THE AFRICAN STATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: *Sustainable development is an idea of global awareness about the demand for natural resources for growth and development with obvious consequences on the environment, especially for the future. The idea now has a 17-goal agenda, which was adopted in January 2015, by the UNDP to be achieved within a time frame of 15 years, from 2015 to 2030. Even though Africa is not on the same level as the global North, in terms of development, all African countries now embrace the idea. Using public policy as a perspective in understanding the implementation of the 17 goals, because all the 17 goals are policy issues and the state is central to policy formulation and implementation, this paper, therefore, interrogates the nature of the African state in order to see the extent to which African countries can achieve the 17 goals. The paper observes that the nature of the African state must be put in a proper perspective in order to understand why African countries may not achieve even one of the 17 goals within the 15- year time frame. This is because the state is today, the problem with the African development process, for being in crisis and for operating with very weak institutions.*

KEYWORDS: African State, Sustainable Development, Public Policy, Capacity Building.

INTRODUCTION

For some decades now, the idea of sustainable development has assumed a part of the global discourse on development strategies. The growth and development process became a matter of concern when it was observed that the modern industrial development strategies, with the massive industrial expansion, are consuming so much of natural resources that pose a threat to nature's ability to reproduce the resources as they are being consumed. Consequently, it was agreed that if the trend goes on without caution, there will be a conflict between the environment and development needs. It was against that background that the idea of sustainable development became part of development strategies, with a view to being sensitive to the continuous depletion of natural resources and its concomitant consequences for the future. Thus, in January 2015, the UNDP came up with 17- point sustainable development goals (17 SDGs) to be achieved within a time frame of 15 years, from 2015 to 2030.

And because the idea of sustainable development is a global idea, it is being embraced by African countries not minding the fact that they are not on the same level of development as the global North.

In this paper, therefore, an attempt is made to see how the 17 SDGs will be achieved within a 15 year – time frame, from 2015 to 2030 by African countries. Using public policy as a perspective in understanding the implementation of the 17 goals, because all the 17 goals are policy issues and the state is central to policy formulation and implementation, this paper interrogates the nature of the African state in order to see the extent to which African countries can achieve the 17 goals.

The paper starts with some brief conceptual notes on the concept of sustainable development after which the concepts of public policy, strategic planning, the state and capacity building were also briefly discussed in order to link the four concepts to the process of achieving the 17 SDGs. Finally, the paper concludes by examining the nature of the African state in relation to public policy, strategic planning and capacity building. And that is because the nature of the African state must be put in proper perspective in order to understand why African countries may not achieve even one of the 17 goals within the 15- year time frame because the state is today, the problem with the African development process, for being in crisis and for operating with very weak institutions.

Sustainable Development: Some Conceptual Notes

Capitalism, as a mode of production, has always been characterised by continuous expansion in order to meet development strategies. And the process of capitalist expansion in meeting industrial needs for development requires heavy demand for resources, such as agricultural outputs like wood, cotton, timber, oil, and coal, all of which depend on the increasing use of the land, sea and even the atmosphere. Consequently, there is a conflict between development strategies that relentlessly demand resources and nature's limited available resources. (Snarr & Snarr, 2012). In other words with capitalism and the ideas of development, which aim at improving the wellbeing of society, through industrial processes, the industrial processes that continually require more and more resources, a conflict between ecology and economics becomes inevitable.

Thus, if the modern idea of development, with its dynamics, is to stop fueling the inevitable conflict between ecology and economics, policymakers will have to embark on substantial

modifications to their strategies and their assumptions about development plans, so that development will be sustainable (Snarr & Snarr, 2012). It is against this background that the idea of sustainable development became a global concern in terms of discussing the environmental consequences of economic growth and development with particular reference to the continuous depletion of natural resources. In other words, focusing on the depletion of natural resources and its concomitant consequences for the future becomes the underlying definition of sustainable development.

Although the idea of sustainable development is a controversial one, as there is no general agreement as to what it means, it is, however, pertinent to say that common ground in all the definitions and positions of scholars about the idea of sustainable development is the reconciliation or better still, the management of the inevitable conflict between ecology and economics. Thus, sustainable development will simply mean a concerted effort that involves many global actions, from the development of concepts to the negotiation; monitoring, and financing of action plans for the management of the conflict between ecology and economics. In other words, it is that man should be conscious of the danger between capitalist expansion with the needs and requirements of development and the protection of the environment. Thus, sustainable development is primarily about embarking on development efforts while at the same time paying attention to environmental protection for sustaining resources that are necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. It is, therefore, a process that envisions a desirable future for human societies in which living conditions and resources continue to meet human needs without undermining the "integrity, stability and beauty" of natural biotic systems (Brundtland, 1987).

Sustainability, therefore, can be defined as the practice of reserving resources for future generations without any harm to nature and other components of it. Sustainable development ties together the concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political and economic challenges that are faced by humanity. It can also be defined as any construction that can be maintained over a long period of time without damaging the environment while man's current interests in the use of resources should not jeopardize the interest of future generations. (Brundtland, 1987 Report).

The most quoted definition of Sustainable Development is the one by UN World Commission on economics and development. It says:

> Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs
> of the present without compromising the ability of future
> generations to meet their own needs.

Thus, sustainable development is about meeting human development objectives and also making sure that doing so does not, in any way, decrease the ability of the environment to provide the needed resources for human future needs. In other words, sustainable development refers to the many processes and pathways for sustainability, which is about the future in which human activities in the environment are balanced in the pursuit of improved quality of life. (en.unesco.org/theme education).

Although, the idea of sustainable development has been criticized for asking the question of what is to be sustained in sustainable development, however, this criticism does not remove the idea that society continues to embark on the development process by making use of

environmental resources that may be irreversible. Therefore, while it is possible that we may be able to find ways to replace some natural resources, it is much more unlikely, if not impossible, in some cases, that some can ever be replaced. (en.unesco.org).

Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been described in terms of some dimensions, domains or pillars that should be taken care of, in order to protect the future of humanity. These dimensions are *ecology, environment, agriculture, energy, technology, couture, institutions and governance*. In other words, by taking good care of the above dimensions, i.e. making positive use of them, devoid of abuse, will make it possible for sustainable development to be achieved, which is organizing economic activities to promote growth and development and at the same time protecting the environment by focusing on the importance of identifying and respecting environmental limits. (Lamborn &Lepgold, 2003). Thus, sustainable development simply means ensuring development, which is a continuous (sustain) process of growth towards self-reliance and contentment that embodies a strong, healthy and just society. It is about improving the ways things are done, both for the present and for the future in order to promote personal wellbeing, and social cohesion and create equal opportunity for all (development). It is about holistic thinking, a systematic approach to development which aims at achieving a well-defined outcome in terms of making a society responsible, on a continuous basis, for human livelihood, welfare and the future. To realize sustainable development, therefore, there must be strategic plans, capacity building and strong institutions while the role of the state must be seen as extremely crucial.

Sustainable Development Goals, Strategic Planning,

Capacity Building and the State.

The Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, as part of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the organization adopted what was termed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were a global development agenda. At that meeting, the UN adopted a set of 17 goals which imagines a future that would be rid of poverty and hunger and a world that will be safe from the worst effects of climate change.

The set of 17 goals was objectives form of a programme of sustainable universal and ambitious development. (*en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals*).

The set of 17 goals had the UNDP as one of the leading organisations that will work towards the realization of and fulfilment of the goals by the year 2030.

The SDGs embody different policies with emphasis on their process of actualization and not just the end result. (Mayanja and Nkata, 2019). The adopted SDGS in September 2015 became a programme of 15-year development agenda for the eradication of poverty which today constitutes the greatest challenge to mankind. And without facing poverty for its eradication, sustainable development will be difficult to attain. The 17 goals of the SDGs are, (1) no poverty, (2) zero hunger, (3) good health and wellbeing, (4) quality education, (5) gender equality (6) clean water and sanitation (7) affordable and clean energy (8) decent work and economic growth (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure (10) reduced inequalities (11)

sustainable cities and communities (12) responsible consumption and production (13) climate action (14) life below water (15) life on land (16) peace, justice and strong institutions (17) partnership for the goals.

Thus, from the above, the role of the state becomes very crucial and central to the realization of the set of SDGs. And that is because the goals are all policy issues and the state is the institution that is very central in policy formulation and implementation.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the process of looking into the future and identifying trends and issues against which to align priorities. (UNDD) It is about understanding the challenges, trends and issues associated with a problem and then determining the most effective and efficient way possible to achieve a set of goals for solving the problem. Strategic planning is a process of defining major goals and objectives and also developing some long-term strategies in a purposeful way that will ensure a high level of performance (Paister, 2003).

Again, strategic planning is the conscious selection of policies, the development of capability and the interpretation of the environment in order to be focused and also be able to position collective efforts toward the achievement of a set of objectives. (Shafritz, Russell and Borick, 2007).

Strategic planning is an effort that is aimed at creating or updating the actions that are contained in a set policy or in a vision. Indeed, strategic planning is a systematic process of envisioning a desired future that leans heavily on the concept of a strategy which is about achieving a set goal in the most effective and efficient manner possible (UNDP). Thus, one of the aims of strategic plans is to guide the delivery of an overall objective and direct a multi-task of work. Strategic plans, therefore, integrate, drive and connect all inputs to a common model of framework. (UNDP).

Strategic plans must embody the following:

- A clear statement of intent reflects the vision and mission of the government.

- Understand the need for a strategic plan.

- Well defined set goals.

- Identification of opportunists, threats and other critical factors.

- Identification of strengths, weaknesses and competencies.

- Relevance of the conditions to make strategies relevant.

- Availability of funds and other resources.

- A well-articulated process of implementation.

- Identify different ways to achieve set objectives.

- Design a relevant plan of action.

- The time frame for evaluation.

In other words, four critical considerations must be taken note of

- Scope (is it too much or too little)

- Means (How does government achieve the goals i.e. what instruments to use)

- Resources (Funds, personnel, infrastructures)

- Institutional structure (Assembly, L/G) Inter-governmental relations).

Indeed, the primary purpose of strategic planning is to set overall goals for objectives and also develop a plan to achieve them. Therefore, if Africa is to achieve the aims of sustainable development, the state must come up with a strategic plan.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is the process of developing and strengthening the skills and abilities including the processes and the resources that an organization needs to survive. It is also about capacity development which is the development that focuses on the understanding of the obstacles that inhibit people, government or any institution from realizing their developmental goals. In other words, it is about the enhancement of the abilities that will allow people or institutions to achieve measurable and sustainable results. (www.definitions.not/defintion/capacitybuilding).

Capacity building is an intervention that strengthens an organization or institution's ability to fulfil its mission by providing sound management, strong governance and persistent rededication to achieving results. (Bealey and Shebby, 2010). Thus, in its wide context, capacity building is about the ways and means by which the overall goals are achieved. (Stig Enemark, 2003). Consequently, capacity is the ability of an institution or organization to perform its functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Thus, capacity is the power of something, a person, an organisation or an institution to perform and produce positive results. (Sting Enemark, 2003). Indeed, capacity building is not a one-time effort to improve short-term effectiveness, but a continuous improvement strategy toward the creation of a sustainable and effective institution or organization (www.commitofnonprofits.ng).

Capacity building is doing whatever is necessary and needed to equip a society so that it becomes more efficient and productive and is able to advance itself into the future. It must be a conscious effort of strategy for improvement, on a continuous basis, for sustained effectiveness, growth and development. In other words, capacity building is about an intentional, well-coordinated mission/vision, a driven effort, that is aimed at strengthening the society for improved performance and positive impact. It is about using institutions with the aim of sustaining order and good governance to ensure popular participation and equip the people with the capacity to exploit their potential and the resources in their environment for the betterment of their society. Capacity building is essential for people in order to make them acquire the skill that will enable them to manage, adjust and respond to the dynamics of future developments. Thus, capacity building must be people-focused and oriented to be carried out through institutions.

Capacity building is therefore a policy process that gives definition and meaning to the fact that people must be well empowered in order to make them achieve development on a

sustainable basis. And because it is a policy-driven strategy, it is also a class project, developed and carried out by the state, on a well-defined and articulated ideology.

Thus, strategic planning and capacity building are both policy strategies that the state must adopt in order to achieve the SDGs for long term sustainable development.

In other words, to meet sustainable development objectives, the state must develop strategic plans and capacity building with strong institutions.

The State

Quite a number of theories have been propounded, which aim at explaining the evolution, emergence or origin of the state. There are such theories as patriarchal, evolutionary, historical, matriarchal, anthropological, Marxist/Force, social contract, divine, and natural. Today, the dominant issue in politics is the state, precisely because the state is the central focus of political theory and political analysis. Indeed, the state is so central in any development discourse.

Although the concept of state is very current in the social sciences, it is worth noting that different theorists view the state in the background of their respective ideologies and attitude which is why the concept of state is different from period to period and from age to age, from Plato to Marx (Das, 2009). It is also agreed that the exact source and time of origin of the state is not known, the movement of thoughts about the concept can be outlined as follows, from Divine, Evolutionary, Natural, Social Contract and Force Theories. However, the emphasis here shall be on the Marxist/Force theory.

The Marxist/Force theory is neither about the divine, evolutionary or natural origin of the state nor is about the strong people subjugating the weak in society. This is where Marx makes his significant contribution to the concept of the state. Thus, to Marxist/Force theory, the state neither originates in the will of society nor it is maintained for the benefit of all sections of society, because the state does not come into existence for the fulfilment of a moral purpose, nor does it emanate from the will of the people because the origin of the state is as a result of conflict and the state then operates as an instrument of domination, the domination of the weak by the powerful. (Mahajan, 2014).

The theory considers the emergence of the state in terms of events and actions that arise in the process of social production, which is why the state has little to do with representative institutions; rather, the state is something through which the will of the ruling class is imposed on the rest of the people (Burns, 1957). Again, the theory believes that it is always a particular class that plays the leading part in establishing and then consolidating a given economic system and this particular class is able to do so because of its ownership of the means of production and its control, through the state. It can therefore be argued that property owners created a force within the society and the force became the instrument that is used for governance and that is because force is applied in implementing taxation, ensuring obedience to the law and policy implementation. It is, therefore, logical to argue that the state was created by the dynamics of socio-economic production which is maintained and sustained by force.

The modern state is therefore a creation of capitalism which developed with the coming of industry and of complicated commercial arrangements and, with large scale economic operations, the modern complex economic activities, the capitalists needed to stay in control and dominate society. Thus, the state emerged, as an institution and also an instrument of power

for the capitalists, which is why the state is an institution that represents politics and power on behalf of the property class. (Shively, 2012). Thus, Marxists see the state, its powers, with its corresponding ideology as what constitutes the guardian of property (Comforth, 1962). Therefore, the state is closely identified with what is called the ruling class (Weldon, 1962). Consequently, wherever there is a class struggle (conflict), there is a need for a state (Lukais, 1991). Thus, the state produces hegemonic ideology in terms of exercising a dominance of ideas in society. Today, the modern state remains a most significant force in shaping the economy of the society, thereby making it play an important role in the development of modern society. (Dicken, 2003). It is against this background that the Marxist/Force theory is believed to be most appropriate in explaining the concept of state, in so far as the economically powerful group controls the means of production. Indeed, this was the type of state that was imposed on African countries by colonialism and it was the same colonial state that African countries inherited at flag independence.

Consequently, for this paper, the Marxist/Force theory of the state, using the Marxian perspective in the analysis of the state has been adopted. So, any reference to the state in this work refers to the Marxian idea of the state. My choice of state is based on the fact that today, it is the Marxian type of state that is struggling to emerge in Africa and also because the state, in modern society is the major locus of power and authority.

Sustainable Development Goals, Public Policy and the State.

Sustainable Development Goals

As earlier noted, the concept of sustainable development focuses attention on finding strategies to promote development in ways that degradation, pollution overexploitation of natural resources of the environment, will be avoided (Baylis & Smith 2006). It is an idea that represents human efforts to harmonize human activities and the natural world so as to be able to conserve the earth's stock of resources and its broader ecological support systems (Lambarn & Lebgold, 2003).

The World Bank (cited in Lewellen, 1995), realizing the crucial role of the state toward the achievement of sustainable development especially the 17 SDGs came up with the following seven important ways. These are:

- Environmental considerations must be built into the policy-making process.

- Reduction in population growth should be a priority

- Even though sustainable development is a global agenda, local problems should be attacked first

- The administrative cost of environmental protection should be minimized by setting realistic goals.

- Although the need for trade-offs between the economic, social and biological spheres cannot be avoided, such trade-offs should be made after careful analysis.

- Governments need to conduct research on environmental problems and ensure that the research results reach relevant administrators and even the general public.

- The adage that "prevention is cheaper than cure" should be kept in mind because it is easier to protect the environment than face the irreparable damage later.

From the above, it is clear that all the seven ways by which sustainable development goals can be achieved are all policy issues which make public policy a clear factor in the global efforts toward achieving sustainable development goals.

Public Policy

According to Eagles & Johnston, (1999) people look to the state to solve problems or take action on pressing issues. Again it is agreed that the political process throws up a lot of demands on the state which makes the state to be an ensemble of resources, organized for solving problems. Consequently, increasing focus, nowadays, has been on this problem-solving activity of the state (Eagles & Johnston, 1999). Thus, David Easton says that politics is the "authoritative allocation of values for a society" and to Lasswell, politics is "who gets what, when and how". What both Easton and Lasswell are saying is that politics is used in resolving conflicting interests and values and that from among the numerous competing interests in society, the actions of government, on behalf of the state will determine which values/interests will prevail.

It is against this background that public policy can be seen as what public officials within government choose to do or not to do about public problems (Kraft & Furlong, 2007). And public problems here mean any conditions that the public perceives to be unacceptable and therefore require state intervention. In this instance, therefore, environmental degradation, pollution and threats to wildlife all call for state action. Thus, public policies result from decisions made by the government.

Public policy can therefore be defined as a course of government action or inaction in response to public problems (Kraft & Furlang, 2007). Again, Leslies Pal, cited in (Eagle and Johnston, 1999) says that public policy is a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given set of problems. Again, public policy is an instrument through which societies regulate themselves. Therefore, policy reflects a society's most important values and which of the many different values are given the highest priority in any given situation. However, the most often quoted definition of public policy is by Thomas Dye (1972) which is "anything government chooses to do or not to do".

From the above, two important points need to be emphasized in order to appreciate how crucial the state is to the idea of public policy. The first point is that the agent or institution for public policymaking is the government. Consequently, talking about public policy is talking about the action of the government. Second, it is obvious from the above definitions and analyses of public policy that public policies involve a fundamental choice on the part of the government, to do something or to do nothing (Howlett & R. Ramesh, 2003).

The role of the state

Although there is no agreement on a particular definition of the state nor is there an agreement on its basic functions, however, one feature on which there has been an agreement is that by the nineteenth century, the state had become a key political actor in any capitalist society. What that means is that since that time, the power of the state is exercised directly over a certain territory and its population. Thus, the state now possesses public power that is exercised by its

special institutions, making it a political super-structural organization of power with political supremacy as well. (Johari, 2012). Consequently, we may not all agree on the definitions and nature of the state and the state may appear to us as highly abstracted, it nevertheless imposes its will on all of us through its institutions, especially the government. In other words, one thing is clear about the state, and that is, today the state has a direct influence on all our lives. And, in actual practice, the way it functions, the state is represented by the government. (McAuley, 2003). Again, the government exercises all its functions with authority, on behalf of the state, which ultimately makes the government an essential organ of the state. (Gauba, 2007). Thus, whenever we are referring to the state, we are speaking of an institution, of which government is the administrative organ. (MacIver, 1965).

As noted earliest, public policies are designed by governmental bodies to accomplish specific goals and produce definite results. In other words, policies involve what governments actually do and not merely what government officials say they will do (Anderson, 2015). Thus a public policy is about a fundamental choice on the part of the government, which is why Thomas Dye says that the agent of policymaking is the government and when we talk about public policies, we speak of the actions of governments, cited in (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Here lies the connection between public policies, government and the state.

In the case of sustainable development, which is the focus of this paper, the role of the state is very crucial in the realisation of the 17 SDGS. This is because the 17 SDGs are all policy issues, in so far as they are expected to be articulated as programmes to be implemented and get the desired results. Consequently, for sustainable development goals, the state will work through its institutions, in particular, the government, to formulate a broad policy for meeting the 17 SDGs objectives. And in order to make the policy workable and achievable, the policy must embody well-articulated strategic planning and capacity building programmes.

Fig. 1 below illustrates the interactive process of the state and public policy for sustainable development goals with strategic planning and capacity building programmes that will assist in strengthening the policy and also seeing to its successful implementation and outcome. The public policy on the 17 SDGs must also have an inbuilt mechanism for evaluation, the result of which will be communicated back to the state.
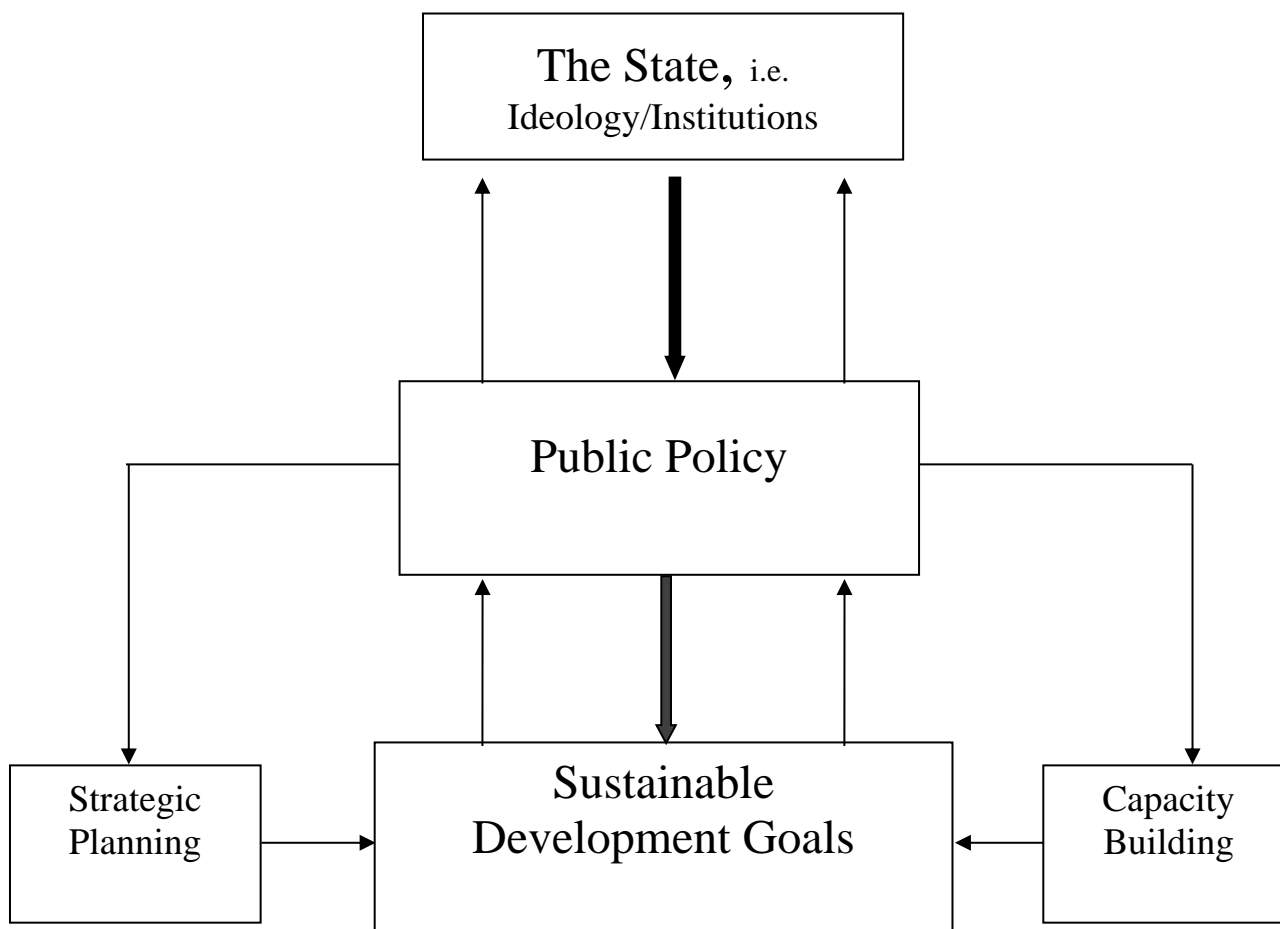
**Fig. 1. The State and the flow of public Policy for sustainable Development Goals.
(Authors creative idea)**

The African State and the Challenge of Sustainable Development

The conditions of the African State

The study of the polity includes the social decision-making process which is a process that has an impact on every member of society. (McAuley, 2003). The government is a major player in the decision-making process and in performing this decision-making role, the government acts on behalf of the state, the state that is today, the most crucial political actor, indeed, the powerhouse of the society.

There may be diverse definitions perspectives or classifications of the idea of the state, but in all modern societies, the defining characteristic of the state is that it has power over every member of society. And, in any given society, the power is universal, the power that is responsible for all the decisions that are taken by organs of the state, particularly the government. (Belov, 1986). Thus, the African State needs some elaboration in order to understand how it will formulate and implement the policy of sustainable development goals. This is precisely because the nature of the state, and the institutions through which legitimate

power is exercised and enforced are central to policy formulation and implementation in any society. (Smith, 2009). Today, the conditions in Africa provide some reasons why an analysis of the African State is necessary for an understanding of the performance of policy formulation and implementation on the continent. Hence, some attention needs to be given to the African conditions with regard to the nature of the African State, while discussing the policy of sustainable development, in particular, the 17 SDGs. It is, therefore, not out of place to see the African State in a peculiar way because the modern African State is an imposition of colonialism and because it did not evolve gradually as capitalism progressed, as was the case in Europe, it now possesses some unique characteristics.

As earlier noted, the modern state is a creation of capitalism when the capitalist class realised the need to have an institution for control and dominance. That was because capitalism had torn the society apart with its creation of irreconcilable contradictions between antagonistic classes, because of a lack of unity of interests. (Belov, 1986). However, in pre-colonial Africa, there was no capitalism but slavery and feudalism and therefore there were no capitalist social classes or capitalist institutions that represent the interest of capital, as a result, the modern state did not exist in Africa. Consequently, one of the uniqueness of the post-independent African State was the evolution of a political class that was created by colonialism but with its own trajectory of development based on the unleashing of capitalist forces. Thus, colonialism created capitalism in Africa when there was no capitalist class. It also created capitalist political institutions when there was no capitalist state. (Fadakinte, 2021). It is, therefore, unfortunate that the African post-colonial state has taken on more elements of the capitalist colonial state without a well-rooted capitalist ethos in African Society. Thus, the legacy of the colonial state is the weak vertical and horizontal integration of the African State, emphasizing the dominance of brute/raw power rather than rational authority and relying on weak and low-level government. (Olowu, 1994). The reason for this weak condition of the state is that at independence, the dominant class in Africa got political power but without economic power because economic power was still with the metropolitan capitalists in Europe, as they dominated the economy. Consequently, at independence, those who were given political power did not have economic power. The result was that the dominant class, which became fragmented during decolonization, embarked on a bitter struggle for resources, political and economic, with the aim of taking control of state power and consolidating it. (Fadakinte, 2020). In the process, the attitudes of the dominant class toward politics became violent and any faction that controls state power becomes ruthless, which explains the fragility of the state. As a result, the African society with its internal structures and the inherited colonial institutions became weak making the state unproductive. Consequently, the state became crisis-ridden by being enmeshed in a factional struggle for power and it became inefficient and unproductive due to a lack of clarity of public policies, because, in Africa, public policies are devoid of meaningful and relevant ideology.

Furthermore, because of the weakness of the African state, the Society became strong which makes private interests riddle the state and the ordinary citizens ignore state directives. (Rapley, 1996). The African state is, therefore, not strong enough to be effective and again, it is short of rational and legitimate power and also, it is deprived of bureaucratic resources to make it function efficiently. As a result, the state is quite distant from the people, which is why it is difficult for it to successfully formulate and implement policies. (Rapley, 1996). In addition, the inherited well-organized bureaucracy, from European colonizers, now lacks the normal

bureaucratic power and legitimacy and most frequently has to work with inadequate information. (Smith, 2009).

However, it is inevitable for the African state to be insipient and crisis-ridden because the character of the dominant class defines the nature of the state and the values of the dominant class also determine the form of public policy.

Consequently, (Smith, 2009) has identified four characteristics as the defining nature of the African State. These are,

- The legacy of colonialism continues to influence the African State.

- The African State stands between being one of a society-centred and one of a state-centred institution.

- The impact of the forces of globalisation now renders the African State weak with regard to political power.

- The African State is with perpetual political instability.

And (Anderson, Hey, Peterson, Toops, and Stevens, 2008), argue that;

- Unstable governments and civil conflicts have taken a heavy toll on African people that today Africa is home to seven of the ten states that are most susceptible to political and economic collapse.

- Africa is today less connected to the global economy than any other continent. For example, in twenty years, that is between 1980 and 2000, Africa received more than $300 billion but economic growth in much of the region declined.

- African governments continue to incur greater and greater debt to finance their projects.

- Today, Africa produces less food than thirty to forty years ago. And about 75% of the African population makes their living off the land while in America the percentage is less than 2%.

The Challenge of Sustainable Development

There is no doubt that the idea of sustainable development has some challenges in Africa, and the main challenge is the state which is responsible for articulating a policy for the achievement of the sustainable development objectives. However, with the description of the African state, it will not be too difficult to understand why and how the 17 SDGs cannot be met in 2030 as proposed.

With the African state in such a condition of flux and the society so underdeveloped, meeting the development goals will certainly be a mirage. For example, Africa ranks the least among the six continents of the world in the following areas

- Education and literacy level

- Poverty

- Life expectancy

- Debt portfolio

- Development index

CONCLUSION

If sustainable development is about laying emphasis on the links between development and environmental problems and promoting political and economic change, then Africa is far from being able to achieve any of the 17 SDGs, within the fifteen-year time frame, from 2015 to 2030. This is because the primary reason why sustainable development became an issue was to raise some concerns about the process of economic growth and development that is accompanied by massive industrialization and the effects on the environment. (Smith and Warr, 1999). Therefore, going by the current situation and the debilitating conditions of African society, it is doubtful if Africa has the peace, at the moment, to study the concept of sustainable development in order to understand the extent to which all the issues raised in the 17SDs affect the continent (Smith and Warr, 1999). In any case, Africa is far from possessing an industrialized economy that will engender serious concerns about the effects of industrialization on the environment. However, for the current pitiable conditions of Africa, being a continent in a debt trap and unable to adequately feed her teeming population, this is the time to start bearing in mind the idea of sustainable development, so as to be able to take care of the environment and address all the identified concerns while planning for development.

The 17 SDGs, perhaps, summarize the African conditions, from poverty, hunger, and poor health to weak institutions and it is doubtful, except by some magical intervention, for Africa to solve the problems in 15 years, as planned by the UNDP in September 2015. Fig. 2 below explains the pitiable conditions of the African state that make meaningful policy difficult to formulate and which explains why sustainable development, with its objectives, being policy issues are currently far beyond the capacity of African states.
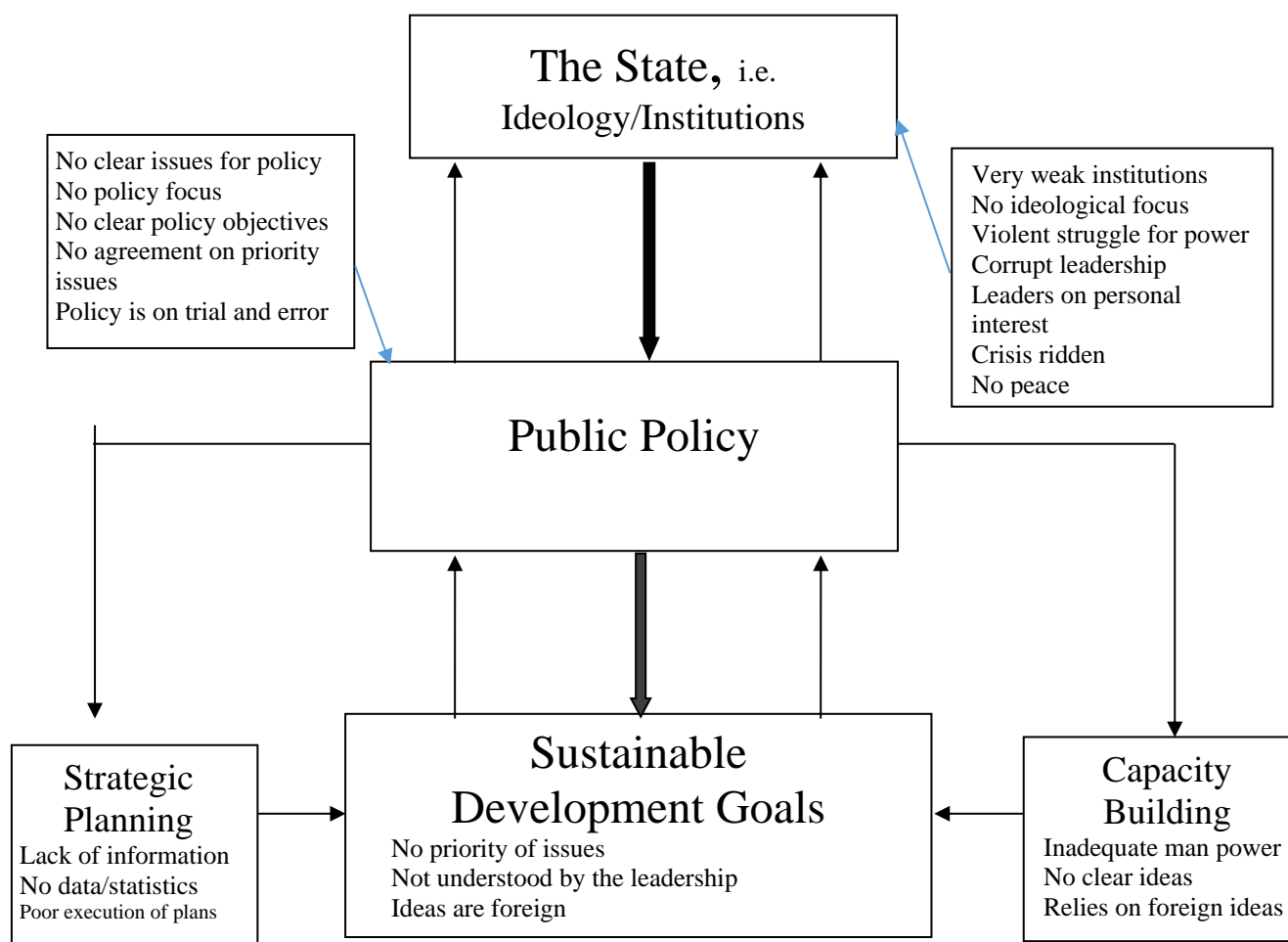
Fig. 2. The conditions of the African State and Public Policy for Sustainable Development Goals. (Authors creative idea)

Finally, what then is to be done? We need to understand how colonialism and its legacies created foreign institutions, particularly the state, which is now the main challenge to development in Africa. The imposition of the European capitalist model of state is yet to emerge and consolidate its powers and unfortunately, the process of its emergence is now fraught with the violent struggle by factional political leaders.

Second, the state has earlier been identified as the powerhouse of society, making it a crucial institution and a critical political actor in the development process. But because the African state is crisis-ridden, it does not have the peace to formulate meaningful policy on a well-defined ideology to promote development and aim at sustainable development.

Lastly, for now, we cannot be talking about sustainable development in Africa rather, we should be talking about how to develop a cohesive and responsible dominant class to enable them to produce a ruling class, a class that will be in control of politics and also control and

manage the economy in the interest of all and not a corrupt and parochial gangs and brigands, who parade themselves as leaders while holding on to power for their selfish purposes.

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