several development plans pre and post-independence, including a three year rolling plan in 1990, together with a 15 - to 20-year prospective plan and the annual operational budget, to find an acceptable development strategy. The federal government established ambitious programmes between 1999 and 2003, 2003 and 2007 called NEEDS, Nigeria Vision 20-2020, and Economic Growth Plan 2017-2020. Clearly there is a pattern in the trajectory of our development; a vacillation between decentralized development planning in the decades between 1946 and 1966 on the one hand, and centralized planning from the 2nd National Development of 1970 -1974 strengthened till date by an increasingly skewed fiscal federalism in favour of the federal government.

Planning can therefore be defined as the systematic process that includes setting objectives, identifying strategies for achieving them, and the development of appropriate stages or activities leading to desired outcomes. Planning always calls for foresight since it deals with the anticipation of future conditions and readiness for obstacles or opportunities that may present themselves in the future. Organizing effort, amongst other things, would do planning for a group of people. It reduces risks and still manages to ensure that all the people are working towards a similar goal (http://Plutus education.com). It entails looking ahead and making informed decisions about timelines, resource allocation and mobilisation to achieve set objectives and provides a roadmap for action and helps to minimize uncertainty and maximize efficiency.

In the context of states, "development planning" therefore connotes the conceived vision driven by a philosophical and ideological thrust, the processes, the deployment of appropriate strategies, resources and the mobilisation of the same by the State to achieve set goals and objectives, which may include; promoting economic growth, reducing poverty and improving living standards, improving infrastructure, economic diversification, attraction of foreign direct investment and ensuring a more equitable allocation and distribution of resources among the component units as well as a secure and stable environment.

Appreciating social science perspective in development planning is critical as they provide a near-holistic insight of the complex socio-economic and cultural factors that influence development outcomes, which must of necessity take into consideration important factors as social equity, community participation, impact of policies on vulnerable identities and sustainability in outcomes. Indeed, devoid of any ideological orientation, Akin Mabogunje (1968) practically underscores the importance of development planning in his theory of regional development by advocating for balanced regional development targeted at creating self-sustaining and interdependent regional units to promote equitable national development.

To properly situate this discourse, it is apposite to define the concept Subsidy. What is subsidy? Subsidy is a form of financial assistance or support extended by a government or other entity to key stakeholders in the economy of a given society. Beneficiaries of subsidy are varied with the given product or service. It could be the producer(s) to lower their production costs or increase their revenue. It takes a form of price reduction to the consumers of a given product or service. In much broader cases, it could be a deliberate policy action to support players in a given economic sector to avail the public of a service deemed beneficial to a critical mass of the population. In practice it takes various patterns, such as Cash grants, tax rebates, price support to keep a particular good or service within an affordable level, low interest rate on loans and other monetary instruments. This is aside from supporting strategic industries to remain viable and sustainable and enhancing the availability and affordability of social services as in education and public health to improve citizens welfare.

A government subsidy is a measure that lowers the price that consumers pay for consumption or raises the price that producers charge for their goods. Subsidies fall into two broad categories: production subsidies, which are primarily associated with industrialised economies, and consumer subsidies, which are prevalent in poor nations. The rationales behind the adoption or withdrawal of subsidies differ significantly. Environmental concerns, foreign trade policies and the need to maintain competitiveness are the main drivers of the policy in developed economies. Subsidies are typically provided in developing nations like Nigeria due to concerns about welfare, poverty reduction, and election cycle politics as seen in the calculated disinclination to remove subsidy by the President Muhammadu administration in order to obviate any anticipated political backlash that may be triggered by a removal in an election cycle.

By its logic, subsidy has impacted negatively and positively on economies of nations. On a positive note it lowers prices, increases demand for given product and services, increases both consumers and suppliers surplus, encouraging more producers into the market. On the other hand, it makes a given sector uncompetitive, inefficient and less innovative. It leads to market distortions and higher taxes resulting from government sourcing of funds. Adopting Nigeria as a case study, subsidies have been a significant part of the economic landscape, particularly in the keeping of fuel and gasoline prices low for consumers but have also been a source of debate due to their cost, potential for corruption, and environmental impacts. Other potential areas for subsidies in Nigeria would include agriculture, education, and renewable energy, each with its own set of potential benefits and drawbacks.

Theoretical Perspectives on Development Planning in Post Subsidy Regime in Nigeria

Examining development planning in post-subsidy regimes from the prisms of Social Sciences stimulates a clear understanding of the structuration of the socio-economic and political relations on which a given social formation, in this context the Nigerian State is founded. On the broad structuration of development planning in Nigeria, two broad theoretical perspectives have emerged dominant and have managed to illuminate the foundation and trajectory of development planning. These perspectives are analytically woven around the relationship between the developed West, on one hand, and the developing countries of the Third World on the other hand of which Nigeria happens to be in the latter. These theories are the theory of Liberalization/Modernisation and the theory of Materialism.

The proponents and exponents of the modernisation theory which draws its inspiration from classical capitalism argues that development is the function of the ability of a society to overcome the traditional means of production and distribution and its capacity to learn from and emulate the developed economies; this way, the modernists, Lewis, Rostow and others argue, the developing nations will achieve development. On the other hand, the theory of Materialism, which is a brainchild of the Marxist-Leninist school of thought, holds that the poverty of nations is a function or reflection of the exploitative activities of the developed West in their quest to sustain capitalism.

Hence, to right development planning, the Materialists posits that developing nations must take deliberate steps to overthrow the vestiges of imperialism, a tool of liberalism, which manifests as colonial and neocolonial structures for the engendering of an unequal relationship between the developed and the developing and presently in its most advanced stage as globalisation, a stage of the global economy in which international interdependence, buoyed by the communication explosion engendered by information technology, has reached an unprecedented state of global oneness in economic, sociopolitical and cultural terms (Osai (Ed.), 1992).

From a Materialist point of view, therefore, Third World economies are identified as sharing certain fundamental problems that impinge their underdevelopment. Foremost among these problems are food insecurity, poverty, pervasive corruption, low productivity, weak industrial and, therefore, productive base, primitive technology etc. these have been identified as the key hindrances to development and economic growth.

Pure economic theoretical analysis of subsidy is based on the framework of neo-classical economics which is premised on the functionality of perfect competitive market and uninterrupted flow and interplay of the market forces of demand and supply. It bars government intervention in the economy. Leonard and Oriakhi (2012) in their appraisal of the introduction of subsidy in a perfectly competitive market were of the view that the policy will reduce the price of the commodity relative to the international price and increase consumption beyond the equilibrium competitive quantity. Hence, it would translate into a departure from competitive equilibrium resulting in reduction in social welfare. The conclusion from this perspective is that subsidy is not desirable since it leads to a reduction in the welfare of the citizens. Hence, the rationale of the World Bank's prescription of the removal of petroleum subsidy. From this viewpoint, subsidies are deemed a form of market distortion which leads to misallocation of resources.

Neo-Classical economists vary on the assumption of perfect competition on grounds that the conditions for the attainment of perfect market condition is restrictive and rarely met in real world conditions characterised by market imperfections typified by the existence of public goods, externalities, decreasing cost industries (monopolies), uncertainty, weak property rights, immobility of factors of production and limited information. The removal of any of the above imperfections cannot guarantee improved social welfare. Thus, Mosley (1991) argued that any structural adjustment programme, that is, a programme to remove a cluster of such imperfections is not an application of economic principles, but rather an improvisation or a gamble based on the premise that if past microeconomic policies have yielded unsatisfactory results, an alteration of those policies may help (the second best theory).

Other neo-classical theorists such as Keynes are very favourably disposed to government spending to the extent that it would increase production, distribute income, allocate resources to critical sectors and promote citizens welfare. This theory refutes the arguments of the classical school that the economy is self-regulating and that the government should not intervene. Arising from the great depression of the 1930s, Keynes postulated the imperative of government expenditure in boosting aggregate demand and general economic stability.

Public spending was classified by Keynes as an exogenous variable rather than an endogenous phenomena that can lead to economic growth. Government spending is thought of as a short-term stabilising mechanism for economies, but it must be done carefully because excessive public spending can trigger inflationary conditions, while insufficient public spending can result in unemployment. Active government policies could be useful for controlling the economy. Keynes supported countercyclical fiscal policies, tide of the business cycle, and deficit spending when a country's economy suffers from a recession or when recovery is protracted and unemployment remains high. These measures are either through tax cuts or spending reductions by the government. He did not view an unbalanced government budget as incorrect.

The rational choice theory on the other hand, stressed the rational calculations of the government to cut subsidy payments seen as a corruption mill in order to benefit the entire economy in the long run. This theory underpins the classical economic thinking of the invisible hand and rational actors seeking to minimize losses which in this context is seen in the humongous subsidy payments and yet increased poverty of the Nigerian masses. As a result, the government will make decisions that are sensible and motivated by self-interest and that will benefit the entire economy.

Subsidy removal is seen by the government as the best interest of the collapsing Nigerian economy. Policy makers weigh the benefits of subsidy removal, such as reduced fiscal burden and more efficient resource allocation, against potential negative consequences like inflation. With the resultant increase in cost of produce as a result of subsidy removal, individuals would evaluate how the removal affects their finances and cost of living viz-avis the long run objectives of provision of infrastructures from increased government revenue. In the same vein, the symmetric relationship theory of growth maintains that eliminating subsidy could potentially lead to more equitable growth by reallocating resources towards more productive uses and fostering **market** efficiency in the long run. The theory posits that economic growth and income distribution are interconnected, with improvements in one reinforcing the other.

In all, the symmetric relationship theory suggests that subsidy removal, if done thoughtfully and accompanied by complementary policies, can contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth by fostering efficiency and improving income distribution. Generally speaking, there is no consensus on the economic consequences of subsidy removal given the complexities in the real world, moreso, as each economy has its own unique economic structure. Thus, the World Bank prescription of subsidies to several developing countries as a single dosage to cure all their economic woes continues to attract comments.

Development Planning and Subsidy Regime in Nigeria.

Petroleum subsidy has unarguably proven to be a most contentious issue in Nigeria's fiscal policy regime and microeconomic management. This is best appreciated when one considers the budget expenditures dedicated to petrol subsidy relative to other budgetary subheads. According to reports from the federation's budget office, Nigeria has spent nearly as much on fuel subsidies since 2005 as it has on defence, health, education, and agriculture combined over the last five years, and nearly as much on capital expenditures over a ten-year period between 2011 and 2020 (NEITI, 2021). Subsidy expenditure payments in 2011 exceeded allocations for defence and security by twofold, education by more than five times, health by eight times, power by twenty-four times, agriculture by thirty-two times, and transportation by thirty-eight times, including transportation infrastructure (NEITI, 2021). For example, in 2011 subsidies accounted for twice as much as all capital investment and much outweighed all other important sectors of the economy (NEITI, 2021).

There is therefore a huge divide between proponents and those against. In his analysis of "IMF Subsidy and the Real Cost of Nigeria Petrol", Agbon (2012) had argued that subsidy is part of the IMF liberalisation policies and programmes which it imposes on developing nations whenever the opportunity arises. In evaluating the Petroleum swap policy and the matrix of export-import of refined petroleum products, he stated that there is no petrol subsidy; but rather there is a high sales tax of 91.2% at the then prevailing price of #65 per litre...there is no petrol subsidy whatsoever. Petroleum subsidy is the attempt of the government to transfer wealth from the Nigerian masses to a petrol cabal.

Nigeria has an estimated 37.2billion barrels of proven oil reserve and ranks 10th largest in the World and second in Africa before Libya. She is the 8th largest exporter of crude oil in the world and number one in Africa. Historically, subsidy began during the Gen. Yakubu Gowon administration in 1973 following the need to enhance citizens' welfare by means of affordable cost of goods and services through the placement of ceilings on the price of petroleum relative to the international prices. It was subsequently institutionalised by the Obasanjo administration in 1976 when petroleum was included in the Gazette of products and services whose cost price must not go beyond the approved cost limits following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. The story of fuel price increase in Nigeria from 1973-2024 under the regime of the present and past leaders is as shown in the table below;

S/N	Regime	Year	Price
1.	Gowon	1973	6k to 8.45K
2.	Murtala	1976	8.45k to 9k
3.	Obasanjo	1978	9k to 15.3k
4.	Shagari	1982	15.3k to 20k
5.	Babangida “ “ “	1986 1988 1989 1991	20k to 39.5k 39.5k to 42k 42k to 60k 60k to 70k
6.	Shonekan	1993	70k to N5
7.	Abacha “ “	1993 1994 1994	N5 to N3.25 N3.25k to N15 N15 to N11
8.	Abubakar	1998 1999	N11 to N25 N25 to N20
9	Obasanjo “ “ “ “ “	2000 2002 2003 2004 2004 2007	N20 to N30 N30 to N22 N26 to N42 N42 to N50 N50 to N65 N65 to N75
10.	Yar'Adua	2007	N75 to N65
11	Jonathan	2012 2015 2015	N65 to N141 N141 to N97 N97 to N87
12.	Buhari “	2016 2021	N87 to N145 N165 to N212
13.	Tinubu “	2023 2024	N220 to N617 N898 to N1,030

Source: Abdulbasit Toriola in Godwin & Lilly-Inia (JPDS:2024).

In recent times, the issue of fuel subsidy originated from the inability of Nigeria to refine its crude oil domestically for domestic consumption due to poor state of refineries; hence, crude oil is exported and refined petroleum products are imported at high cost. The Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration solidified its resolve to remove petroleum subsidy with the institution of an elaborate implementation framework articulated in the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) document, which postulates that with the removal of subsidy, government will be relieved of the huge financial burden, save reasonable amount with which to develop infrastructure across the country, correct the then extant disproportionate benefit to the rich, the doing away with the inefficiency, leakages and corruption associated with the policy, encourage competition and investment in the downstream sector i.e. refineries, petrochemical and fertiliser plants, smuggling of petroleum products across borders as well as provide additional resources for investing in programmes to mitigate poverty and spurring economic growth.

Comparatively, the removal of fuel subsidies has been a recurring and contentious issue in Nigeria, with both President Goodluck Jonathan's administration in 2012 and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration in 2023 undertaking this bold economic reform. While the underlying rationale for subsidy removal to free up government funds and promote market efficiency has remained consistent, the approaches, immediate impacts, and palliatives offered by the two administrations differed. Both administrations aimed to remove a fiscally unsustainable and corruption-ridden subsidy regime.

However, the economic conditions, the manner of implementation, and the scope of palliatives have shaped the different experiences and outcomes for Nigerians under each policy. Some similarities and differences can be gleaned from the President Goodluck Jonathan and the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Administrations. The timing of their implementation enjoys some semblance of urgency. Under President Jonathan subsidy was removed on January 1, 2012, with little or no prior warning to the public, leading to an immediate increase in petrol prices from N65 to N141 per liter (a 117% increase); while under President Tinubu it took the form of an announcement on his inauguration as President on May 29, 2023 with an increase from N195 (approx.) to N480-N570, then higher (200%+). Thus, he declared - "fuel subsidy is gone". This signaled the end of the subsidy.

Another commonality is in the economic rationale and motive of the subsidy regime. The Jonathan administration argued that the heavy subsidy was unsustainable, costing the government over N1 trillion annually, and that its removal would free up funds for other critical sectors like infrastructure, education, and healthcare. It also aimed to curb corruption associated with the subsidy regime. President Tinubu aimed at eliminating a massive financial burden on the government, which was estimated to be trillions of Naira annually. The removal aimed to redirect funds to productive sectors, reduce corruption, and attract private sector participation in the downstream oil sector.

Both regimes elicited serious public reaction. Under the President Jonathan's administration, the sudden removal triggered widespread, coordinated protests across the country, dubbed "Occupy Nigeria," involving civil society groups and labor unions. These protests lasted for about a week, paralyzing economic activities in major cities. Due to immense public pressure and widespread protests, the Jonathan administration partially reinstated the subsidy, bringing the pump price down to N97 per liter. Tinubu's subsidy removal witnessed significant public outcry and hardship, but less organized and sustained widespread protests.

Both regimes put in place programmes to cushion the Effect (Palliatives). The Jonathan administration's palliatives were largely reactive and came after the protests. They included:

i. Public Works/Job Creation: Promises were made to invest the saved funds in job creation initiatives.

ii. Increased Mass Transit Buses: The government announced plans to increase the number of buses to help reduce transportation costs, although the effectiveness of this measure was debated.

iii. Salary Reductions for Government Officials: President Jonathan announced 25% reduction in the salaries of public officials to shore up revenues to enable the provision of palliatives for the low income earners.

In like manner, in spite of the avowed commitment to leverage on the pricing regime driven by market forces and an enabled legal framework - the Petroleum Industry Act that deregulated the petroleum sector; like the Jonathan administration, the Tinubu administration initiated and announced several palliatives, some of which are still being implemented or have faced challenges:

i. Cash Transfers: A conditional cash transfer program targeting vulnerable households, aiming to provide direct financial support.

ii. Wage Awards for Workers: The government implemented a provisional wage award for federal civil servants to cushion the impact of rising costs.

iii. Investments in Public Transportation: Plans for the deployment of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses and other alternative energy vehicles to reduce transportation costs.

iv. Student Loan Scheme: Introduction of a student loan scheme to provide financial assistance for higher education.

v. Agricultural Support: Efforts to boost food production and ensure food security through various agricultural interventions.

vi. State-level Interventions: State governments also received funds from the federal government to implement their own palliative measures.

vii. Investment in Green Technology: Exploration of alternative energy sources and investment in green technology like electric vehicles.

The above similarities notwithstanding, certain contrasts are identifiable as follows; In Timing and Execution: Jonathan's removal was abrupt but partially reversed, while Tinubu's was announced definitively at his inauguration and has been sustained.

i. Magnitude of Price Hike: The percentage increase in fuel price under Tinubu was significantly higher than Jonathan's initial hike. The social implications were massive. Food prices increased significantly, while transportation costs soared. Hyperinflation was manifest in the delivery of products and services, deepening poverty and inequality (NBS, 2023)

ii. Palliative Strategy: While both acknowledge the need for palliatives, Tinubu's administration has articulated a broader range of palliatives, including direct cash transfers, even if their impact is still being felt. Jonathan's palliatives were more reactive and less structured as initial mitigation.

iii. Public Mobilization: The 2012 protests were arguably more unified and effective in forcing a partial policy reversal, while the 2023 removal, despite causing severe economic pain, has not led to a similar level of organized mass resistance that resulted in a policy change.

Critically speaking, actualising goals and the rationales for subsidy removal as stated by President Tinubu’s administration are still a work in progress. Achieving the intended results is another challenge, largely driven by multiple factors, including economic and social considerations.

Be that as it may, the Tinubu administration’s response indicates the policy was not well planned considering the effects on households’ purchasing power and the costs of transporting goods. Rather the government relied on generating more money through taxation as exemplified by the new tax laws 2025, sharing money or throwing money at the problem approach to cushion the effects. Throwing money at the problems measures such as N75bn for manufacturers, N185bn as palliatives for states, N315bn to pay federal workers’ N35,000 wage allowance for six months, N1.13tn to 15 million households at N25,000 per month for three months, and N75bn loan facility to 1.5 million market women had little or no effect. The palliative measures spearheaded by the states and Federal Government were ineffective. (Ayodele and Paul Adepelumi, Punch Newspaper, 29th May 2024.)

In both instances, the political economy approach reveals that fuel subsidy was never purely an economic decision. It was a deeply political act with significant ramifications, shaped by the interplay of powerful interests, institutional frameworks, historical grievances, and the capacity of different actors to mobilise and influence policy outcomes. The difference in public reaction and policy sustainability between 2012 and 2023 can largely be understood by analysing shifts in political power, state-society dynamics, and the perceived legitimacy of respective administrations.

One essential issue need further interrogation. From the geographer's perspective, on what population census is the nation's development planning being made? Do we have social register? How was it generated and to what extent is it reliable? These questions are pertinent and require deliberate and urgent policy intervention. It is an anathema that Nigeria is still using the 2006 Census on a yearly extrapolation of a 3% increase to project her population size, currently put at 230 million people. The concerns for an accurate, reliable and acceptable census by public officials have remained a matter of rhetoric. Without an accurate and reliable census, development planning in any policy regime tantamount a planning to fail.

It would be recalled that the President Buhari administration had prioritized the organizing of a National Population and Housing Census as a programme to follow on the heels of the 2023 General Elections achievable before handing-over to the succeeding government. For some security, political, financial and other logistic reasons, the administration could not proceed with the elections, but had urged the succeeding regime to prioritise the census. With the increased prioritization of 2027 General Election by the polarized but ideologically homogenous political class, the vision to organise a national population and housing census apparently remains an illusion. Sadly, the Independent National Electoral Commission in line with her statutory mandate recently embarked on what Ward delineation using the voters register which has its roots in the spatial distribution of the population.

Comparative Analysis of Nigeria's Subsidy Regimes with Other Jurisdictions:

Oil is a volatile commodity and most countries trading in oil have been exposed to oil price shock and this phenomenon has shaped their response to the removal of subsidy. A peer review of subsidy regimes in the oil producing countries Ghana - West Africa, Gabon in Central Africa, and Venezuela in South America offers us very interesting insight. The experiences of these countries with fuel subsidy removal offers valuable lessons on the economic, political, and social impacts of such policy shifts. We shall briefly discuss them here;

Starting with our sister country Ghana, her economic history shows that she has made multiple attempts at fuel subsidy removal, particularly in the years between 2000 and 2010. In 2005, the government completely removed fuel subsidies under President John Kufuor, citing fiscal sustainability. On a positive note, the policy led to reduced government expenditure, more funds for social sectors, and encouragement of energy efficiency. Conversely, there was the down side of this policy thrust as the sharp rise in fuel prices led to inflation, protests, and social unrest. In her move to manage the discontent, the Ghanian government introduced some palliative measures: The government introduced targeted social programs such as subsidized transport for students and investments in health and education to offset the impact. Somberly, some important lessons were learnt, chiefly that transparency and well-targeted compensatory measures are essential to gain public support.

Gabon, a central African country has the petroleum sector as the backbone of its economy. It is one of Africa's major oil producers, with substantial crude oil reserves both onshore and offshore (EITI, 2025; EIA, 2019). Oil revenues typically account for a large percentage of Gabon's GDP, government revenue, and export receipts. Gabon's experience with managing oil subsidies is complex and has seen several attempts at reform with mixed success. Unlike some major oil producers, Gabon is historically reputed to have maintained domestic fuel prices that are significantly below international market rates due to substantial subsidies (IMF, 2011; World Bank, 2023).

Indeed, for many years, fuel prices in Gabon remained largely frozen, sometimes for decades, regardless of fluctuations in international oil prices (IMF, 2011). This meant that the government (often through its national refinery, SOGARA) bore the difference between the import parity price and the fixed domestic price. This mechanism created a subsidy that imposed a huge fiscal burden. For instance, in the period around 2008-2009, estimated fuel subsidies increased to about 3% of GDP, and in 2022, they were estimated at 0.7% of GDP, equivalent to a substantial portion of public spending on health and education (IMF, 2011; World Bank, 2023).

Distributional impact need consideration. Studies, including those by the IMF and World Bank, have consistently shown that these fuel subsidies in Gabon primarily benefit the wealthier segments of the population, who consume more fuel, rather than genuinely aiding the poor. The top 10% of individuals often received a disproportionately large share of the total subsidy, while the bottom 30% received only a small fraction (IMF, 2011; World Bank, 2023). This highlights that fuel subsidies are an inefficient and regressive way to protect the real incomes of the poor. Like Ghana and later Nigeria under President Goodluck Jonathan, there was wholesome sensitivity marked by increased social tensions.

Attempts to adjust the domestic pricing mechanism have faced social tensions. For example, a price adjustment mechanism adopted in 2007 had its implementation suspended in 2009 due to public outcry (IMF, 2011). There have been efforts by the Gabonese government to partially liberalize the oil sector in an attempt to contain the rising fiscal cost, beginning with fuel prices for industrial consumers from June 2022, while maintaining prices for households unchanged (World Bank, 2023). In spite of this, the World Bank continues to highlight that these subsidies stifle development and have high fiscal and social opportunity costs.

In sum, while Gabon is a significant oil producer, its long-standing policy of domestic fuel subsidies has been a drain on its public finances and has disproportionately benefited the wealthy. Despite some reform attempts, particularly for industrial consumers, the country has not achieved a comprehensive and lasting solution to the subsidy issue, largely due to social resistance and the political sensitivity of the policy, thus marking its experience as largely unsuccessful in sustainable management.

Also instructive for our enlightenment is the case of Venezuela. The country is known to have had one of the world's most generous fuel subsidies for decades, keeping domestic gasoline prices among the lowest globally. In 2016 and again in 2020, the government began raising fuel prices and introducing a dual pricing system due to economic collapse and hyperinflation. Advantageously, the country recorded minor relief on fiscal pressure, and made sincere attempts to reduce smuggling of cheap fuel to neighboring countries. On the flip side, the attendant economic collapse meant that even small price hikes were unaffordable for many. Attempts at subsidy removal were chaotic, leading to severe fuel shortages, black markets, and increased public hardship. The country was forced to admit that removing subsidies in a context of economic crisis without proper infrastructure and trust can deepen social and economic distress.

RECOMMENDATION

Leveraging on social sciences perspective with the political economy approach as our compass, we which to make the following recommendations to enhance development planning in subsidy regimes in Nigeria;

* Transformation from a consumer to a knowledge-based production-oriented economy characterised by a healthy population. It is ultimately healthy people that can do production. Sick people cannot do production. So, we need knowledge, which is education, and also health.

* Prioritise the organising of an accurate, reliable and acceptable National Population and Housing Census.

* The repair of existing refineries and the intentional admission of more players into the petroleum market through a regulated artisanal refining system.

* Facilitate the expansion of Nigeria's power energy capacity through exploration of other energy to cease from a single energy source. Fortunately, renewable energy sources are available locally. For example, the North-East and North-Central regions have more substantial wind movements. Wind energy can be generated by creating momentum, and transferring it to rotor blades. The government can offer a range of incentives to stimulate investment in the sector. Relying on a single energy source is not sustainable for a country like Nigeria. Diversifying the energy mix with investment in renewable energy sources like solar, wind biomass will be helpful. The advantage on multiple energy source is profound.

Aside from providing alternative energy sources, investment in renewable energy will create employment and generate other economic activities. Finally, whatever strategy the government takes in addressing the energy crisis in Nigeria, the overarching objective is to be transparent and communicate milestones or challenges to the public expeditiously. Surreptitiously doing the opposite of what is communicated only for Nigerians to find out through alternative channels will bring about resentment and ultimately cause the government to lose credibility. Good intentions are not enough.

* Diversification of the economy to boost the nation's revenue base through the development and exploitation of the solid minerals sector. Nigeria is one of those countries in Africa that is richly endowed with a variety of natural resources. Most of these precious metals, such as Barites, Gypsum, Kaolin and Marble are yet to be exploited. Statistically, the level of exploitation of these minerals is very low in relation to the extent of deposit found in the country. One of the objectives

of the new National Policy on Solid Minerals is to ensure the orderly development of the mineral resources of the country.

Table: Nigerian States and Their Natural Resources

S/No.	State	Natural Resources
1	Abia	Gold, Lead/Zinc, Limestone, Oil/Gas & Salt
2.	Abuja	Cassiterite, Clay, Dolomite, Gold, Lead/Zinc, Marble & Tantalite
3.	Adamawa	Bentonite, Gypsum, Kaolin & Magnesite
4.	Akwa Ibom	Clay, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Limestone, Oil/Gas, Salt & Uranium
5.	Anambra	Clay, Glass-Sand, Gypsum, Iron-ore, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Limestone, Phosphate & Salt
6.	Bauchi	Gold, Cassiterite (tine ore), Columbite, Gypsum, Wolfram, Coal, Limestone, Lignite, Iron-ore & Clay
7.	Bayelsa	Clay, Gypsum, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Limestone, Manganese, Oil/Gas & Uranium
8.	Benue	Barite, Clay, Coal, Gemstone, Gypsium, Iron-Ore, Lead/Zinc, Limestone, Marble & Salt
9.	Borno	Bentonite, Clay, Diatomite, Gypsium, Hydro-carbon, Kaolin & Limestone
10.	Cross River	Barite, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Limestone, Manganese, Oil/Gas, Salt & Uranium
11.	Delta	Clay, Glass-sand, Gypsium, Iron-ore, Kaolin, Lignite, Marble & Oil/Gas
12.	Ebonyi	Gold, Lead/Zinc & Salt
13	Edo	Bitumen, Clay Dolomite, Phosphate, Glass-sand, Gold, Gypsium,Iron-ore, Lignite, Limestone, Marble & Oil/Gas
14.	Ekiti	Feldspar, Granite, Kaolin, Syenite & Tatium
15.	Enugu	Coal, Lead/Zinc & Limestone
16.	Gombe	Gemstone & Gypsum
17.	Imo	Gypsum, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Limestone, Marcasite, Oil/Gas, Phosphate & Salt
18	Jigawa	Butyls
19.	Kaduna	Amethyst, Aqua Marine, Asbestos, Clay, Flosper, Gemstone, Gold, Graphite, Kaolin, Hyalite, Mica, Rock Crystal, Ruby, Sapphire, Sihnite, Superntinite, Tentalime, Topaz & Tourmaline
20.	Kano	Gassiterite, Copper, Gemstone, Glass-sand, Lead/Zinc, Pyrochinre & Tantalite
21.	Katsina	Kaolin, Marble & Salt
22.	Kebbi	Gold

23	Kogi	Cole, Dolomite, Feldspar, Gypsium, Iron-ore, Kaolin, Marble, Talc & Tantalite
24.	Kwara	Cassiterite, Columbite, Feldspar, Gold, Iron-ore, Marble, Mica & Tantalite
25.	Lagos	Bitumen, Clay & Glass-sand
26.	Nasarawa	Amethyst (Topaz Garnet), Barytex, Barite, Cassirite, Chalcopyrite, Clay, Columbite, Coking Coal, Dolomite/Marble, Feldspar, Galena, Iron-ore, Limstone, Mica, Salt, Sapphire, Talc, Tantalite, Tourmaline Quartz & Zireon
27.	Niger	Gold, Lead/Zinc & Talc
28.	Ogun	Bitumen, Clay, Feldspar, Gemstone, Kaolin, Limestone & Phosphate
29.	Ondo	Bitumen, Clay, Coal, Dimension Stones, Feldspar, Gemstone, Glass-Sand, Granite, Gypsium, Kaolin, Limestone & Oil/Gas
30.	Osun	Columbite, Gold, Granite, Talc, Tantalite & Tourmaline
31	Oyo	Aqua Marine, Cassiterite, Clay, Dolomite, Gemstone, Gold, Kaolin, Marble, Silimonite, Talc & Tantalite
32	Plateau	Barite, Bauxite, Betonite, Bismuth, Cassiterite, Clay, Coal, Emerald, Fluoride, Gemstone, Granite, Iron-ore, Kaolin,Lead/Zinc, Marble, Molybdenite, Phrochlore, Salt, Tantalite/Columbite, Tin & Wolfram
33	Rivers	Clay, Glass-Sand, Lignite, Marble & Oil/Gas
34.	Sokoto	Clay, Flakes, Gold, Granite, Gypsum, Kaolin, Laterite, Limestone, Phosphate, Potash, Silica Sand & Salt
35.	Taraba	Lead/Zinc
36	Yobe	Soda Ash & Tintomite
37	Zamfara	Coal, Cotton & Gold

Source: https://nigeria.gov.ng/about-nigeria/people-of-nigeria/

There are tremendous opportunities for investments in the solid mineral sector of the Nigerian economy. The verified records of the quantum deposits of some of these minerals are revealing. For instance, Nigeria boasts of over 40 million tonnes deposits of Talc in Niger, Osun, Kogi, Ogun and Kaduna states. The Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC)'s 3,000 tonnes per annum catalytic Talc plant in Niger state is the only talc plant in the country. The talc industry represents one of the most versatile sectors of the industrial minerals of the world. The exploitation of the vast deposits would therefore satisfy local demand and that for export.

Gypsum

Gypsum is an important input for the production of cement. It is also used for the production of Plaster of Paris (P.O.P) and classroom chalks. This resource begs for large scale mining. Currently, cement production is put at 8 million tonnes per annum while the national requirement is 9.6 million tonnes. About one billion tonnes of gypsum deposits are spread over many states in Nigeria.

Iron Ore

There are over 3 billion metric tonnes of iron ore in deposits found in Kogi, Enugu and Niger States as well as the Federal Capital Territory. Iron Ore is being mined at Itakpe in Kogi State and is already being beneficiated, up to 67 percent of iron. The Aladja and Ajaokuta Steel complexes are ready for consumers of billets and other iron products for down-stream industries.

Lead/Zinc

An estimated 10 million tonnes of lead/zinc veins are spread over eight states of Nigeria. Proven reserves in three prospects in the east-central area are 5 million tonnes. Joint venture partners are encouraged to develop and exploit the various lead/zinc deposits all over the country.

Bentonite and Baryte

These are the main constituents of the mud used in the drilling of all types of oil wells. The Nigerian baryte has a specific gravity of about 4.3. Over 7.5 million tonnes of baryte have been identified in Taraba and Bauchi States. Large bentonite reserves of 700 million tonnes are available in many states of the federation ready for massive development and exploitation.

Gold

There are proven reserves of both alluvial and primary gold in the schist belt of Nigeria located in the south-western part of the country. The deposits are mainly alluvial and are currently being exploited on a small scale. Private investors are invited to stake concessions on these primary deposits.

Bitumen

The occurrence of bitumen deposits in Nigeria is indicated at about 42 billion tonnes; almost twice the number of existing reserves of crude petroleum. Analytical results suggest that this potential resource can be used directly as an asphalt binder. Most bitumen used for road construction in Nigeria currently is imported.

Coal

Nigerian coal is one of the most bituminous in the world owing to its low sulphur and ash content and therefore the most environment-friendly. There are nearly 3 billion tonnes of indicated reserves in 17 identified coal fields and over 600 million tonnes of proven reserves.

Rock Salt

The national annual demand for table salt, caustic soda, chlorine, sodium bicarbonate, sodium hydrochloric acid and hydrogen peroxide exceeds one million tonnes. A colossal amount of money is expended annually to import these chemicals by chemical and processing companies including tanneries and those in food and beverages, paper and pulp, bottling and oil sector. There are salt springs at Awe (Plateau State), Abakaliki and Uburu (Ebonyi State), while rock salt is available in Benue State . A total reserve of 1.5 million tonnes has been indicated, and further investigations are now being carried out by the Government.

Gemstones

Gemstones mining has boomed in various parts of Plateau, Kaduna and Bauchi states for years. Some of these gemstones include sapphire, ruby, aquamarine, emerald, tourmaline, topaz, garnet, amethyst; zircon, and fluorspar which are among the world's best. Good prospects exist in this area for viable investments.

Kaolin

An estimated reserve of 3 billion tonnes of good kaolinitic clay has been identified in many localities in Nigeria.

*Encourage Investment in agriculture that is based on comparative advantage in the agricultural zones of the country.

* Full implementation of the National Security Plan to recalibrate the Nation's security network for real-time impact.

* Full exploration of the blue economy.

* Expedite the transition from Petrol to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). This is a viable alternative and with regards to the country's abundant gas reserve. Its advantages are lower cost, reduced emission of carbon and improved fuel efficiency. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) has been proposed as a promising alternative to petrol in Nigeria due to the country's significant natural gas reserves. One of the most significant benefits of CNG is that it is considerably cheaper than petrol, which could result in substantial savings for vehicle owners. Additionally, the cost of CNG is more stable than the volatile price fluctuations experienced by petrol. Also, the use of CNG could reduce vehicle maintenance cost due to its cleaner burning properties, which produce fewer engine deposits that clog up the engine over time. However, the adoption of CNG in Nigeria also presents some challenges. These challenges include the initial investment required to retrofit existing vehicles with CNG engines, the need to establish a robust distribution infrastructure for CNG, and the need for government policies and incentives to promote the use of CNG. While CNG presents a number of benefits compared to PMS, there are challenges to its adoption making it an unlikely alternative to petrol in the short to medium term.(pwc, 2024).

* Engender stakeholders' inclusivity and participation in the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy. Before the implementation of the subsidy removal, the new government ought to have analysed the effect on the economy, society, and the environment, including the benefits and costs of reform. Analysing the effect involves assessing the benefits and costs of the proposed changes, which should inform decision-making and help minimise unintended consequences. For several reasons, exploring the impact of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria is essential. Firstly, it can help to determine whether the proposed reforms will achieve the desired objectives, such as reducing the budget deficit, promoting sustainable development, and increasing access to energy. Secondly, it can identify potential risks and unintended consequences, such as inflation, or social unrest, which can be very detrimental.

* We recommend the practice of true fiscal federalism that will decentralize development from the federal government to the States with the latter equipped to take greater responsibility for the exploration, exploitation and management of their natural resource endowments.

CONCLUSION

This Keynote speech on the terra firma of the political economy approach has been able to establish that in situ the integration of multi-disciplinary social sciences perspectives is strategic to successful development planning, especially in the conceptualization of policies, programmes and activities in post-subsidy regimes. We have used Nigeria as our primary case study as the Nigerian state has been exposed to a plethora of subsidy policies being instituted in guaranteeing the provision of goods and services across different administrations since the early 1970s till date; a development that has left in its wake far reaching effects and consequences occasioned by the removal of subsidy at each turn.

For convenience and meaningful discourse, we have intentionally focused on the removal of petroleum subsidy as it cuts across all administrations, has pervasive influence on Nigeria's mono-cultural economy that is hugely petro-finance driven and has left 'dreadful' outcomes for the micro and macro economy, but have done a more detailed examination of the scenarios under the administrations of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and that of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. We have also juxtaposed Nigeria's experience with those of other countries, such as Ghana, Gabon and Venezuela. Our findings show that they share similar experiences, but with few peculiarities. We have made some important recommendation, among which are the urgent need to revert to true federalism wherefore different States will explore, develop and manage their natural resource endowments while paying royalty to the Federal Government and assigning the latter the responsibility for the management of common services, the need to diversify the economy with the prioritisation of agriculture and its value chain with enabling security of the peasantry as well as the imperative to organize a technology-driven accurate, reliable and acceptable national population and housing census.

Thank you and wishing conferees a fruitful deliberation.

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