NATIONAL FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: ORCHESTRATED FOOD SHORTAGES IN NIGERIA TO DRIVE NATIONAL FOOD SCARCITY AND NEOCOLONIAL RULE

By Prof. Qrisstuberg Amua

Executive Director, Centre for Food Safety and Agricultural Research (CEFSAR) www.cefsar.org

Abstract

Economic hyperinflation significantly contributes to food insecurity, exposing any nation, but especially African nations (most largely still grappling with other macroeconomic policy handlings) to food sovereignty challenges and control by non-state transnational players and philanthropists. This thesis analyzes the situation through juxtaposition of economic theories and models, supported by empirical examples and case studies, focusing on the interplay between inflation, agricultural productivity, and the influence of external/Non-State actors.

Introduction

Food sovereignty, defined as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods (Patel, 2013), is a critical aspect of national security. Nigeria, a country with vast agricultural potential, is systematically pushed to the brink of facing severe food insecurity driven by economic hyperinflation and external influences. Let's attempt to dissect the mechanisms through which hyperinflation exacerbates food scarcity and how non-state actors exploit these vulnerabilities to enforce neocolonial control.

Economic Hyperinflation and Food Insecurity

Cost of Living and Purchasing Power

Hyperinflation, defined by Cagan (1956) as an inflation rate exceeding 50% per month, undermines economic stability of any nation, but especially those still rated down the ladder of economic development indices. While Nigeria's inflation has not reached such extreme levels in absolute terms, by this classical definition, the significant spikes in food inflation, surpassing 20% in recent years and reaching 31.70% in February 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2024), have severely impacted the cost of living, similar to the levels defined in absolute terms of classical hyperinflation. The Theory of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) posits that exchange rates should adjust to equalize the price of identical goods across countries (Rogoff, 1996). In Nigeria, persistent inflation reduces the purchasing power of the Naira, making basic food items unaffordable for many citizens.

Venezuela's hyperinflation offers a stark comparison. Following the collapse of its currency, Venezuela experienced severe food shortages and skyrocketing prices, demonstrating the real-world implications of extreme inflation on food security (Hausmann & Rodríguez, 2014). Nigeria, with its similar dependency on oil revenues and economic mismanagement, risks a comparable trajectory if inflation remains not controlled.

Cost-Push Inflation Theory suggests that inflation also results from increased production costs. In Nigeria, 'hyperinflation' has driven up transportation, storage, and distribution costs, leading to higher food prices. This situation mirrors Zimbabwe's hyperinflation period (2000-2009), where disrupted supply chains exacerbated food insecurity (Hanke & Kwok, 2009).

Food Insecurity and Food Sovereignty

Dependence on Imports

The Import Dependency Theory highlights the vulnerabilities of economies reliant on imports. Nigeria has been systematically pushed over the years of orchestrated food shortages to depend on imported food. This further execarbates decreased local production, and further exposes the country to global market fluctuations and trade policies (Dorward et al., 2004). The 2007-2008 global food price crisis illustrated how reliance on imports can lead to severe food shortages and price hikes (Von Braun, 2008).

Agricultural Sector Impact

Schultz's Agricultural Productivity Theory contends that investment in agricultural technology and infrastructure is crucial for increasing productivity (Schultz, 1964). However, 'hyperinflation' in Nigeria discourages such investments. The decline in agricultural output reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) underscores this issue. In contrast, the Green Revolution in Asia demonstrated how significant agricultural investment can enhance productivity and food security (Evenson & Gollin, 2003).

The Green Revolution in Asia, characterized by significant investment in organically grown high-yield hybrid crop varieties like the Tenera oil palm in Indonesia, Malaysia and more recently the Philippines, irrigation infrastructure, and agricultural education, led to substantial increases in food production and security (Evenson & Gollin, 2003). Nigeria's agricultural policies, if restructured to prioritize similar investments (but not the touted 'hook, line and sinker' attempt to adopt GMOs; which have been proven to be largely unsafe as food crops), could potentially replicate these successes despite current inflationary pressures.

Non-State Transnational Players and Philanthropists

Aid and Conditionalities

Dependency Theory argues that foreign aid can create a cycle of dependency, hindering sustainable development (Dos Santos, 1970). Non-state actors, including international NGOs and philanthropic organizations, often provide aid with conditions that may not align with national interests (Devereux, 2009). Nigeria's reliance on international food aid exemplifies this dynamic.

Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed by the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s reduced agricultural subsidies and support, exacerbating food insecurity in Nigeria and other African nations (Bates, 1981).

Market Control and Influence

Monopoly and Oligopoly Theories explain how a few large players can dominate markets, setting prices and terms (Murphy, 2006). Transnational corporations in Nigeria exert significant influence over the agricultural sector, often prioritizing cash crops over staple foods. This prioritization undermines food sovereignty and local food security.

The Case of Monsanto's Influence

The dominance of Monsanto (now Bayer) in the African seed markets illustrates how control by a few corporations influences agricultural practices and policies (Clapp, 2015). Monsanto's promotion of genetically modified seeds has been criticized for increasing dependency on proprietary technologies and external inputs, undermining local agricultural resilience.

Politics of Control

Policy and Governance

Public Choice Theory posits that policymakers may prioritize decisions that benefit themselves or a small elite over public interests (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). In Nigeria, inflationary policies weaken state institutions, making them more susceptible to external influence. The influence of donor agencies and international NGOs in shaping agricultural policies often compromises local needs (Chinsinga, 2007).

Neocolonialism Theory suggests that former colonial powers and international actors continue to exert control over developing nations' economies and policies (Nkrumah, 1965). The reliance on external aid and investment perpetuates a cycle of dependency, undermining autonomy of nations (Rodney, 1972).

The Case of AGRA's Impact

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has been criticized by scholars and policy analysts for promoting dependence on external inputs and technologies, mirroring the influence of corporations like Monsanto (Patel, 2013). AGRA's initiatives, while promoted to independent countries as aimed at increasing productivity, they often fail to address the root causes of food shortages like herder attacks on crop farmers, governmental policies that tend to rather discourage internal production of inputs; and rather tend to encourage and promote dependency of African countries on aid from without.

These either independently or put together demonstrate how economic 'hyperinflation' in Nigeria tends to exacerbate food insecurity and undermine national food sovereignty. Hyperinflation, from the foregoing analysis severely disrupts local agricultural production, increases dependence on imports, and invites greater control by non-state transnational players and philanthropists. Present food shortages in Nigeria, as much as in many other African countries is orchestrated through many factors like insecurity, macroeconomic policy mishandlings and wrong political learnings and leanings. To address these orchestrated food shortages and safeguard national sovereignty, Nigeria must stabilize its economy by looking inwards like China did, invest in local agriculture like the most of Asia did, and develop policies that enhance food sovereignty and reduce dependency on external actors.

Policy Recommendations

1. ***Economic Stabilization:*** Overhaul monetary policies to control inflation and stabilize the Naira.
2. ***Investment in Agriculture:*** Prioritize investment in agricultural security, technology, infrastructure, and education to boost local production.
3. ***Food Sovereignty Policies:*** Develop and enforce policies that support local food production and reduce reliance on imports and external inputs.
4. ***Regulation of Non-State Actors:*** Establish regulations to manage the influence of transnational corporations and ensure aid aligns with national interests to a far more greater extent.
5. ***Strengthening Institutions:*** Enhance the capacity of state institutions to resist external pressures and maintain accountability to the Nigerian citizenry.
6. ***Strengthening Internal Security:*** Enhance the capacity of states and local governments to curtail internal insecurity and maintain community based policing of the Nigerian citizenry.
7. ***Strengthening Capacity for Research and Development in Universities and Tertiary Research Institutions:*** Invest in policies to enhance the capacity of universities and

tertiary institutions to commit more focus to imparting strong skills in local research and development, to the Nigerian student.

8. And much more…

References

1. Cagan, P. (1956). The Monetary Dynamics of Hyperinflation. In M. Friedman (Ed.), *Studies in the Quantity Theory of Money*. University of Chicago Press.

2. Hausmann, R., & Rodríguez, F. (2014). Venezuela Before Chávez: Anatomy of an Economic Collapse. Penn State University Press.

3. Rogoff, K. (1996). The Purchasing Power Parity Puzzle. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 34(2), 647-668.

4. National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria. (2024). Inflation Report. Retrieved from NBS Nigeria website (*https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241470#:~:text=In%20February%202024%2C%20the%20headline,January%202024%20headline%20inflation%20rate.*)

5. Hanke, S. H., & Kwok, A. K. F. (2009). On the Measurement of Zimbabwe's Hyperinflation. *Cato Journal*, 29(2), 353-364.

6. Dorward, A., Kydd, J., Morrison, J., & Urey, I. (2004). A Policy Agenda for Pro-Poor Agricultural Growth. *World Development*, 32(1), 73-89.

7. Von Braun, J. (2008). Rising Food Prices: What Should Be Done? *EuroChoices*, 7(2), 36-41.

8. Schultz, T. W. (1964). Transforming Traditional Agriculture. *Yale Economic Essays*, 4(1), 191-205.

9. Evenson, R. E., & Gollin, D. (2003). Assessing the Impact of the Green Revolution, 1960 to 2000. *Science*, 300(5620), 758-762.

10. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2020). Nigeria at a glance. Retrieved from FAO website (*http://www.fao.org/nigeria/fao-in-nigeria/nigeria-at-a-glance/en/*)

11. Bates, R. H. (1981). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press.

12. Buchanan, J. M., & Tullock, G. (1962). *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*. University of Michigan Press.

13. Dos Santos, T. (1970). The Structure of Dependence. *The American Economic Review*, 60(2), 231-236.

14. Chinsinga, B. (2007). Reclaiming Policy Space: Lessons from Malawi's 2005/2006 Fertilizer Subsidy Programme. *Future Agriculture's Consortium*.

15. Clapp, J. (2015). Food Security and International Trade: Unpacking Disputed Narratives. *World Development*, 74, 14-23.

16. Devereux, S. (2009). Why does famine persist in Africa? *Food Security*, 1(1), 25-35.

17. Murphy, K. M. (2006). Oligopoly and Public Economics. *Handbook of Public Economics*, 2, 1631-1681.

18. Monsanto (Bayer). (2013). The Influence of Agrochemical Companies in Africa. Retrieved from [Monsanto website](*http://www.monsanto.com/agrochemicals/influence-africa*)

19. Buchanan, J. M., & Tullock, G. (1962). *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*. University of Michigan Press.

20. Nkrumah, K. (1965). Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. International Publishers.

21. Rodney, W. (1972). How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Howard University Press.

22. Patel, R. (2013). The Long Green Revolution. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 1-63.