

EVALUATION OF MARX ALIENATION THEORY, ELITE ACTIVITIES AND  
THEIR INFLUENCE ON POLICY PROCESS IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

*The prevalence of alienation has manifested itself and being sustained through the contradictions emanating from capitalist development. Capitalism has perpetuated class antagonism which breeds dissatisfaction amongst people in a bid to seek equality and justice in the distribution of power and economic resources. This study examines Marx Alienation Theory Vis-À-Vis Elite Activities and their Influence on Policy Process in Nigeria. The study used qualitative and content analysis method in analyzing the information generated for the study. Against this backdrop the Elite theory was used as our theoretical framework. Cases and instances from the content analysis showed that; Marx's theory of alienation can prove fruitful in understanding social movement activity and promoting social justice. Findings of the paper observed that, Nigeria elite attitudes are not farfetched from the protection of the corporate self-interests of the few ruling minority as against the views of the general populace, a conspicuous feature of an elitist state which needs to be urgently tamed if Nigeria ever wants to witness any meaningful socio-economic and political emancipation, liberation and development of her citizens through viable policy decisions. A way out of this is to create mechanism to open up more equitable access to power and economic opportunities which could lead to full capacity utilization of people's potentials and subsequently empower them with incomes and improved living conditions; this requires both commitment and diplomacy for government to undertake under the banner of collective responsibility and good governance.*

Keyword; Alienation Theory, Elite, Fourth Republic, Policy, and Marx.

Introduction

The 19th century Europe in which Karl Marx lived and died was a century of great hope, of dream of the perfectibility of man, of new religions of science and humanity, when men were eager to reform the world in order to solve the problem of poverty. But it was also a violent and volatile century, characterized by strong feelings of nationalism and revolutions in Germany, Italy, France and England. It was a period when capitalism had emerged as the dominant mode of production and prevailing economic order, following the breakdown of Feudalism and its Absolutist Monarchy; and thus had created new wealth and power all over Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution (Ajom, 2006).

Marx propounded an economic theory based on capitalist society. That every society, whatever its stage of historical development rest on economic foundation; the mode of production, this in turn has two elements, the forces of production and the social relations of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of the society. That at a certain stage of its development, the material forces of production in the society comes into conflict with the property relations. That this antagonism and conflict is inevitable between these two classes, and would result as class consciousness and militant class action develop in the overthrow of the existing system (Ajom, 2006, Chinonye, 2008).

In The Communist Manifesto of 1848, Marx posits, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle...without conflict, no progress, this is the law which civilization has followed to the present day". In this sense, the relationship between labor and its products are eliminated, thus breeding alienation. Marx also contends that Alienation is considered to be a condition that leaves no one unaffected, but does impact people in different ways and extremities in relation to their status in society. In understanding this in relation to the commodity, Marx outlines

its effect on all human beings: Production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the commodity-man, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a spiritually and physically dehumanized being (Marx 1961).

This illustrates a connection between Marx's theory of alienation to the wide ranging impacts of the commodity-form, and the reproductive nature of such abstractions. The opportunity to overcome alienation is precisely how Marx defines the alienated condition and the existence of an unalienated condition is not necessarily a romantic utopian vision, rather it is the reality that has been continuously interrupted and re-interrupted by capitalism. As explained in Barry Padgett's recent recovery of Marx's theory of alienation, the very structure of capitalism necessitates that I must exchange my productive activity or product for exchange value, whether I like it or not; and under these conditions my labor is the only product I have to exchange (Padgett 2007, p. 10).

Alienation distorts the nature of human beings. This distortion is dynamic and a process that does not occur in isolation. Once again, we may consider how money is a key mediator of the deprivation that Marx describes. Marx's concerns with private property and money are central to understanding the alienated condition, especially with statements like "The less you are, the more you have; the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life" and "Everything which the political economist takes from you in life and in humanity, he replaces for you in money and in wealth; and all the things which you cannot do, your money can do" (Marx, 1961(1844):119). From these direct statements regarding the relation between alienation and the conditions of capitalism, we must begin to ask two key questions; 1) how do individuals cope with such dehumanizing conditions? And 2) to what extent can Nigeria citizen provide the means for coping and overcoming conditions of alienation?

Nigeria gained political independence from British Rule on October 1, 1960, which amounts to sixty years. The country, which is richly endowed with human and natural resources, has not translated these potentials to expected economic development. Nigeria crawls behind other developing countries in terms of economic development measured in GDP per capita (Nwaze, 2011).

Over this year, poverty became widespread in Nigeria, tormenting the citizens in rural and urban communities. The incidence rose from 27.2% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985, to 42.7% in 1992, to 65.6% in 1996, and 69.0% in 2010 (NBS, 2011). The manifestations are decaying infrastructure, child abuse, labour, trafficking, cultism, brain-drain, insecurity, industrial unrest, 'sorting', handout, examination malpractice, certificate racketeering, indecent dressing and seduction, poor attitude to work, embezzlement of public funds, extortion by uniformed men, degrading environment, among others (Ozuhu-Suleiman, 2013). Suleiman (1985), laments this unfortunate situation in a more precise and vivid illustration of its ugly picture saying the Nigerian nation is socially unjust because;

*Certain people-mostly a tiny minority who are relatives of those in power, or who are born into the families of those 'who matter' or who hang on to those who have means- are allowed virtually unlimited access to wealth and privileges, while the majority of the population are impoverished and dispossessed, through a systematic and political state policy (Suleiman, 1985, p.15).*

In Nigeria, common social back- ground is an important characteristic of the power and authority structure because large numbers of elite members share socio-cultural, economic, military and political back- grounds and also have similar interests. In the context that has been described above, one would expect a practice where the elite eventually settle for the selection rather than election of candidates based on common background and interests. The lack of open competition and inclusiveness can lead to an authority structure where coercion, co-optation, patronage and corruption are common practices. The resultant institutional order may accommodate independent

electoral commissions that are not truly autonomous and responsible to the people, but controlled by incumbent government elites who use them to block-off opposition (Diamond, 2002).

The most fundamental of all the atrocities committed by the ruling class/elite of Nigeria was the continuous violation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As it was observed elsewhere in the West African region, governmental leaders in Nigeria did not act as if they were bound by the constitution, which they swore to defend (Susanna, 2008, p.17). Throughout the so-called Fourth Republic, at the level of the federal government, there was no single appropriation law that was obeyed. In fact, in the trend in the first eight years of the regime from 1999 to 2007, the appropriation laws of the country were violated with impunity. The period witnessed not just the refusal by the federal government to apply the components of the budgets, as approved by the national assembly, but all not-spent money allocated in the budgets, were 'shared', literally misappropriated by the ruling class.

It's in consonant with the above assertion the paper submit that the elitist character of the Nigerian state accounts for the failure of successive governments in Nigeria to promote the common good of the greatest number of the citizens, and that the failure of the ruling elite in Nigeria to effectively promote the common good of its citizens is accounts for lack of popular participation in the democratic process. On the basis of the above findings, the study submits that for Nigeria to overcome its challenges of democratic consolidation, the ruling elite should change their orientations. The actions and orientation of the ruling elite determine to a greater extent the degree of political stability especially with regard to the issue of the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Their actions should be geared towards using the structure and institutions of the state in enhancing the common good and general welfare of the greatest number of the people as this would encourage the popular participation of the people in the affairs.

It is in this regard that the study made an attempt to locate the reality of the Marx Alienation Theory in the Nigeria's governing process. It is in this light that, the study seeks to assess alienation and the challenges of human development in Nigeria. The study adopts exclusively secondary sources of data collection and descriptive method of analysis.

#### Conceptual Clarification

Associated terms such as elite, elitism, public policy, policy making and alienation are extensively and contextually conceptualized below in order to aid adequate understanding of the study.

#### Elite

In the classical elitist literature, elites were often (but not only) defined through capacity, personality and skill. For instance, Pareto (1935) distinguished elites between those who resembled the lion (domination by force) and those who resembled the fox (domination by persuasion and skill), a typology that resembles Machiavelli's political philosophy. Mosca (1939)

López Elite theory made mention of material conditions, but also of the intellectual and moral superiority of elites. Current elite theory defines 'elites' as actors controlling resources, occupying key positions and relating through power networks (Yamokoski and Dubrow, 2008).

Thus, the state-of-the-art concept of elites is more closely related to the Weberian notion of power, understood as the capability of implementing one's will, even against the will of others (Weber, 2005 p. 696).

Power can be achieved through material and/or symbolic resources. Consequently, elites can be defined as those in possession of those resources (Reis and Moore, 2005). This definition does not appear to be that distant from the Marxist notion of ruling class, which is based on the possession of the means of production. However, the concept of elite power is not based on economic

assumptions; it is based instead on political assumptions. Also, elite theory usually conceives the elite as a smaller group than social class. In addition, elites can emerge among dissident movements and even from dominated classes or groups (Dogan and Higley, 1998).

As Higley and Burton (2006: 7) argue, elites are persons occupying the top of powerful organizations and movements, thus capable of affecting political outcomes both substantially and regularly. The current concept of elites is often criticized, because the notion of elites emerging from movements and organizations may lead to a vast array of elite sources, contradicting the notion of elites as a small group (Cammack, 1990).

This entails a group of people in a society who are powerful and have a lot of influence because they are rich or intelligent and hence have the disposition or right to supreme leadership. Elite, according to Jordan (1978) refer to "an objective empirical fact namely; The existence in many perhaps most societies of a stratum of the population which for whatever reason can claim a position of superiority and hence a corresponding measure of influence over the fate of the entire community" in other words, an elite is that person or people who are set off from the rest of the society as superior because of certain qualities which they possess by virtue of ascription or achievement.

#### Elitism

The belief that government ought in principle always and everywhere to be confined to elites. In other words, it is an argument that a small minority comprised of members of socio-economic elite and policy hold the most power and influence in politics and policy making.

#### Public Policy

Mlekwa (1976) defines public policy as "official statements determining the plan of action or what a government wants to do. It is therefore what government chooses to do or not to do. Public policy is the integrated courses and programs of action that government has set and the framework or guide it has designed to direct actions and practices in certain problem areas (Ikelebege, 1996). Public policy is simply governmental action and programs of action towards solving societal problems.

More generally, it involves all that goes on from when the need and desire for a policy was articulated to its formation, enactment, implementation, performance and impact. The policy process in Nigeria could be described from the perspective consisting of several activities and interactions between the environment which generate demands, the political process in Nigeria could be described from the perspective consisting of several activities and interactions between the environment which generate demands, the political system or more accurately the conversion process which converts and translates demands and preferences into policy output and the implementation system which converts and translates demands and preferences into policy output and the implementation system which consists of implementation agencies and activities. The stages in policy process could be seen as policy formulation, implementation and policy outcome.

A policy is a purposive course of action taken or adopted by those in power in pursuit of certain goals or objectives (Sapru, 2012). For decision or policy making by individual and group, no single frame work can possibly explain everything (Mill, 1963). Contribution to decision or policy analysis invariably overlaps and interacts. One focus serves as critique of another. Policy is a plan of action, usually based on certain principles and decided on by a body or individual, designed to administer, manage and control access to resources.

#### Policy Making

This is and can be a tortuous process of problem determination, goals determination and

clarification, generation of alternatives, data gathering, political bargaining and choice (Ikelegbe, 1996, p.31). It should be emphasized here that policy making is not an act, but a culmination of an entire process within a given condition or environment and circumstances. It can simply be seen as the act or process of converting a policy into reality and of enforcing a policy.

### Marx's Conception of Alienation

The concept of alienation was the central notion of Marx's teachings and analysis. For instance, he rightly noted that "The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them". Therefore, explicitly stated or tacitly assumed, the notion of alienation remained central to Marx's social and economic analysis. In an alienated society, the whole mind-set of men, their consciousness, is to a large extent only the reflection of the conditions in which they find themselves and of the position in the process of production in which they are variously placed. Marx famously noted while describing the state of constant war between labor and capital (Oliman, 1996).

From the above, it is obvious that Karl Marx acknowledged the fact that there are indeed two classes constantly in conflict with each other. But due to the disadvantaged position of the working class, will always be dominated by the owners of the means and factors of production. 'Alienation', then, is used by Marx to refer to any state of human existence which is 'away from' or 'less than' unalienation. It is in this sense and on this scale, however, that Marx refers to alienation as 'a mistake, a defect, which ought not to be'. Both the individual and his way of life can be spoken of as 'alienated', and in the latter case the tag 'realm of estrangement' is applied to the most infected areas.

Alienation may also be described as a condition in which men are dominated by forces of their own creation, which confront them as alien powers. Karl Marx's concept of Alienation further reveal that alienated man is an abstraction because he has lost touch with all human specificity. This is because, He has been reduced to performing undifferentiated work on humanly indistinguishable objects among people deprived of their human variety and compassion. There is little that remains of his relations to his activity, product and fellows which enables us to grasp the peculiar qualities of his species. Consequently, Marx feels he can speak of this life as 'the abstract existence of man as a mere workman who may therefore fall from his filled void into the absolute void'. Though Marx clearly overstates his case in calling alienated man a hole in the air, it is in such an extreme notion that the term 'abstraction' is rooted (Marx, 1986).

To Marx, all major institutional spheres in capitalist society, such as religion, the State, and Political Economy, were marked by a condition of alienation. Moreover, these various aspects of alienation were interdependent (Marx, 1986). Economic alienation under capitalism is involved in men's daily activities and not only in their minds, as other forms of alienation might be. "Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of real life. . . . It therefore affects both aspects." Karl Marx notes that Alienation in the domain of work has a fourfold aspect: Man is alienated from the object he produces, from the process of production, from himself, and from the community of his fellows (Walton & Gambie, 1992).

The object produced by labor, its product, now stands opposed to it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. . . .The more the worker expends himself in work the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, and the less he belongs to himself.

Interestingly, Marx (1976) in his analysis on the different dimensions of Alienation further explains that;

However, alienation appears not merely in the result but also in the process of production, within productive activity itself. . . . If the product of labor is alienation, production itself must be active alienation. . . . The alienation of the object of labor merely summarizes the alienation in the work activity itself. Marx (1976).

Being alienated from the objects of his labor and from the process of production, man is also alienated from himself. This act of alienation ensures that he cannot fully develop the many sides of his personality. "Work is external to the worker. . . . It is not part of his nature; consequently he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself. . . . The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless." "In work (the worker) does not belong to himself but to another person." "This is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as something alien, not belonging to him activity as suffering (passivity), strength as powerlessness, creation as emasculation, and the personal physical and mental energy of the worker, his personal life. . . . as an activity which is directed against himself, independent of him and not belonging to him" (Marx, 1976).

#### Theoretical Framework

The elite theory has been employed here to help in the analysis of how the elite power play influences the policy process in Nigeria. The elite theory was first propounded by Vilfredo Pareto Getano Mosca who argues, that "every society consist of two broad categories; (1) the selected few who are capable and therefore, have right to supreme leadership, and (1) the vast masses of people who are destined to be ruled" (Varma, 1975, p.143). Even though the theory was first started in the Central and Western European countries as a critique of democracy and socialism, it was suitably adopted in the United State by a number of writers to explain political process as they existed in their country or, for that matter, in any democratic country.

Mosca (1948, p.50) puts it more succinctly when he said;

In all societies that are very meagerly developed and have barely attained the dawning's of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies –two classes of people appear-a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the less the numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first in a manner that is now more or less legal, more or less arbitrary and violent and supplies the first in appearance at least with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism. Mosca adds that "the larger the political community", the smaller will be the proportion of the governing minority to be governed by, and the more difficult it will be for the majority to organize for reaction against the minority.

This assertion by Mosca is an absolute and exact caption of Nigerian political system today where the political elites have obviously become arbitrary and inconsiderate in their dealings with the populace as observed in the issue of the new National Minimum Wage, formation of the Nigerian state, Elections and the Electoral Exclusion of the Nigerian people and Economic Disempowerment of Nigerians.

Mosca explains the rule of the minority over the majority is facilitated by the fact that it is organized, whereas the individual in the majority stands alone before it, and also by the fact that the minority is usually composed of superior individuals. The elite theorist holds the view that even in a classless society, political equality and power sovereignty cannot be realized. They argued that all governments including the socialist societies are essentially Oligarchic because in the final analysis, it is only a small minority that rules. This small minority are the elites.

To buttress the above points, (Michels, 1949) argue that, majority of human beings are apathetic, indolent and slavish towards public matters and ignorant about how the political system works and are permanently incapable of self-government. Apathy goes with technical incompetence in political matters and since the majority is too apathetic to organize itself, they have a psychosocial need for guidance, which proves or gives backing to those who take political responsibilities thereby providing an ideal condition for the few with the interest and the organizational ability to lead.

#### Assumptions of Elite Theory

1. The theory posits that a small minority, consisting of members of the economic elite and policy- planning networks, holds the most power—and this power is independent of democratic elections. Elite theory of policy process based on the proposition that power is concentrated in the hand of few elites .
2. Policy making, according to elite theory, is a process which works to the advantages of these elites. The theory holds that in the real world there are those at the top with power and the mass (at the down) without power.
3. The theory also contends that the elite, whose members share common value and have more money, education and power, governs the masses who are apathetic and ill-informed about public policy.
4. In an environment which is characterized by apathy and information distortion , elites informs mass opinion on policy issues more than mass influence elite opinion.
5. Top down Policy making, argues that U.S. public policy does not result from the "demands of the people", but rather from elite consensus found in Washington, D.C.-based non-profit foundations, think tanks, special-interest groups, and prominent lobbying and law firms. (Dye, 2004)
6. Elites are persons occupying the top of powerful organizations and movements, thus capable of affecting political outcomes both substantially and regularly
7. Elite's dispute power, meaning that they may find more antagonism among themselves than among the lower classes. For instance, a workers' strike, from elite theory's perspective, would imply a conflict between union leaders (labor elites) and corporate elites. Even a socialist revolution would be seeing as a case of elite circulation, where elites are overturned by other elites. The example of a workers' strike brings up the subject of elite sectors. Elites in complex societies are not a homogeneous group, nor share the same amount of power.
8. Elite aims first at powerful institutions and then to the main positions within those institutions. Several elite surveys follow this sampling strategy in order to achieve a significant sample size. Other operationalizations of the concept of elites rely on reputation, thus targeting those perceived as leaders by others. Another method of elite sampling targets decision makers within a circumscribed political event, for instance the passing of a bill in congress or the making of a given policy.
9. New elitists propose a typology of elite configuration: elites could be (a) disunited, (b) consensually united or (c) ideologically united. Consensual unity is associated with stable democracies, while elite disunity is associated with unstable democracies and authoritarian regimes. Ideological unity relates to totalitarian regimes, adopting Linz's (2000) typology, where elites legitimize and submit to a highly centralized ideological command.

10. Elite theory maintains its great advantage of doing macro-theory while operating with a small- group/personal level of conceptualization (Marcus, 1983, apud Higley et al., 1990). This advantage results in a very close relationship between theory and empirical research. In sum, elite theory worries about the state, without reifying the state.

In Nigeria, it is the elites that organize through political parties thereby giving ardency to Michel's assertion that organizational ability grants power to the elites who emerge from the structure of the organized society. The preceding analysis on the elite theory no doubt posits the elites in Nigeria at a strategic posture which gives them a dominant role in the formulation and implementation of socio-economic policies.

The elite theory directs our attention to the source of policy flow and whose interest such public policies serve, which in Nigeria reality has proven to be those of the ruling and non-ruling elite evidenced in the kind of policies been made. For instance, a critical look at most of the bills are been passed by the legislature reveals the fact that the common man does not have a place in determining what he gets with the particular look at the wage system, where the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly members quickly allocated and legitimized large sums of pay as their salaries and allowances whereas the consideration and passage of a bill to the effect of the N18,000 now N30,000 minimum wage from Nigeria's workers suffered implementation in most states of the federation which Kano, Niger, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa State government reveal they will not be able to pay the 30,000 new minimum wage, which is a deliberate attempt to frustrate the rise of the working class to a relative economic freedom. While our political leaders and their numerous appointees are paid or pay themselves fat and undisclosed salaries without any hindrance.

#### Criticism

First, decision making, according to the elite theory is a process which works to the advantage of elites in whom power is concentrated. As such, public policy does not reflect the demand of the masses so much, as it does of elites. Therefore changes in public policy occur as a result of redefinition by elites of their own values and choices. Because elites share a consensus in preserving the social system, changes in the public policy are brought about through reform (incremental in nature) when event threaten the system. The stability of the system, therefore, depends on elites sharing in a consensus about fundamental values underlying his system, and only policy alternative that fall within shared consensus will be given serious consideration. The value of elite may be welfare oriented for the public. The welfare of the assesmay be an important element in elite decision making, but the responsibility for the welfare rest on the shoulders of elites rather than masses.

Second, elite theory purports that masses are apathetic and ill-informed about the public policy that elites manipulate mass opinion and sentiments on policy questions more than masses manipulate and influence elite values and opinions and that policy flows downwards from the elite to the mass. Therefore, policy questions are seldom decided by the masses through the popular elections or through the presentation of policy options by political parties. For the most part, these elections and political parties play their symbolic role. Elitism views the masses as largely apathetic having at best an indirect influence over the policy making process of elites.

#### Analysis of Marx Alienation Theory Elite Activities and their Influence on Policy Process in Nigeria

According to Inyikalum&Amadi, (2016), the 19th century capitalist Europe, the socio-economic conditions were such that there was social differentiation among the people in terms of social inequalities in status, wealth, power, privileges and opportunities, and more importantly, in the control of economic, political and social resources. It was a time when the European Society had



already been bifurcated into two classes namely – the working class and the capitalist class. The working class served basically as elements of manipulation and exploitation in the process of capital accumulation while the emergent middle class (i.e. the capitalist class) enjoyed its glorious moments in wealth and power, and thus, wanted to consolidate its position in both economic and political scheme of things, by rationalizing with some principles and ideas be it that of liberty, reason or material progress (Rodee et al, 1972).

Based on the postulation of the classical elite theory, there appears to be a presence of selected few ruling group of people in almost all endeavors of life especially in the public sector. Little wonder then why policies are shaped by a long list of criteria and a variety of elements such as, power and the influence of vested interest, corruption, political ideology, arbitrariness, etc which are a reflection of policy actors' interest stage-managed by their sponsors who sometimes are behind the scene. Porter and Hicks (1995) are of the view that "just as policy is political, the process is closely connected to the nature of the power itself and the power holder". They noted that the policy process involves a course of action and a web of decision, and cannot be associated with several actions and decision making. In tandem with Porter and Hicks view, this study unmask the activities of political elites in Nigeria and their influence on policy process.

Although in Nigeria, there are various categories of elites including; Technocrats and bureaucrats in government, traditional rulers, professional group i.e lawyers, doctors, the media, pharmacists, politician and political parties organized labor, private sector groups and many others who exert ferocious influence on public policies to their benefit, at the expense of the general masses. The Nigerian political elites since the re-emergence of democracy in 1999 have continued to manipulate public opinion and policy by sponsoring political campaigns for their preferred candidates who would protect their interest. It is unfortunate to note that those that have credentials for top public positions must appear beggarly to the elites who determine their eligibility to win election based on unwritten agreement to protect some parochial interest. Yushua(2010, p.2) is of the view that not even the educated citizens have the courage to make positive contribution in discourse to influence public policy process.

Politics today in Nigeria has turned out to be the fastest profit yielding business and a center which every other sector of the Nigeria system stands. Little wonder there is an increase in cases of political god-fathers who after financing the exorbitant cost of electing their god-sons later dictates to them what, how, when and even which policy decision to make at the expense of the general wish of the public. The political elites in Nigeria who had in one way or the other amassed wealth to themselves while in service can be said to be one of major if not the sole determinants of policy making process through their politically sponsored agents in the name of legislatures, governors and even the president. Hence, making policy outcomes take the shape and direction of the interest of the few powerful elites rather than the 'helpless general populace'. The resultant effect of the activities of the political elites as understood from the foregoing analysis is reflected in the way most policies which are not elite oriented are always frustrated right from their point of origin to the implementation stages, that is if they ever manage to scale through the tortuous process of legislative humiliation all in the name of debates. More obvious is the frustration which policy decisions that scale through legislative processes undergo as they are often ignored, delayed and even abandoned by the executive arm.

In a nutshell, the influence of elites in policy process cannot be overemphasized as the above analysis has shown that, the elite have become an integral part of policy making who exert pressure on policy stakeholders to elite policy to their favor through aligning with government to be manipulated and used so long as their interest are satisfied always at the expense of the general masses as will be further revealed in the case of the new minimum wage, formation of the Nigerian state, Elections and the Electoral Exclusion of the Nigerian people and Economic

### Disempowerment of Nigerians.

Capitalism in this epoch has incarcerated the under-served to a level where repudiation is subsumed into. Political leadership in the Africa sub region (Nigeria) is characterized by disregard of the yearnings of the people and a violation of the constitution they swear to protect. In the quest to remain in power at all cost, all forms of manipulations are employed. This may include manipulation of ethnic differences, religious and political yearnings. In pursuance of selfish agenda, nothing is spared as long as the aim is achieved. The art of self-succession is the name of the game in the sub region except for some isolated cases (Ibrahim & Cheri, 2013). The vision 2010 Committee Report reveals that: 50% of Nigerians live below the poverty line; only about 40% have access to safe drinking water; about 85% of the urban population lives in single houses with more than 7 Occupants on the average; only about 62% of Nigerians have access to primary healthcare; most Nigerians take less than one-third of the minimum required protein and vitamins.

Karl Marx has called on workers of all nations to rise and overthrow the exploiter class and thereafter established a classless society. This Marxian call seems to widen the horizon of the proletariat and or arouse their consciousness while demystifying the "falseness" that was hitherto attached (Otobo, 1978:2-3). This is so because exploitation of workers by employers and the conceptualization and realization of the imbalance by the employees are basis of the formation of trade unions, mainly as front for the presentation of grievance with a view to securing for members better conditions of service as it were. Thus strikes have been persistent in Nigerian industrial system. For as Obasi (1999:4-5) highlighted, between 1960 and 61, there were 65 strikes, in 1970/71, 124 strikes occurred et certera. These strikes no doubt had their basis in exploitation of workers by work-owners.

### Persistent Alienation of Nigerians in the Sustenance of the Nigerian State: A Prognosis

Capitalism has left an indelible landmark of contradictions in this 21<sup>st</sup> century with arising conflicts and war of terror taking varied new dimensions each day. It has insipidly extolled its inanity to the struggle to perpetuate class antagonism, shrouded in anarchism and terrorism in governance of people and the economy. Incognito to the portents of its mischief, capitalism has unleashed untold terror and suffering to mankind; and when juxtaposed to the annals of development, it betrays the very principles of equality, justice, fairness and assured subsistence of the population and its transformation.

The implementation of the new minimum wage which incidentally originated from the executive can be said to be witnessing the worst form of humiliation as both the federal and majority of the state governments are foot-dragging for reasons being that "the states cannot afford to pay", except the federal revenue allocation formula reviewed to remit more money to the state governments. The issue here is, while our political leaders and their numerous appointees are paid or pay themselves fat and undisclosed salaries without any hindrance, the meager N30, 000 new minimum wages which cannot even take care of the basic needs to the low or middle income earners in Nigeria have suddenly become burden on the executives. The researcher sees the problem resulting from insincerity and lack of political will to implement policies that are people oriented. Thus highlighting the nature and character of the elite' influences on policy process.

### Minimum Wage of Political/Elected Office Holders Remuneration in Nigeria

There is wide disparity between the salaries of political elite and that of their counterpart (Elected/Political) office holders in Nigeria. It is this disparity that makes most Nigerian citizens to see politics as an end itself rather than means to an end; A statistical analysis of the emolument of political/elected official revealed astonishing figure to such an extent that one is in a state of confuse as to whether it is constitutionally accepted or a breach of it. The figure release by Daily Trust 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013 as follows:

S/N	SALARY COMPONENTS	SENATOR	HOUSE OF REPS
1	Annual Package	N35 million	N29.28 million
2	Accommodation	N4 million	N3.97million
3	Car Loan	N8 million	N6.9 million
4	Furniture	N6 million	N5.956 million
5	Constituency	N5 million	N1.7million
6	Car maintenance	N1.52 million	N595.563
7	Entertainment	N202.140	N198.521
8	Recess	N202.640	N198.521
9	Ward robe	N405.280	N397.042 Annually

Source: RMAFC (In Daily Trust 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013)

Base on the table above, the figures show that the Nigerian Federal legislators receive much higher salaries than their counterparts in wealthier countries and developed nations.

A Nigerian legislator receive an annual salary of about \$189,000 equivalent of N30 million, which is 116 times the country's gross domestic product (GDP) per person. The above salaries collected by Nigerian senators and House of Representatives is ahead of those received by fellow parliamentarians in the wealthier countries whose data was analyses in term of volume of cash earnings. The Nigerian legislators beat their counterpart in Britain who take \$105,400 yearly, as well as those in the United States (\$174,000), France (\$85,908), South Africa (\$104,000), Kenya (\$74,500), Saudi Arabia (64,000) and Brazil (\$157,500) Abdullah (2014).

In terms of lawmaker's salaries as a ratio of GDP per capital, the gap is even much wider. While the salaries of a Nigerian lawmaker is 116 times the country's GDP per person, that of a British member of parliament is just 2.7 times. British legislators pay is relatively parsimonious when compared with that of their counterparts in poorer countries, including Nigeria, who enjoy the heftiest salaries by the measure.

According to data collected for this research, only Australian lawmakers, with \$201,200 annual salary, receive higher amounts compared to Nigerian legislators, but new salaries are only 3 times their country's GDP per person.

However, as for the Nigerian Federal Minister their salaries and paraphernalia of office are much higher than the African average as indicated in the table below:

#### MINISTERS

S/N	SALARY COMPONENTS	FEDERAL MINISTER	STATE MINISTER
1	Basic Salary	N2 million	N1.9 million
2	Accommodation	N4 million	N3.9 million
3	Vehicle Loan	N8 million	N7.8 million
4	Furniture allowance	N6 million	N5.8 million
5	Vehicle maintenance	N1.5 million	N1.4 million
6	Entertainment	N911,880	N587,274
7	Severance gratuity	N6 million	N5.9 million
8	Domestic staff	N1.5 million	N1.4 million
9	Personal assistants	N506,600	N489,395
10	Leave allowance	N202,640	N195,758
11	Newspaper	N303,960	N293,637
12	Utility	N607,920	N587,274 Annually

Source: RMAFC (In Daily Trust 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013)

Based on table above, Nigeria ministers receive higher salaries and allowances than their counterparts in Britain, United States, South Africa and other stronger economies relative to the country's wealth using official data a Nigerian minister soaks up N32million in yearly emoluments, more than 120 times the country's gross domestic product per person (GDP). This means that a minister picks up a package that equals over 120 times what each Nigerian citizen in worth when the nation's total wealth is shared by its population. This follows that activities of elites in the Nigeria Political scene also work against the effective practicing of democracy by a way of allowing the interest of the selected few (elites) to prevail on the general majority which democracy advocates. The above tendency further leads to the disenfranchisement of the electorates via high party registration fee and the expensive nature of political campaigns. This at the end of the day encourages political godfatherism. The greatest challenge and effect of the higher emolument and salaries of the political office holder is that when the greatest percentage of the country's income is shared and managed by tiny clique or segment of the society (Elite) the majority continues to wallow in hunger, penury and poverty. The resultant effect is that people may continue to devise other means to wrangle themselves out of their pathetic condition in long-run, this is what makes democracy to assume a dangerous dimension by making lives bleak and precarious for the citizens. There is need for moderation in the cost of governance at all levels, both vertically and horizontally, especially in the light of recent economic realities, most notably the recent negative trends in international oil prices and attendant dwindling oil revenues to the government.

#### Formation of the Nigerian State

As the colonialists amalgamated the southern protectorate and the northern protectorate in 1914, such unification would have been an institutional mechanism for internally establishing a real western type of liberal democracy in Nigeria which would guarantee the participation of the people of diverse nationalities rather the colonialists used the institution of the amalgamated territory for the maximization of their specific economic interest at the detriment of the people. Put in another way, it was the monopolistic nature

of the colonial capitalism which led to the marginalization of the emerging Nigeria petty bourgeoisie who were frustrated because of their exclusion from the benefits of participation in the colonial political economy that gave credence for the formation of various political organization to fight colonialism and ensure their participation in the colonial political economy (Uba, 1989:214).

Apart from this, the colonialists administratively adopted a divide and rule strategy which excluded the northern protectorate in 1922 until they were re-integrated in 1946. But the re-integration conceded with the introduction of regionalism by the Arthur Richards constitution of 1946. This singular act further partitioned Nigeria into three major but unequal administrative regions with some minor ethnic nationalities coercively been re-aligned into each of the these major regions without their various participation and consultation. This directly laid and cemented the foundation of ethnic politics and the emergence of a disunited Nigeria State without a unified administrative structure for the participation of the people in the affairs of the state (Coleman, 1966; Crowder, 1966).

With the regional politics taken precedence over national politics, political leadership and followership become promoted on the ethnic grounds. This then militated against the emergence of one united administrative Nigerian state in which stable and functional democratic structures and institutions would have been built, promoted and guaranteed in a free, equal and participatory manner.

After the attainment of flag Independence in 1960 the indigenous political elite would have changed the authoritarian and anti-peoples' character of the colonial Nigerian state and then promoted national unity and ensured the active participation of the people in the affairs of the Nigerian State. Instead the indigenous political elite intensified the existing colonial authoritarian and anti-people nature of the Nigerian State by alienating, subjugating and oppressing the people in the conduct of the affairs of the Nigerian State. The implication of this for the enthronement and consolidation of western-type of liberal \democracy was the absence of a united Nigerian State through which active participation of the greater number of the people in the entire democratic process would have been assured and also guaranteed.

It was on this ground that Sadora (2008) argued that democracy will continue to elude Nigerians because of lack of national unity. According to him, "where a common national identity is lacking as in countries like Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Afghanistan the force of social heterogeneity are less restrained". He also stresses that "without a common Nationhood to fall back on, socially polarized societies have a difficult time making compromises necessary to build or sustain democracy" ( Sadora, 2008).

Following Sodaro's direction, Adeniran (1994) citing the Political Bureau maintains that the bane of democracy in Nigeria has been the non-existence of one Nation which would promote and guarantee the collective good and common welfare of the generality of Nigerian people. According to the political Bureau:

Nigeria's political misfortune in the past and the failure to evolve a united, prosperous and just nation can be blamed partly on inadequate and defective structures and institutions as well as the orientation which British Colonialism bequeathed to the young Nation at Independence and the

reluctance of succeeding governments to tackle these problems decisively. Among these are; an unbalanced federation, regionalism and sectionalism, alienation of the populace from the institutions of government and major apparatus of state; and the conception of the state as an instrument for exploiting the people, rather than as a vehicle for the promotion of their welfare and development (Adeniran, 1994:242).

From this, state remains the only strategic institution through which the people participate in the affairs of the state. But as the Nigerian state is currently structured, it remains the exclusive property of the indigenous elite who alienate, oppress and subjugate the people. This has affected the active participation of the people in the processes of enthronement and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria and equally heightened the clamor for the implementation of the Sovereign National Conference (2014) in Nigeria which would promote and guarantee the active participation of the entire Nigerian people in the affairs of the Nigerian state especially on the enthronement an enduring democratic system.

In Nigeria, the government is run as if the consent of citizens does not matter. Major policy decisions affecting the lives of the majority of the people were taken without their consent. Such policy decisions about selling the property of the Nigerian people were made without their consent. Even when popular public opinions were expressed against such policies, it does not matter to the Nigerian ruling class. They would still go ahead in accordance with their selfish interests. The class has perfected a mass propaganda strategy against the people's will. The Nigerian government has been spending billions of Naira to convince the people and sometimes even misinform them along narrow ruling class interests. In some cases, they go to some length, in a dubious manner, to propagate that such policies were the people's initiative and the people owned them under the so-called democratic dispensation.

Capitalist transformation in Nigeria provides the prime dynamo that shapes the fundamental relationship among the people and the dynamics of the socio-economic, political and cultural changes that are taking place in the polity presently. The fact that the Nigerian political economy is at the very crucial stage of primitive accumulation in which the state is central in the creation, control and distribution of societal resources, makes the capture of state power and politics very critical among the dominant class. The so-called private sector, which is said to be driven by both local and international moneybags, the political class and all the petty-bourgeois elements who hustle around driving nepotism, corruption and thievery, all rely, absolutely, on the Nigerian state as the primary source of their wealth and investment in the economy.

Taking into cognizance the supremacy of the dominant class, which is the class in control of the state and the economy, the tendency is that such a class decides for the country the line of development it may wish for itself that suits its political, economic and cultural interests irrespective of the interests of the majority of the people whose exploitation and disadvantage were taken for granted. Hence, this was what constituted the basis of the 'democratic thought' of the dominant class, which was what gave rise to the anti-democratic attitudes of the dominant class.

There is no doubt that the process of governance in Nigeria is not democratic. This type of transition that has been taking place since 1999 contradicts the expectations of the majority of the Nigerian people (International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance, 2001). This is irrespective of the barrage of literature asserting: "transition to democracy in Nigeria", 'democratization of Nigeria', 'democratic consolidation in Nigeria', etc. With the manifestation of the contradictions in the Nigerian political process becoming more glaring, some scholars are now even charactering the Nigerian situation as 'trapped in transition to democracy' (Shola, 2010). The contest here is that all these characterizations of the Nigerian polity are not correct. The question then is-what is it? That is, what is taking place in Nigeria? The answer is that Nigeria is transiting into full-fledge plutocracy (Eskor, 2010). A plutocratic form of government is-government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. In fact it can be added that Nigeria is at the stage of primitive plutocracy, which is plutocratic governance plus an economy of primitive accumulation. This is different from the type of plutocracy experienced by some modern capitalist countries of the west.

An examination of Nigerian primitive plutocracy reveals that the government is the promoter of crony-capitalism, and private wealth is the basis of capturing power. It is in Nigeria that you can find the history of some rulers who were primitive accumulators and promoted their cronies in the corridors of power to become super-rich in society. All these happened under the gamut of privatization with the backing of the Bretton Woods's institutions and the international capitalist governing class. The Nigerian elite has perfected the art of modifying and changing national laws, sometimes under the instigations of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), to go well with their interests even if the direction of such modification and change contradicts the constitution of the federation. The party politics of the Nigerian governing class has been transformed into politics of money, which was driven by the force of enormous wealth extracted and sometimes literally stolen from the public treasury. This is what explains the desperation of the various fractions of the dominant class in political contests to capture state power in the spirit of 'do or die politics'. Here in lies the politics of democracy in Nigeria.

#### Economic Disempowerment of Nigerians

A significant area which needs to be properly examined in the assessment of how the elitist and authoritarian character of the Nigerian state is hindering the active participation of the greatest number of the Nigerians in democratic enthronement and consolidation is the material conditions of the greatest number of Nigerians. As the economy is the base which shapes the superstructure, it is imperative to explore the material existence of the greatest number of the Nigerian people in order to ascertain how it has been greatly enhanced in order to guarantee active participation of Nigerians in the democratic enthronement and consolidation in Nigeria. With this, we will x- ray the link between the material life of the majority of Nigerians and the challenges of democratic enthronement and consolidation in Nigeria in what Ibeanu (2007) referred to as the Political Economy of democratic consolidation.

Here, the Classical Marxists place much emphasis on the material condition of the society as the major determinant of other aspects of the society. According to them, it is the material existence of the individual members of the society which determines their social

existence (Engels & Marx, 1971; Engels, 1942). By this, the Classical Marxists maintain that the nature and character of any given society are dependent on the material existence of the citizens in such society.

Therefore, the nature and character of any form of political system are determined by the material existence of the citizens. In relation to this, democracy as people oriented political form of government is dependent on the material existence of the citizens whom the sovereignty lies on. So, a state enthrones and subsequently sustains democracy if the material welfare of the greatest number of the people were guaranteed.

That is, state where the material conditions of the greatest number of the people are assured and equally maintained, democracy will thrive and its survival will be guaranteed. But where contrary, democracy will continue to fail and also remain a mirage. It is on this that Lipset (1981:3) maintains that "the more well to do a Nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy". The well to do of any Nation is the dependent on the material well-being of the greatest number of the citizens.

Going by this, it is expedient to state that in Nigeria, like some post-colonial states, the state remains a veritable instrument of capital accumulation (Ake, 1984; Miliband, 1977; Ekekwe, 1986). Miliband in this direction maintains that "the state here a source of economic power as well as an instrument of it; the state is a major means of production" (Miliband, 1977). By this, he stresses that the state combines the function of serving as direct instrument of class domination with that of being a major instrument of capital accumulation (Miliband, 1977). As the Nigerian state has had a chequered history of colonialism in which the Western imperialists instituted and positioned it to serve and promote their specific economic interest, the greatest number of Nigerians were alienated and marginalized in the economic affairs of the Nigeria state by the colonialist. Based on this, a Nigerian state with weak economic base was instituted and later bequeathed to the Nigerian elite at independence. These indigenous political elite inherited the state and its weak economic base and then continued to use the state as an instrument of capital accumulation as well as a tool for domination. This then limited the economic and political participation of the greatest number of Nigerians.

Therefore, in assessing the dilemmas of democracy in Nigeria with regard to the material conditions of the majority of Nigerians, greater emphasis will be significantly but not exclusively placed on the incidence of poverty. The choice of incidence of poverty as the basis for exploring the material conditions of Nigerians stemmed from the premise that poverty remains very encompassing as a means of examining the degree of material disparity and wealth accumulation among the entire Nigerian population. Also, poverty helps in shaping other aspects of the social existence of the people. Going by this, in the 1999 report of the Federal Office of Statistics the incidence of poverty in Nigeria has been so high and on the general increase since 1980 (Miliband, 1977: 15). From the data, incidence of poverty has been on the increase from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985 but later dropped slightly to 42.7% in 1992 from where it jumped to 65.6% in 1996. By 2005, according to the Central Bank of Nigeria's report incidence of poverty hit 71.3% (CBN, 2005: 23; 2006).

Still on the same trend, in the summary of the UNDP Nigeria Human Development Report



of 2008- 2009, the agency acknowledged the fact that Nigeria has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in sub- Saharan Africa with an annual growth rate of 6% witnessed between 2001 and 2008 and maintained that until the current global economic crisis which began to affect the global economy seriously towards the end of 2008, Nigeria had achieved unprecedented macro- economic stability. In spite of this, the report states that, the high growth rates do not seem to have translated to equitable distribution of wealth. Rather inequality in asset distribution clearly shows that 20% of the Nigerian population own 65% of National assets. Apart from this, on the poverty level, the report states that the number of poor people in Nigeria remains very high. According to the report, the total poverty head count rose from 27.2% in 1980 to 68.6% in 1996, an annual average increase of 8.83% in the 16 years period. However, the report states that, between 1996 and 2004, the total poverty head count declined by annual average of 2.1% to 54.4%. Over this period, the reports states, the percentage of population in the core poor category rose from 6.5% to 29.3% before declining to 22.0% in 2004. In the end, the report clearly stated that over 50% of the total population is officially poor (UNDP, 2008).

As over 50% of the total Nigerian population is officially poor, over 1.3 trillion naira remains the estimated annual salaries, allowances and fringe benefits of Nigeria's political office holders at all tiers of government. A breakdown by the Revenue mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission shows that N27 million was approximately the annual salaries and allowance of each minister, N28 million was the annual payment for each of the 109 senators while their counter parts in the House of Representatives went home with N22 million. Also a total payment of N53 billion was the total annual payment for councilors and chairpersons of the 774 local government areas. A total of N1.4 billion remained the estimated total annual payments to the presidential aides in emoluments while the total sum of N36 billion was annual salaries of House of Assembly members across the 36 states of the federation (This Day, 11 February 2009:1 ; Daily Sun, 2 June 2011). In spite of this, the country has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the world despite huge revenue gotten from oil and other mineral resources available in the country. As it stands, Nigeria produces over 2.4 million barrels of oil on daily basis.

With the above statistical records, it is clearer that the greater number of Nigerians is poor and economically disempowered. This has been attributed to the dominance of the Nigerian state by few indigenous political elite who remained very authoritarian, by using the state and its apparatus to accumulate at the detriment of the greatest number of the Nigerian people. As greater number of Nigerians is economically poor and marginalized, they are socially subjugated and politically alienated. This trend has made democracy difficult to be enthroned and consolidated in Nigeria as such have limited the general participation of the greatest number of people in the affairs of the state. This has been an aspect of the character of the Nigerian state which will continue to make democracy to be exclusive and very difficult to be consolidated in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

From this study, we understood that alienation can equally be conceived of as state of mind, and not just an understanding of how social organization affected human beings. It is however important to state at this point that, Marx's writings on alienation, from the

Manuscripts and Capital, demonstrates that for him alienation was not merely a state of mind, but also viz the material life of the individual. The problems of Nigeria have metamorphosed beyond leadership into institutional problems. Nigeria is living in falsehood, as the constitution does not reflect the will of the people. Taking into cognizance the prevailing anti-democratic attitude of the Nigerian dominant class, it can also be concluded that the ruling class lacks the capacity to administer the country through simple democratic relations. From all indications, some significant number of the Nigerian dominant class are more interested in plutocracy rather than democracy and their entrenched interest in plutocracy will hinder the process of humane societal development in Nigeria.

#### Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are hereby advanced:

Firstly, it is imperative that, if we are to progress from this state of war' in which we find ourselves, then we must be ready to reinvent and renegotiate the contract terms of this union that will ensure that the government exists for the good of the people; and as such should depend on their consent; and finally, should be limited and constitutional in its authority.

Secondly, since policy process shape and define the living conditions if not the totality of the way of life of a country's populace as it determines the political economic and socio-cultural existence of man as a part of the whole systems, there is need to ensure that positive policy decisions that are masses oriented are taken in Nigeria.

Thirdly, while agreeing with the argument of Michels that majority of human beings are apathetic, indolent and slavish towards public matters with a psychological need for guidance, the Nigerian elites should while doing this maintain a healthy balance between them and the poor thereby giving the latter a sense of belonging.

Fourthly, Nigeria's elite class through its policy makers needs to stem the prevalent elite oriented development policy pattern which has so far helped in creating a chasm between the country's rich and its poor.

Fifthly, in order to curb the present ugly trend of elite political practice and manipulations, Nigerians must unite to fights against hereditary political practice which is capable of running our painstakingly earned democracy.

Sixthly, political elites also, must not be allowed to continue hiding under the canopy of ethnic, regional and religious umbrellas to perpetuate corruption, unjust practices and domination of Nigeria's politics.

Lastly, there must be a total overhaul of the old political leadership from the hands of the old 'unproductive' former military generals to the hands of the relatively new, vibrant, and intelligent Nigerians. This can be done through credible election devoid of rigging and manipulations.

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