

**STATE ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES AND UNFAIR POLICIES
VIS A-VIZ MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: AN APPRAISAL**

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Abstract

The concepts of social justice and equality of status and opportunity in Nigeria are deeply embedded in our laws. They are specifically part of state economic objectives in the Nigerian constitution. The transformation of these provisions through State policies to impact and form the path of everyday transactions in Nigeria appears to be a mirage. The economic objectives though laudable but with practically no commitment on the part of the State seem to have exposed the objectives as somewhat worthless. However, the onset of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiations in 2015 brought with it increased hopes and aspirations in the policy paradigm. This paper examines some economic policies of the state from the end of Nigeria's Civil war to the MDGs to ascertain if the state is practically engaging in policies towards the maximum welfare of her citizens considering the huge financial investments in the MDGs. The work found that some inroads were made through the MDGs in the expansion of the state economic policies but could not be sustained due to violent conflicts and a lack of commonwealth in the state. The work recommends that the state should jettison all ethnic prejudices that have bedeviled it and be decisive in its actions in the implementation of any policy for the benefit of its citizens.

Keywords: *Economic Objectives, Unfair Polices, Millennium Development, Goals.*

1.0 Introduction

The State economic objectives as set out in Nigeria's constitution started with evasions of responsibility. The state shall, within the content of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution:¹

- (a) Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic, and self-reliant economy for every citizen based on social justice and equality of status and opportunity;²
- (b) Control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness of every citizen...³

The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring:⁴

- (a) The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development;
- (b) That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good...⁵

The avoidance of responsibility by the state as earlier stated can be seen from the phrase at the outset of the provision thus; for which the provisions are made for in this constitution.⁶ Nigeria's Constitution which denotes or presupposes it is an instrument made by the people to govern them

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¹ S. 16 (1) Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as Amended (CFRN 1999)

² *Ibid*, S. 16 (1) (a)

³ *Ibid* S. 16 (1) (b)

⁴ *Ibid* S. 16 (2) (a)

⁵ *Ibid* S. 16 (2) (b)

⁶ *Ibid* S. 16 (1)

ought not to set out with such limitation or avoidance of responsibility.⁷ The instrument is a guide in the governance and administration of Nigeria. It does not contain all the extant laws but rather a compact instrument from which other laws ought to draw their authority. The State's economic objectives are meant to provide 'social welfare' for the benefit of all citizens but rather appear to be the harbinger of the traumatization of many citizens today. How the natural resources in Nigeria are harnessed and put to use will also be seen in this paper. Nigeria adopted the Millennium Declaration in pursuit of MDGs after the New York Declarations in the year 2000, to overcome poverty through a set of eight mutually reinforcing interrelated time-bound goals with related targets.⁸ This program could be a turning point in Nigeria but can we proudly say that the MDG programs achieved substantially part of its goals in Nigeria?⁹ It had been argued that Nigeria with her relatively well-performing economy, the growth had not been strong enough to reduce the poverty levels.¹⁰ It was further stated that factors such as population growth, unstable commodity prices, natural disasters, drought, conflicts, insecurity, kidnapping..., and violence have been identified as contributing to the main causes of underperformance in Africa.¹¹ The main question then is, whether Nigeria is immune to these factors for the MDGs to have performed excellently. Has there been a paradigm shift in government policies in consideration of the MDGs and huge financial investments thereof, and constitutional provisions of State economic objectives?

2.0 Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Economic objectives

This is simply a clearly defined and stated description of a measurable standard, desired condition, trend, goal, or indicator to be achieved for social or economic value, feature, or attribute. The Nigerian economic objectives are those clearly stated ideals that the state desires to pursue to achieve the maximum benefits and happiness for its citizens.¹² This can be achieved through planned balanced development.¹³ It has been said that the 1999 Constitution - is willing to bequeath wealth to Nigerians but the willpower to bring it into reality is just simply lacking or inadequate.¹⁴ Economic objectives do not stand alone. There is always a law upon which such objectives stand. The constitutional provision in Nigeria is the authority upon which the economic objectives stand. It has always been contended that the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy do not have the force of law and citizens thereby are precluded from bringing action to enforce any of its provisions.. This view is somewhat anachronistic. The world has moved on and Nigeria ought not to be left behind considering the abundance of human capital development and resources at our disposal.¹⁵

⁷ Several provisions in the Constitution abound stipulating that bodies can be set up for one or more purposes. These bodies may be set up by the president or the National Assembly to deal with wide range of issues whether foreseeable or not in the course of their work.

⁸ Chikwe Ihekweazu; *Before the SDGs How Did Nigeria Really do with the MDGs*. www.linkedin.com, Published in 10/Nov./2015 (accessed 26/2/2024)

⁹ There is serious doubt if the many echoes of what MDGs were alleged to have achieved were actually achieved, if not on paper. The effects should not have disappeared so soon for Nigeria to be where it is today in poverty radar index

¹⁰ A.I Olatubosun; *Sustainable Development Goals and Possibilities of Meeting Africa's Priorities*. UIJPIL VOL6. 2016 P.4

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² *Op.cit*, S.16 (1).

¹³ *Ibid* S.16 (2) CFRN.

¹⁴ G N Okeke; *Fundamental Objectives and Directives Principles of State Policy: A Viable Anti-Corruption Tool in Nigeria*. www.ajol-file-journals_479_articles_82400. Accessed 6/3/2024

¹⁵ *Olafisoye v FRN* (2001)LPELR 4151. In that case Supreme Court of Nigeria in reaching a conclusion referred to an Indian case of *Mangru v Commissioner of Budge Bude Municipality* (1951) 87 CLJ 369 and held that the directive principles of state policy requires to be implemented by legislation, and so long as there is law carrying out the

2.2 Policy

Every policy pursued by the state is a public policy that generally affects all citizens either directly or otherwise. Policy might take the form of law, regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern a particular issue or problem. Policy is a process that brings certain principles or ideas into practice. Governments through policies codify and publicize the values which are to inform future practice and thus encapsulate prescriptions for reform. Policy can also be taken to be any course of action . . . relating to the selection of goals, the definition of values, or the allocation of resources by the government. A connection is thus made between policy and governance, and more specifically understanding policy in relationship to the exercise of political power and the language discourse that is used to legitimate that process.¹⁶ Ball contends that policies are . . . ways of representing, accounting for, and legitimating political decisions, and as such they go to the heart of the relationship between the state and the welfare of its citizens.¹⁷ Thus the concept of policy is entangled with notions of public and social issues, the solutions to these, and the role of the state in providing these solutions.

A public policy therefore is a course or principle of action chosen by a government for the achievement of specific goals that should ideally favour as much of the society as possible. The public policy stems from the pursuit of government in power¹⁸. There are fundamental policies Nigeria must pursue based on the constitutional provisions on objective principles of state policy in ideal situations, but this is not always the case. Sometimes policies are pursued and implemented without consideration of the general constitutional provisions on objective principles of state policy. Such policy may be to target a sector or group within the polity or for other purpose other than as set out in the constitution. Public policy reflects a society's values, priorities, and ideologies (particularly of the government in power) and therefore shapes its socioeconomic landscape and governance structures.

2.3 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals are the international community's most broadly shared, comprehensive, and focused framework for reducing poverty and its many manifestations: hunger, disease, gender inequality, lack of education and access to basic infrastructure, and environmental degradation.¹⁹ This program is meant to transform the lives of millions of people around the world. They also drive international development policy by spelling out the responsibilities of rich countries to support poor countries through aid, debt relief, and improved market access. The Goals confirmed the importance of the United Nations, with its unique legitimacy and convening power, as the multilateral body best placed to build global coalitions and political action to address global problems. The MDG agenda has become a uniting and organizing principle for the work of the entire international system in the area of development. The Millennium Declaration was signed

policy laid down in a directive neither the state nor an individual can violate any existing law or legal right under colour of following a directive, *Republic of South Africa & Ors v Grootboom & Ors*, ZACC 19, 2001 (1) SA 46 (CC)

¹⁶ SC Ward, C Bagley, J Lumby, T Hamilton, P Woods, and A Roberts; *What is 'Policy' and What is 'Policy Response'? An Illustrative Study of the Implementation of the Leadership Standards for Social Justice in Scotland*. Educational Management Administration & Leadership (2016), Vol. 44(1) 43–56

¹⁷ Ball SJ (1993) What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 13(2): 10–17

¹⁸ Government ought to be a continuity but that is not always the case in Africa. A new political party that assumes power of the government may start implementing new policies quite different and radical from the government it succeeded

¹⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/importance-mdgs-united-nations-leadership-development>

and adopted in September 2000 with a target of achieving them by 2015. Problems like kidnappings, violence and wars, insurgencies, etc. have altered the expected results from MGD implementation.²⁰ The major impediment to the optimum realization of the goals is corruption thereto sectional interest, especially in Nigeria.

3.0 The Economic Policies

3.1 Internationally Backed Policy and Programs

There have been several economic policies and programs implemented in Nigeria. Each of the policies with its program and implementation will usually have the IMF, World Bank, and or 1DA behind it. While we may consider briefly these policies on paper through these international bodies we will also consider some other policies that target some sectors or groups within Nigeria. The target policies were deep-rooted and implemented in the letters, unlike the internationally backed policies and programs.

- a. Economic Stabilization and Austerity Measures Act.²¹ This was a program and policy of the IMF foisted on Nigeria with emphasis on exchange controls, abolishing tax exemptions, and increasing import duties to reduce demand for imported goods.
- b. Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) is also an IMF-backed program and policy. It focuses on fiscal policy and management, monetary policy, exchange rate management, liberalization of foreign trade, and management of external debt among other things.
- c. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) with its high points on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction, and value orientation among others which is still presumably functional, is yet another policy. It should be noted that several other policies were also implemented in the banking and financial sector.²²

These major policies and programs were initially and practically engineered by the IMF, World Bank, and the International Development Association. It is not gainsaying that these programs and policies did cause increased hardship for Nigerians in the course of their several implementations. Is Nigeria bankrupt of economists to always rely and depend on these international bodies for policies and programs? Several of these programs and policies were implemented in other countries in Africa and Asia with great success. Why has every known program and economic policy implemented elsewhere failed in Nigeria? The answer is not far-fetched. The entire system in Nigeria is infested with corruption. It can easily be said that these three policies have a lot to do with wealth creation, however, Nigerians groaned in the course of their implementation, especially the Austerity Measure and SAP.

3.2 Nigerian Policies and Programs; Group Targeted

Some State policies were designed and implemented to affect a particular sector or groups within Nigeria. The target policies were implemented in the letters. Soon after the Nigeria civil war part of the Federal Governments reconciliation program was targeted against the South East and part of the Niger Delta. Nigerians were asked to deposit all Nigerian and Biafran currencies in their hands with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). There was total compliance in expectation of

²⁰A.I Olatubosun; 'Sustainable Development Goals and Possibilities of Meeting Africa's Priorities'. *UIJPIL* Vol. 6. 2016 P.4

²¹ Of April 1982.

²²J. G. Donli; An Overview of Nigerias' Economic Reforms. www.cbn.gov.ng Accessed 2/27/2024

receiving the equivalent of what was deposited. The federal government however changed the plan and 20 pounds was given in exchange for whatever was deposited.²³ The action of the federal government has the immediate result of pauperizing the middle class and earning a profit of 4 Million pounds for the federal government treasury.²⁴ What about the Indigenization Decree which completed the routing of the Igbos from commanding height in Nigeria's economy to everyone's apparent satisfaction?²⁵ The policy of reconciliation, reconstruction, and reintegration was an abysmal failure. There was no intention to reconcile or reintegrate any sector into Nigeria, having lost the secession war.

These target policies implemented after the Civil War were a total negation of the economic objectives constitutionally provided. One may argue that it was part of the war programs of the federal government. This postulation is untenable. After the war had ended, the government considering the apparent setback caused by the war came up with what was supposed to bring harmony and structural development in the polity turned around, and created more enmity. People could have rightly kept their monies as part of their memories of the war but to have brazenly asked the citizens to return them in exchange for another sum equivalent, then changed the plan after the deposits are, to say the least, deceptive. The target policies emasculated the target economically. Such programs and policies were never intended by the Constitution.

3.3 Natural Resources and Legislation

The Petroleum Act vests petroleum ownership and control in the State.²⁶ The Mining Act²⁷ while vesting ownership and control of solid minerals in the State provided that the property in the mineral resources shall pass from the government to the person by whom the mineral resources are lawfully won, upon their recovery by this Act.²⁸ However, in the interpretation Section of the Mineral Act, the word *Won* is interpreted to mean the production or extraction of mineral resources.

The question that needs to be addressed is whether these minerals and their explorations are used for the maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness of every citizen...as provided in the constitution and also part of the essence of the MDGs. A blanket answer cannot be given forthwith. The practice of allotting oil wells to private individuals or companies for their sole benefit cannot be said to have satisfied the provisions of Section 16 (1) (b) of the Constitution of Nigeria. The supposition that other minerals can be *won* and thereby extracted and controlled by individuals is a total negation of the extant provisions of the Constitution. The idea of having different provisions for the control and extraction of petroleum minerals and other minerals in Nigeria cannot be said to serve or have the interest of the citizens as its primary concern. In our view, it is still a negation of the provisions of the Constitution. On the other hand, whether the word *won* is used about minerals other than petroleum or the allocation of oil wells about petroleum, both serve the same purpose. They are meant to benefit the very persons to whom the allocation is made in his favor or the person who is said to have won the mineral to extract the same for profit.

²³ D Iweze; Post – Civil War Reconstruction Program in Western Igboland, Nigerian 1970-1991, Ph.D Dissertation University of Nigeria Nsukka 2013, 143 cited by Ighodalo J.E in a study of Gowon's Post Nigeria Civil War Reconstruction in Esan People of Midwestern Nigerian. www.theinterscholar.org/journals/index

²⁴ Chima Achebe; the trouble with Nigerian, England: Heinemann educational books 1984,46.

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ S.1 Petroleum Act 1969 Chapter P10 LFN 2004

²⁷ Chapter 1, Part 1 (1) Nigerian Mineral and Mining Act 2007

²⁸ Chapter 1, Part 1 (2) Nigerian Mineral and Mining Act 2007

Mineral resources may be categorized into two main compartments: petroleum and solid minerals. The solid minerals in the class of precious metals; gold and the like should be governed by the same class of law as petroleum or liquid gold. Other solid minerals may further be categorized in such a manner that their extraction whether by private persons of government or her agencies should bring the best of benefits to Nigerian citizens. The natural resources in Nigeria and or its extractions should not be personalized in or with any individual.²⁹

3.4 Special Concession Policies and Programs

Special concession policies and programs come in diverse forms. It could be in the form of tax exemptions for pioneer industries waiver or reduced import duties. It may also be to claim other benefits other than the two stated above upon fulfillment of certain conditions. In all these, the policy must not be unfavorable to other companies or individuals whether or not they appear to be in the same cadre.

There appears to be a consistent policy of successive governments in Nigeria granting special concessions to the Dangote Group at the expense of Nigerians. From 3% import duty on semi-finished products which turned out to be a finished cement product imported from Korea with a marginal 44% profit, the highest in the world, several tax exemptions, and port concessions, this can best be described as a state-backed private monopoly.³⁰ In another breath Nwanze's writing has this to say, it is amazing to see the extent to which Nigeria's macroeconomic policies are tweaked to give Dangote's companies favourable treatment that doesn't translate into cost-effective benefits for the rest of the nation. Macroeconomic policy should help create a stable economic environment for the majority.³¹ What is the farce about concessions granted without positive translation of any benefit to the citizens? The Lekki Deep Seaport appears to have been conceded to the Dangote group. Being conceded may entail a total tax exemption for the group save for the refinery.³² Other cement manufacturers are groaning not just on the level of concessions granted to the group but on the fact that such exemptions are stifling the life out of their respective businesses.³³

The concessions, tax, and other exemptions granted to the Dangote Group were done in the negation of the constitutional provisions on state economic objectives with an outlook of maximum welfare of her citizens and balanced economic development for the common good of all. The tax exemptions and reduced import duties are lost revenues the state could have garnered to effect positive change in any area of the economy.³⁴ There is an urgent need for a rethink of these

²⁹ FN 33

³⁰ <https://dailyguidenetwork.com/stop-dangote-cement-imports-manufacturers-tell-govt> Accessed 8/3/2024

³¹ Cheta Nwanze; Dangote and Near Absolute Monopolies. www.premiumtimesng.com-of-dangote-and-near-absolute-monopolies. Accessed 8/3/2024

³² The entire policy and programs that have elevated the group exceptionally above other companies may be a prearranged gun-powder that will explode in a moment.

³³ FN 27.

³⁴ On February 28, the Chief Strategy Officer of Dangote Group, Aliyu Suleiman said that the importation rights for petrol should be awarded only to licensed and active refineries in Nigeria. This demand was in his speech to members of the National Assembly's Joint committee on the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) who paid a visit to the site of the Dangote Refinery, which is under construction, and slated to be soon finished. Suleiman insisted that any need to supplement shortfalls in the local production of petroleum products, due to maintenance procedures or whatever else, should be legally limited to the companies with active refining licences. This means that they should be the ones to benefit from their own failure to do what they were licensed and partly subsidised to deliver to the marketplace. This idea could also prevent the forces of demand and supply from

humongous concessions and a shift in government direction towards the negation of the constitutional provisions on economic objectives and state policies. Public resentment is already rising and unless there is a shift in the trend towards favoring Dangote Group, the bubble will burst to the embarrassment of the government.

4.0 The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals as earlier stated are the international community's most broadly shared, comprehensive, and focused framework for reducing poverty and its many manifestations: hunger, disease, gender inequality, lack of education and access to basic infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Through the MGDs sustainable development goals were designed and if reasonably followed, the world ought to have been a better place or simply put, 'safe heaven' for her citizens. The global action via MGDs served to promote a shared prosperity and well-being agenda for the world over the next 15 years.³⁵ It is not gainsaying that the MDGs merely expanded the constitutional provisions on some of the fundamental objectives and directives principles of state policy, especially the economic, social, environmental, and educational objectives.³⁶ The MDGs added flesh and blood to these objectives for clear articulation in achieving them. The MDGs are meant to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and global partnership for development. A perusal of these objectives will reveal that the ideals in them will be to achieve the self-same objectives the constitutionally provided economic, social, environmental, and educational objectives are meant to achieve. These ideals could be achieved without any extra spending on the MDGs, just with the peoples' commonweal.

Global partnership for development is indeed part of the MDG initiatives. It is however objectionable if Nigeria will suddenly align herself with North Korea Iran or Russia as a result of promises any of such countries may have made as benefits to her through the MDGS global partnership for development. Nigeria's Foreign policies are shaped by her constitution. The initiative for partnership for development is wonderful but will not make some states in Africa suddenly shift their alignment and align with another due to the MDGs.

4.1 The MDG Results

The result of the MDG implementation in some places may appear tremendous but can those states still boast of those lofty results today? The answer can be seen from the developmental and poverty index of the several nations that took part in the MDGs. In 2023, nearly 12 percent of the world's population in extreme poverty lived in Nigeria, considering the poverty threshold at 1.90 U.S. dollars a day. Within the studied timeframe, the share mainly rose. Overall, the number of people

determining market trends, with imports not being allowed to compete with local supply and hopefully get us a truly competitive pricing regime. The very fact that demands like this can be made openly and to members of a National Assembly that should be made up of people who look out for their respective constituencies, shows us how unbalanced things are. See FN 30 ante. This is an attempt to intimidate the National Legislature. This could eventually turn out to mean that even NNPC may not have powers to import petroleum products for not having n active refinery.

³⁵ From the launching of the MGDs on 25th September, 2015 it is expected that by the year 2030 the issues that have plagued the world which the MDGs are established to tackle through its design of sustainable development goals would have considerably reduced. See FN 19 ante.

³⁶ S.16,17,18,& 20 CFRN 1999 as Amended

living in extreme poverty in Africa was estimated to reach 422 million in 2025.³⁷ Wherein is the acclaimed impact made by the MDGs in Nigeria? It had earlier been said in this work that problems such as population growth, unstable commodity prices, natural disasters, drought, conflicts, insecurity, kidnapping..., and violence have been identified as contributing to the main causes of under-performance in Africa.³⁸ Certainly, Nigeria is not immune to these problems. In fact, with the ascension to power by President the vices increased and were in place throughout the time President Buhari was in power. So the situation in Nigeria could have been worse than other states in Africa. So it is not expected that Nigeria in her peculiar circumstance would have done better than other states in Africa and Asia. The acclaimed achievement could have been only on paper. It is simply difficult to comprehend why Nigeria is now the poverty capital of the world despite the abundance of human and material resources.

4.2 Nigeria's Growth Rate and its Translation

Nigeria's economy is expected to grow at 3.3% in 2023, 3.7% in 2024, and 4.1% in 2025.³⁹ This is certainly statistics from which postulations and projections are made. However, do the statistics so provided portray what may be the experience of the citizens? The man in the street may ask, what manner of growth are they talking about when his purchasing power with Naira has fallen drastically? World Bank has indicated in its Nigeria Development Update as of the close of 2023 that the Naira has depreciated by 41%.⁴⁰ With such depreciation the effect of any improvement on the average life of her citizens will certainly take some time to start appearing. It will be so slow in whatever index you may juxtapose it. Except there is a redirection of the government and application of the resources to the necessary channel and granting opportunities to technocrats without interference, it may just be a dream and the expected growth will only be on paper.

5. 0 Conclusion

While we agree that our objectives from our fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy are good as outlined in the constitution, there seems to be an absolute loss of trust in the engine that will translate these objectives to practicality. While it may be said that the MDGs have made their impact, such impact could not be felt or still be visible today in Nigeria. This is because the height of the MDG programs was also the height of insecurity and all manner of vices in Nigeria with tacit applause from the government in power. Besides the unfair policies of the government in terms of trade and economic distribution of resources are lopsided. There is so much resentment in the system which is being expressed now in diverse ways like looting. The government needs to do more. In the heat of these crises is the removal of the petroleum subsidy which has exacerbated the sufferings of the citizens with no apparent plan by the government to cushion the effects. Naira distribution just like feeding for school children are all avenues for siphoning what may appear to be left in the empty treasury. The MDGs are another duplication in Nigeria that is not likely to impact really in Nigeria, the engine has lost its trust for transmission. The state of Nigeria is not bankrupt of intellectuals with great ideas that will push Nigeria to always rely on IMF, World Bank, and or IDA for policies that most often impact negatively on the State.

³⁷<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1287840/share-of-global-population-living-in-extreme-poverty-in-nigeria/> Accessed 9/3/2024

³⁸FN 10 & 11 ante

³⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-development-update-ndu> Accessed 9/3/2024

⁴⁰ *The World bank Report; Turning The Corner, From Reforms and Renewed Hopes, to Results.*
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-development-update-ndu> Accessed 9/3/2024

6.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Nigeria should harness its vast human resources in diverse sectors to design economic policies that will suit our economic and political circumstances. The state should also be decisive in the implementation of the policies and refrain from barriers of ethnic prejudice that have hindered the growth and development of the state.