Assessment of Policies or Prayers as Development Options in Nigeria

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Abstract

Development options worldwide respond to pragmatic and concise policy statements that set the pattern and pace for actualizing development status for aspiring countries. However, contrarily, policy programmes that should be the bedrock of development have been replaced by prayers and religious activities carried out in contravention of what religion and religious writing specifies. Given the forgoing position, this paper examines issues boarding on the interplay between religion and development on the one hand and policies programmes which are the bedrock for development endeavours undertaken by the government and development outcomes which are consequent upon the careful implementation of policy programs on the other. The research discovered that rather than formulate and adhere strictly to policies that will propel development across the Nigerian State, the human tendencies for quick results have made both leaders and the citizens seek prayers as alternatives to policies for achieving societal development and, by implication, the overall development of the country. The paper adopts Rostow's theory of economic development and rationale actor model of policymaking as its framework of analysis. It employs secondary data sources, including journals, articles and internet material. It recommends that the prospect of development in Nigeria is consequent upon good economic and policy programmes, which are fundamental ingredients for the development of the individual and, by implication, the country's various states.

Keywords: Development; Policies; Prayers, Underdevelopment

Introduction

Nations of the World have often resolved to policy formulation, implementation and innovation as significant drivers for actualizing the fundamental objective and development goals. The imperatives of holistic policy formulation, implementation and innovation across human and organizational engagement must be emphasized. According to Jenkins, cited in Ambali (2015), "a policy is a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the powers of those actors to achieve".

Therefore, according to Rumki (2014), the policy can be broadly defined as a proposed course of action that a person intends to pursue that drives group actions, an institution or a government to realize a specific objective or purpose within a given environment. Policy formulation is necessary before every action in every form of organization, private or public. The policy lays down the framework within which the organizational goals are set to be accomplished. The objectives of an organization which are often defined within the specific

and general objectives for which they are established are concretized in the policy goals, which set the administrative rules in motion. The policy upon which any government is built is one of the vital tasks of any government, especially ensuring that identified goals are vigorously pursued within a specified timeframe. The forgoing presents a comprehensive action plan summarized into statements and plans of action by government, institutions, and, in some cases, individuals to achieve better conditions which is the basis of development.

However, in the light of the initial position, the imperative of policy for driving development across states and, most importantly, amongst Third World States has presented issues on the contrary, which is evident in the challenges and many issues that include but are not limited to policy formulation and implementation as evident in the development gap experienced in Less Developed Countries.

The challenge of development in Africa is well captured by Osborn, Cutter and Ullah (2015); thus, "Africa is the second most populous continent in the world with a young population of 1.2 billion people. This is because youths account for more than half of the African population. The favourable weather and large landmass make Africa the ideal destination for agricultural production; despite these evident advantages, its population lives in abject poverty and unemployment cuts across all age grades, especially its youth".

According to Handly, Bird and Cammack (2009), "Africa has huge mineral deposits. It is no doubt a land with great potential. However, poverty, inequality and youth unemployment levels across countries in the richly endowed continent are worrisome. Africa is home to the majority of the world's poorest people and is adjudged to be living below the USD1.20 poverty line globally. 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa subsist on less than USD 1 per day".

Notably, within the myriad of development challenges confronting the continent and, by extension, the Nigerian State, government and its institutions still need to address these challenges holistically through well-crafted policies. The policy gap has been filled by the over-religiosity of Africans, specifically in Nigeria, where religious gatherings and prayer houses have taken over major streets of the country. For example, the task of ensuring development has been reduced to prayers when government officials gather for strategic planning sessions; most often, it is either a Christian or Muslim faithful-led opening and closing prayers, where deliberations will be committed into the hands of God, who in the real sense had already given humanity especially resource-rich country like Nigeria all its needs to develop.

Africa, in general, and Nigeria, has become the hub of religious practices across all major religions of Islam, Christianity and Traditional worshipers. Their presence in the country has primarily influenced government and individual reactions to events fundamentally against the provisions of secularism that the country's constitution provides. For example, in most states in Northern Nigeria, religion has been the primary driver of government decisions, with Sharia Law holding a central place in decision-making.

Specifically, the country's secularist position is aptly captured in Section 10 of the 1999 constitution as amended, which states thus, "The Government of the Federation or a State shall not adopt any religion as a State Religion". This provision decisively confers on the country no particular state religion. However, the contrary is the case because religion, above other factors, has often determined the operations and conduct of government affairs in Nigeria. For example, Nigeria's decision to join the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) was religious. Also, coming from the practice of religion in the country is the resolve to hold prayer sessions across the religious lines of Christians and Muslims during government and group functions.

Importantly, in pursuing the religious colourations in Nigeria, state and government institutions are often seen to deploy state scare recourses in sponsoring religious activities such as pilgrimages to Mecca, where religious actions such as stoning the devil are done on a routine basis (the Holy city of Islam), Jerusalem (the Holy city of the Christians) and also sponsor traditional religions where often prayers are said to be made for government representatives, state institutions, State's economic development, security of lives and property and the success of leadership which are core policy issues.

Given the above position, this paper interrogates constructively the prospects and imperatives of concisely crafted policy, implementation and appraisal by government and its agents as the fundamental ingredient for addressing the numerous development challenges confronting Nigeria and, within this context, establish the consequence to the country's leaders resolve to hold prayers and other religious activities as an option for achieving contemporary development strides that will impact on the overall wellbeing of the citizens to which government owe the primary responsibility of governance.

The fact that Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular, is faced with development challenges is no subject of dispute. These challenges, however, are manifested across all spheres of human endeavours. Nigeria, especially recently, has been in the news for various happenings such as kidnapping, armed banditry, poverty, unemployment, armed robbery and insurgency, undermining the drive for development in the country's North Eastern region.

These challenges and many others respond to various efforts but, most importantly, carefully craft and systematically institutionalized policy frameworks and implementation procedures that address the immediate challenges and are also concerned about future occurrences.

However, contrary to the above, rather than take to policy frameworks that address the various challenges undermining the country's development, leaders have resorted to prayers as options for development which have yet to yield the much-desired result expected of citizens for their overall satisfaction. The problematic theme of this work is to find out how policy statements, as opposed to prayers fashioned out by leaders, can address the raging challenges of development across the country.

Theoretical Framework

The paper employs Rostow's theory of economic development and rationale actor model of policymaking as its framework of analysis. These theories explain the imperatives of carefully formulated economic development framework and the rationale actor model of policy formulation as essential ingredients for achieving the desired development across states and situate same within the context of Nigeria where policy has become secondary and prayer sessions organized at every occasion both within and outside government.

Walt Whitney Rostow, an American Economic historian, propounded the Rostow economic development theory. The theory explains that development follows a definite and distinct pattern over the historical life of a country, and countries must pass through these stages during their march towards development, commonly referred to as linear stages theories (Adebayo, 2010).

According to Rostow, societies can be classified into five stages based on their level of development. These stages are; the traditional society stage; pre-condition for takeoff stage; take off stage; drive to maturity stage, and the age of high mass consumption for answers to critical and well-planned policy programs.

The theory has been criticized by experts who argue that evidence from many developed countries shows that development does not necessarily follow a definite sequence as in biological growth but may occur irregularly across countries (Adebayo, 2010).

On the other hand, the theory remains essential despite the shortcomings due to its emphasis on the fact that development across the world requires carefully crafted policies which determine takeoff into sustained growth and, by implication, establish a comfortable order for all citizens irrespective of class or placement.

On the other hand, the rational actor model addresses the policy formulation process by considering all alternatives available to policymakers and all actors in the policy circle. The

rational actor model contends that actors are faced with several policy alternatives within which to choose after considering various consequences associated with each and selecting the best. The theory concerns the best way to create public policy to assure an undistorted flow of information, the accuracy of feedback, and the weighing of values related to the policy under consideration (Ambali, 2015).

The theory's central focus is that individual policymakers or groups, states and countries make rational decisions based on preference ranking and value maximization to achieve a specific goal and objective. The policymaking process is conditioned to meet specific developmental goals for the citizens.

The implication of Rostow's theory of development and rational actor of decision-making to this paper hinges on the fact that developed especially for the individual, State, and, by implication, the citizens answer to carefully formulated policies with insight on the prevailing circumstances given due consideration to choices and alternatives before the actors involved in the policy process and ultimately implementation.

Furthermore, against the resolve to prayer programs which has replaced hard work and holistic policy formulation and implementation for driving developmental programs in Africa and, most importantly, Nigeria, the theories established the imperatives of organized adherence to economic development stages as postulated by Rostow and the advocates of Rational actor model of policy making which are the essential ingredient for driving development across developed societies.

Conceptual Analysis

The policy entails decisions and statements individuals, organizations, societies, institutions, states and countries take to actualize their stated objectives and goals. The policy covers the strategies and general fundamentals of any human endeavour. To a large extent, the direction and success of any action are a function of the policies that guide and drive such. The policy is very germane in actualizing any specific or general objectives, making it the first point of call before any action can be pursued.

According to Ambali (2015) a policy is a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s). It applies to government, private sector organizations, groups, and individuals. The policy covers presidential executive orders, corporate policies, and parliamentary rules of order. However, a distinction must be made between policy and law… policy sometimes also refers to the process of making important organizational decisions,

including identifying different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities and choosing among them based on their impact on the organization.

A policy creates a meaningful relationship between clearly defined objectives and the organizational or State function as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. An articulated policy models consistency of action because every State or country is governed by approved principles which fall within their policy statements.

A policy does not have to be rigid and static, as there should be room for adjustment if necessary after its formulation on the one hand, and on the other, an allowance for modification during implementation and reappraisal in order to achieve development for the citizen. Perhaps this is why Hoy and Miskel (1978) believe that "policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated". This largely explains the imperative of implementation procedure when defined within the scope of development, especially in developing societies as seen across developed nations.

Expressly, the works of development within the public domain confer the responsibility for establishing the public policy framework on the government and its agents. Therefore, public policy includes all statements and drives that will guarantee the generality of general excellence and situate the same within the development context. Rumki (2014) avers that "public policies are developed by representatives of government or by governmental bodies, though non-governmental actors and agencies may also exert direct or indirect pressure or influence in the policymaking process".

From the previous, the place of policy through formulation, implementation, appraisal and innovation has been established as fundamental to driving development across the human organization. This is evident across developed societies that have clearly shown strategic observation and adherence to lay down procedures of development compared with less developed countries of the world where policy inconsistency is the hallmark of their respective government, thereby undermining the process and prospects of development.

On the other hand, prayer is seen as an act that lies at the heart of what many people call spirituality. It is as complex as the term itself in that it belongs to everyone and cuts across all religious beliefs. It lies at the heart of religion in whatever form it comes. Prayer is the instinct of all human beings, even when it is almost totally neglected or called upon only in the direst of circumstances. Prayer is a universal phenomenon that permeates all religious practices and cultures.

Prayer is communion and communication with God or a transcendent other or communion and communication between created beings and their Creator (Hinson, 1990; Dalrymple, 1993). Dalrymple (1993) notes that prayer is a call and response, where the human response is only possible because of God's prior initiative. Again prayer is holding a conversation with God, which may be held verbally (including singing), but other elements of communication, gestures, movement and attentive silence are all ways of conversing with God (Hinson, 1990; Dalrymple, 1993).

There are different types and dimensions of both individual (private), congregational prayers and corporate (public) prayers, such as petition or intercession, thanksgiving, confession/repentance, praise or adoration, as well as surrender and dedication prayer (Aniago, Onah and Ogu, 2016). Prayer is an 'entirely normal action' made during joy and sadness, health and sickness, and good fortune and hardship. As such, it expresses the nature of life itself and varying states of being.

According to Stone (1995), prayer is a universal human phenomenon defined based on the various features that characterize the nature of public and private prayer. Therefore, prayer can be made by anyone and is not the exclusive reserve or prerogative of a selected or highly placed few, as with religious groups (Clements, 1986).

In essence, prayer is mystical, and in this paper, we lean on its essence in dealing with issues of spirituality and emphatically disconnect it from its continuous use as an alternative to policy formulation and implementation in dissecting the subjects of security, provision of purposeful leadership through policy in actualizing the core objective and mandate of governance which is development theory of magical realism to provide background for critical analysis.

Also, the discourse of development across human society presents multiple opinions about what constitutes its existence in a society. Development entails a conscious and programmed effort which can be measured empirically, especially as it concerns the satisfaction and betterment of the individual and, more comprehensively, the satisfaction of the citizen of a state. The development covers a state's materials, institutions, economy and infrastructures in the satisfaction of human life in the State.

According to Gauba (2007), an early indication of development is found in the social thought of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and was expressed mainly in the theory of social change. According to him, this change could be conceived as a transition from simple to complex forms, from less efficient to more efficient forms, or from ordinary to better forms. *Development* is a process in which a system or institution is transformed into a

more vital, organized, efficient and effective form and proves to be more satisfying regarding human wants and aspirations.

According to Mittelman, cited in Gauba (2005), "development is the increasing capacity to make rational use of natural and human resources for social end and whereas underdevelopment denotes the blockage which forestalls a rational transformation of the social structure". Also, development is described as a far-reaching transformation of society's economic, social and political structure of the dominant production, distribution and consumption organization.

According to the liberal view of development espoused by Almond & Coleman cited in Gauba (2005), it implied that new nations pursuing development would have to develop their political structures, economy, and social organization in conformity with those of Western-type liberal democracy, failing which they would remain backward. This implies that development would answer specifically to institutionalization and organization of policies, especially those carefully crafted to suit the agenda of the State and the satisfaction of the people.

Chrisman, cited in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the wellbeing of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in society. It is reasonable to know that development is not only an economic exercise but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life.

Policy or Prayer: The Drive for Constructive Development Agenda in Nigeria

The process and prospects of development amongst nations of the world and most especially across the African continent raise cogent issues of discourse and, most importantly, given man's drive to attain good life within the limitless available human resources through critical policies and development initiatives that are consequential to the attainment of this objective. Precisely, every adventure of the development, leadership, security and economic life of Nigerians and even Africans, as well as instruments of governance and survival, are clothed in religion especially resolve to pray, language and symbolism, which calls to question the imperatives of development and policy plans that are the primary driver of development across developed countries which serve as models for measuring development status amongst contemporaries.

In his critical appraisal of the religiousness of the Nigerian people, John cited in Mbachirin (2016), points out that "the people believed that the gods were responsible for the prosperity or decline of the society. Both the tribe and the family worshipped and sacrificed together to

their gods, believing that these gods would give them wealth and happiness. The success of a tribe or family was associated with how well it treated its God or gods".

However, contrarily, the reward for success and even human development is carefully followed policy programs and, in clear terms, hard work. Though the workability of any human endeavour is answerable to God's guidance, within the context of the organized human drive for development, policy and strict adherence to workable procedures produce the needed environment for actualizing development.

In his call to the nation on the need to pray for the success of the 2019 general elections, the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Akubeze (2019), charges thus, "Through prayers, we come to realize our dependency on God. We cannot move forward if we do not turn to God in prayer. The prosperity of Nigerians is being held captive by corruption. Let us pray and work for the liberation of Nigeria so that every Nigerian can realize their God-given potential. Without justice and peace, there cannot be progress. Let us all be agents of justice and peace in our land".

Furthermore, the Archbishop Adewale Martins of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, in the run-up to the elections, implore Christians to pray for the successful conduct of elections across the country. He states, "I want to urge Nigerians to use their conscience to vote for good leaders who will work and solve their problems, but as a church, we continue to pray for peaceful and credible elections. We need peace in our beloved country before, during and after the polls".

The above brings to the fore the unending reliance of religious leaders to hold on to prayer sessions as the lead to the success of any human endeavour against holding government and its agents to working within stated development policies which are familiar with the first world where development has got to an appreciable degree.

In light of the above, Muslim leaders have been fasting across the country and pleading with Allah to provide peace and security before, during and after the general election. We have been fasting and praying as a Muslim community to beg Allah to grant us peace and security and make everything go smoothly come election day," said Sheikh Alhaji Akinola. "We want good leaders, and only Allah can give (them to) us."

"Right now, the campaigns are not issues-based," said Sheikh Ahmad Fahim, a lecturer at Bayero University in Kano in Northwest Nigeria. "Campaigners of the candidates are attending mosques or churches and urging their supporters to vote for their presidential candidate. (The majority) Christians are likely to vote for the opposition candidate because they believe he is their own, though he is a Muslim." However, Fahim warned that the

campaign was not healthy for democracy in a country that continues to experience violence every election year. "The campaign is unhealthy at all, and it will promote hatred between Islam and Christianity. Our leaders should stop inciting their supporters during campaigns. We want a united nation," he said.

In another light, the general Evangelist of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Prophet Abiara says Nigeria needs prayer to overcome and reposition its dwindling economy. He said there was no solution to the country's economic crisis other than prayer and enjoined leaders to be dedicated to national development. He further states that "only Christ Jesus and prayer can revive the Nigerian economy, and Nigerians must learn a lesson from what is happening now. We say the economy is in crisis, but the people who are in charge of the economy are corrupt. By the grace of God and with prayers, the economy of this country will revive (Ogungbemi, 2016)".

Furthermore, Maxwell says prayer remained the key to resolving the country's numerous socio-economic, political and security challenges. He called on the Church to continue to pray that things would get better for the country in all aspects of life." The Church should remain fervent in prayers for the healing of the land, our fatherland. Fervent and continuous and effective prayers will make our leaders do what is suitable towards driving the much-desired development of the country" (*Vanguard Newspaper*, 2018).

Finally, a call to prayer across Nigeria is an alternative to the development deficit, which is evident across all states and more evident in poverty. Specifically, at every point are prayer points raised for the sick, poor and even the dwindling status of the country's economy. The roadmap to overcome this challenge is expounding the scope of policy formulation across all tiers of government and checking the proliferation of religious organizations and patronage, eroding the place of governance through policy formulation and implementation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examined the subject of development in general terms and, within this, situates the drive for development within the framework of carefully crafted policy by national leaders or prayer sessions organized by religious leaders in order to fill the gaps created by failure in leadership, as evident across the Nigerian State. Also, the paper discovered that more than any issue that drives development, policies and agenda with actualization time frame are significant in development discourse.

Given the forgoing position, the paper makes the following recommendations;

- Strong and responsive institutions that will address the urgent need and task of governance where development agendas can be critically addressed should be the immediate concern of all stakeholders in the country.

- Policy formulation, implementation, appraisal and innovation should become an integral part of governance to meet the day-to-day development demand of the people and, with specifics, provide for timely intervention when the need arises.

- Government and its agents have a responsibility to define the issues that affect their government and separate same, which is fundamental to development from the arena of patronage, especially from religious leaders who see every task of governance as an avenue to join religion as government business.

- Though prayer and religious activities are fundamental components of human existence, the importance of policy defined within the parameters of specified goals and objectives of the State is a core requirement for the focused pursuit of development agendas, therefore, to attain inclusive development for the citizens, state actors should endeavour to adhere to the provision of secularism as contained in the 1999 constitution as amended.

- Development is a function of discipline, strategic planning and consciousness to achieve specific objectives; therefore, to actualize development, Nigeria and its leaders must work within these above to drive its development agenda and establish a good order for the generality of its citizens.

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