

**A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON POLITICS AND POLICIES OF
DEVELOPMENT AND NATION-BUILDING**

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Abstract

The curiosity for this research was possible due to the importance of politics and policies to the development of any developing country like Nigeria especially. The work considers the fact that there have been somersaulting questions bordering on why societies and countries of the world today (in particular Nigeria) have failed to ‘develop’ in spite of the various purported developmental policies that governments and successive governments have claimed to put in place. The work observes that both politics and policies play huge role in the development of any nation; whether in the life of her citizens or in the manner such a country governs her citizens and/or more still, regulates her economic, social, and politico-religious life. The paper is aware that policies—whether positive or negative, good or bad—have serious influence to the development of a nation; for they serve as desideratum to development. Regrettably, the work notes that many so-called ‘developmental’ policies in Nigeria, especially and particularly policies in economy and education, among others, which claim to be good because of their democratic nature and character, have ended up lacking such progressive influences that would have made Nigeria move out as a beggar nation. The work observes further that politics plays great role in the development of a nation and as such insists that politics in Nigeria lacks the requisite principles that engender good policies for sound development. Policy-borrowing is good but not without domesticating them alongside cultural and political values and realities that are original or indigenous to the people. Therefore while Nigeria lacks such optimal attention to indigenous socio-political and cultural values which ought to engender authentic growth to both human, material or/and every other sphere of a nation’s life, the paper concludes that domesticating foreign policies to acquire indigenous flavor is the way to rig Nigeria out of the socio-political and cultural mess and quagmire that slows her speed to development. This paper is

methodically analytic and evaluative in both argument and presentation.

Keywords: Philosophy, Development, Politics, Policies, Nation-Building

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, man has always been described as a socio-political animal; hence he has always been driven to live in a socio-political environment with the rest of his kinds. Unfortunately, and in contrast with other social animals, man does not just live in a society but produces such a society in order to live in it. The need to produce a society that would suit both his nature and aspiration becomes the sole business of man on the planet earth. However, man cannot achieve such unless he develops methods, systems and policies aimed at arriving at the ideal and desired political state. According to Nwoko (2006,1), “from the earliest recorded history, man has always sought and developed methods and systems to organize himself according to what is befitting to his nature as a rational being. He remains always a political animal and can only realize himself fully in a well-organized political state.” But though the establishment of a ‘perfect’ or ideal political society has always eluded him, the truth remains that, in his nature, there is that unquenchable yearning for the perfect or ideal state. The realization of this yearning depends on how he is able to relate, articulate and /or galvanize all the potentials and resources at his disposal, which include the various theories, methods, policies and other systems he has developed for himself in a coherent way in order to achieve that goal of human flourishing, self-actualization, growth or development. Man is therefore a being on a mission to self-actualization. An inquiry into the workings of man and the strength of his relationship in the articulation of his tools—systems, methods, theories and policies—for a complete and total achievement of his goal is equally an investigation into the status of development of man as a socio-political animal generally and as a self-actualized being living in a given socio-political environment as Nigeria. In other words, an attempt to examine the role of politics and policies in the development of a nation as Nigeria is an attempt to explore the status to which man has succeeded or attempted succeeding in galvanizing the potentials and resources before and available to him to develop his nature as a socio-political animal in the same situation in which he lives out his life to achieve the over-all purpose of his existence as a socio-political animal.

2. Development as a purposeful Growth in Socio-Political Discussion

Almost every developmental theorist all over the world seems to have reached that one salient conclusion about the real nature and status of the word ‘development.’ But notwithstanding, the concept of development has a French origin. It is from the verb ‘*veloper*’ which means ‘to unwrap’. ‘To develop’ then would mean ‘to cause to grow gradually, fuller, larger, strong and better’ (Udoidem, 1992; Njoku,2004; Ezebuiro, 2015). Therefore, the word ‘development’ is said to denote a type of change: a positive,

purposeful or goal-oriented change (Rodner, 1982; Udoidem, 1992; Njoku 2004; Ezebuio, 2015; Agbakoba, 2020).

Change is a movement; in fact, an alteration. Change refers to any form of alteration of a given thing or state in shape, size, weight, position, composition, quality, function, etc (Agbakoba, 2020, 1). A purposeful alteration is a positive change because its movement is not random. Thus a random change or alteration of any given entity is purposeless; hence it does not denote or qualify as development at all.

In the nature and character of inanimate beings/things, change usually occurs randomly. Animate beings, on the one hand, frequently change in order to attain some end(s). At the level of human beings, for instance, purposeful change is that change that is directed towards a goal; a goal which Scruton (1984, 422) refers to as “the making real of the self, i.e., the actualization of those potentialities for thought and action, which are distinctive of self-knowledge and self-identity, and which provide the individual with a sense of who he is, that is, that he is someone, and he has an intrinsic value..., which provides him/her with fulfilling and contentment as much as possible.”

Human beings are always in dire need of getting to a better and new level. This movement is called development because it embodies progress. Inability to make progress is seen as a sign of un-development; hence in a given society, lack of progress in the lives of people is a sign that such a society is un-developed.

Psychologists consider development as a purposeful change at the level of the individual person. Here development is understood as human development. Human development is “the scientific study of how people change and how they stay the same over time” (Papalia and Olds, 1992, 3). Change can be in form of quality (as in qualitative change) or quantity (as in quantitative change). A quantitative change is change in number or amount of something. Such an alteration might bear on size, height and weight or number of something (Njoku, 2004, 4). A qualitative change, on the other hand, bears in kind, structure or organization. For example, such as the nature of a person’s intelligence or the way the mind works (Agbakoba, 2020, 2).

At the level of cultural group or society, development involves the realization of additional data, i.e., new forms or systems and this is done through the combination and deployment of already present objects in the society, notably the indigenous socio-cultural and political values and policies (Agazzi, 1993). The preoccupation that development is a positive and purposeful alteration of an entity makes it clear that it is a capacity that unfolds, unveils and advances towards the given situation for the better; considering the value that the society cherishes. It is “the pooling together of resources in order to organize environmental and social relations for the enhancement of the members of the society” (Njoku, 2004, 6). In other words, it is a movement aimed at production, creation of new things away from the old.

The political life of a state is measured according to how developed it is. As a candidate of development and progress, such a society requires a transformation from one state or circumstance to another. A transformation is positive when it is an improvement of some sort. Politics and policies are so implicitly essential to development because development is a political process that raises questions as who has the power to do what, to whom, and, how it concerns what share should go to one another.

Structural development also occurs when there is high impact of growth on the structures that hold the society together. Value systems, norms and policies, politics, and

culture—all come together to form the bedrock upon which substantive development and progress are made. When there are dysfunctional policies as when value systems lack substance, and politics becomes means to self-aggrandizement, the entire fabric of the society runs the risk of jeopardy and corruption.

Positive development is attached to the aspiration and well-being of a people. Iwuoha (2013, 205) captures this when he writes that “the changes that are associated with development should provide the individuals and the societies with more control over their own destiny...both male and female, when properly trained and brought up, tent to contribute meaningfully with their diversity of talents to societal development.”

Whether structurally or essentially, development denotes a process that creates growth, progress; hence positive change brings about physical, economic, environmental and social transformation. While each of these is dependent on politics, the purpose of development remains the increase in quality of life of people. Lewontin (2000, 5) observes that development denotes “unfolding” but it is the progressive unfolding of a preexistent form or preexistent capacities.”

At the level of politics again, development co-mingles with policies. Hence political policies can either drive or restrain development. Political decisions and policies do influence development choices and outcomes. Being transformative and affecting the social, economic and political affairs, it brings fundamental challenges to established interests; demands political sustainability. Politics is central to development; hence it plays great role in the decision-making of a government. It helps to assess and evaluate any given society. Dudley (2006, 3) clearly puts it this way: “The questions to ask about a country’s development are three: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of undevelopment for the country concerned.”

Given the interwoven relationship, it becomes problematic to insulate development from politics or policies from development. Even Hegel (1956) once argued in this favour when he writes that progress is linear and development curvilinear. Development, policies and politics, no doubt, complements each other.

3. Politics of Development and Development of Policies for Politics and Development

3.1 Politics of Development

There have been various efforts by some superior countries of the world to manipulate the concept of development in various developing countries of the world to suit their self-interest but to the detriment of those under-developed or developing countries. Such interests present development as a form of domination, whereby people are dominated, controlled, managed and their destinies shaped by others who neither share their lifestyle, nor their hopes nor their value systems (Njoku, 2004, 13-14; Ezebuoro, 2015, 34). One such attempt is the mechanistic understanding of development.

The mechanistic sense of development is rooted in the 17th century worldview that believes that the laws of human progress are identical with the laws of Physics (Njoku, 2004, 14; Ezebuoro, 2015, 36). Mechanistic understanding of development thus contrasts sharply with the ordered and purposive view that development is natural.

The Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition considers development as a natural process. Here nature is understood as having made everything for a purpose. Thus developmental processes have ends. At the individual level, it is a human good, a value that is basic and forms part of the common good. One of the instruments of achieving the common good is law—a dictate of reason and principle of human act according to Lissaka (1996). The end of law is to realize the common good, and its effect is to make men good simply.

With development of physical sciences, the mechanistic perspective upturns the natural law understanding and sees development from the point of view of domination. The founding fathers of the mechanistic idea of development include Francis Bacon (1952), Thomas Hobbes (1968), and Rene' Descartes (1989) among others. In their separate logic and philosophies, they primarily understand that the law of progress (development) is one and the same with the laws of physical sciences. For them, the idea of progress of human society is that the laws of physical sciences apply in the same way in the human sphere; thus from the domination of nature, humans can be dominated at all level (Njoku, 2004, 14; Ezebuiro, 2015, 35).

The mechanistic thinkers of development sought to drive practice from the theories of physics. No wonder Descartes says that he wanted knowledge such that knowing the laws of physics; one can become lord of nature. That was why they maintained that the idea of progress in human society is one and the same with that of the laws of the physical sciences; hence it must be applied in the same way in the human such that from the domination of nature, humans too can be dominated at all levels. The mechanistic logic therefore sees human development as domiciled in the worldview of the experimental sciences. Hence using the apparatus of physical sciences to dominate nature to our own use, humans can also be subjected to the laws of progress and utility.

The problem with the mechanistic logic of development is that laws and policies of government are made to dominate rather than to create progress in a society. People see politics as avenue to manipulate and dominate. The upper class influences legislation and other government policies to work to their credit and favour; hence the society collapses and lawlessness, corruption, anarchy etc become the order of the day in such a society. Also, this kind of situation breeds revolution because the enslaved would one day want to be free.

Imperialism in Africa, in its entire sphere, was rooted in this kind of logic of domination. For instance, at the beginning of the imperial era, Europe has a superior power and knowledge of humans and nature, according to Njoku (2004, 15). Colonization was thus conceived as a form of development, which interest was to meet the needs of the colonizer. According to Tucker (1991, 27),

The idea of progress with its attendant notions of perfectibility and inevitability gained pre-eminence in the period of the French and English revolutions. Armed with the confidence of having history if not nature to their side, the new economic and political revolutionaries of Britain and French set about changing the world and the way in which it was believed to be universally valid. As such it provided a conceptual and moral basis for colonialism and imperialism.

Imperialism was thus implanted via the medium of culture-contact or acculturation. In the process, it seemed to be reality that the values of the culture with

stronger force dominated, even if the contact was simply a case of mutual cross-cultural pollination. The British policy of Indirect Rule and the French's and Portuguese's policies of assimilation were coined to serve this purpose: to rule and dominate and explore the colonized territories for the interest of their home economics.

Development was therefore seen as imposition; hence colonialism became a development of imposition achieved by the exercise of alien political powers over a conquered territory through all kinds of arbitrary measures designed for the economic exploitation and social degradation of the colonized people (Njoku, 2004, 15).

To demonstrate how bad this logic is, one can then understand while till date, though these policies seem to have disappeared the land of Africa, especially Nigeria, their effects and ripples are still being felt and witnessed all over the continent of Africa and the country Nigeria where they once existed and practiced. For example, till date, though arguably, Britain still determines and controls the affairs of Nigeria: her policies, and her politics. Nigerian laws made at the both chambers of the House of Representative and the Senate appears to favour Britain more than it does for Nigeria. This is also the case with other African countries, whether Cameroun, Togo, Congo, Gabon etc.

Now with all these manipulations, post colonial Africans till date, have been made to think and feel they cannot develop without the West. They are made to see themselves in every sector of life as not succeeding without the West. They think and seem themselves as poor and as people who need help from their post colonial masters. It is this kind of logic and philosophy that have dominated the sub-consciousness of an average African, controlling his vision of life: the way he thinks, reasons, and behaves. It is also behind the formulation of policies and the kind of politics seen in Africa today. It is a logic of dependence. Africans see themselves as a people who must depend on the West for their survival, growth, development and well-being. Any effort to extricate the African from this mode of thinking proves abortive because he, the African thinks it is a mortal sin disentangling his thought and being from the West. No doubt, all revolutionary moves to break this unfortunate linkage and bondage yield no result. Till date, African remains socio-political and economic stooges implanted by post colonial masters for the Africans.

The mechanistic thinkers proved to be capitalists also. Their insinuations continue to be that since they were dominant class, their policies would be maintained even at their absence in all the third world countries. This philosophy has continued to be part and parcel of 'African philosophy' as its being taught, professed and practiced by most African politicians and academia. And this is why these dominant capitalists have continued to engage the local elites who benefited from their dependence on their capitalist masters by earning its revenue on the export market and spending its profit on imported luxury goods (Rapley, 1996, 18-19).

The situation in Nigeria currently shows that the efforts to change the status quo in which the local elites feasts on the shoulders of the poor are thwarted. Njoku (2004, 19-20) reiterates rhetorically thus: "why cannot a refineries be made to work? Why does the 6th greater exporter of petroleum not provide enough fuel for her citizens? Why do Nigerian politicians and big oil merchants prefer to import oil instead of repairing and maintaining the refineries in the country? One answer to these whole questions is that the local oligarchy is benefitting from the pathetic system. Hence laws and policies are made to sustain and maintain them. Whether in education, health, economy, business, politics,

etc—the same policies are for the interest of the capitalist who continue to control Africans though local elites.

3.2 Development of Policies for Politics and Development

A policy is defined as a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual. A policy is also a set of rules or guidelines for an organization and employees to follow in order to achieve a specific goal (i.e., compliance). It is further an effective way of outlining what employees must do or not do. A policy serves as directions, limits, principles and guidance for decision-making. Government also uses policy in the discharge of its task. Government is an institution and the art of running government is politics.

Development of policy for politics and development is very essential in any society that wants to develop. First and foremost, policies that uphold ethical values help society to grow. Ethics (Greek ethos) means character or way of life (Udoidem, 1992). Technically, it refers to principles of human action. Ethics is a normative discipline; hence it prescribes rules and regulation regarding the rightness and wrongness of human action. Ethics as a normative discipline determines what is to be done and what is not to be done if the human person is to live a moral life and human society to develop.

Development therefore is a product of value. Values are cherished principles, goal or standards or ways of life held or accepted as desirable by an individual, class or society (Udoidem, 1992, 2). In economics, values are understood in terms of worth. Values are the hallmarks and engines of development.

The pre-colonial African was aware of this fact hence values were so much cherished and preserved for the development of the society. A man was just as rich or poor as his community. People worked and provided for the well-being of the community as much as his strength could allow him. The sense of belonging and oneness was the drive behind every development. Whoever had the fortune of being even a little better off than the other members of the extended family came to the aid of the others. Similarly, the misfortune of the extended family was shared by all. Theft and wanton destruction of community property was abhorred. This sense of social security remained one of the most valued social practices at those times. And laws and policies were made to preserve and sustain them.

Life in post-colonial Africa changed with the invasion of the land by colonialism. Colonization brought about fundamental social change in traditional African societies. New structural arrangements and their concomitant values, many of them in direct conflict with African values, were imposed on the traditional political economic, social and religious systems (Udoidem, 1992, 11).

The consequence of the contact was a shift from the traditional near egalitarian communism to individual and from spirituality to materialist humanism. In Nigeria, Nduka (1975) writes that it was neither the science nor religion of the West that impressed them but wealth, together with the power which was associated with it that caught their imagination. The ‘places’ where the colonial masters lived, together with all the material comforts that surrounded them impressed Nigerians more strongly than anything. This was the beginning of individualism that crept into Africa where inordinate crave for material wealth, traditional values of being one’s brother’s keeper, and concern for others were replaced by greed, avarice, ruthlessness, dishonesty, corruption and embezzlement of

public fund became the order of the day. With colonialism, the whole edifice and fabric of values and virtues enshrined in the life and conduct of the African was totally severed and destroyed.

To this effect, Omoregbe (1990) asks how development can be possible in a society where public funds were embezzled by those who controlled them. He also inquired into how development can be possible in a country where self-interest became the dominant rule of action. Furthermore, he asks how development and economy can co exist in a society where its citizens lack moral sense of duty; the right attitude to work and a sense of moral responsibility to the society. Again, Omoregbe was conscious that he wanted to know how development can be possible in a country where bribery and corruption break down law and order to the extent that moral laxity, selfishness, lack of sense of duty and social responsibility, disrespect for public good, good etc prevail in that society. In all of these, Omoregbe answers that development cannot be possible except the citizens are morally upright and conscious. In that sense, development of a society passes through virtue and self-discipline.

Ethics of community or national development is consequently important if we must place more premium on development. It means all hands must be on deck to see and ensure that development is achieved. That means that the cultivation of moral virtues and the creation and implementation of policies that are development-oriented must be the preoccupation of the government and political office holders. Plato was conscious of this fact that he says that if we knew what justice is, then the problem of being just would be relatively easy. Similarly, if we knew what community development means, then the task of developing our community would not be much of a problem.

A review of Nigeria's historical development shows that on many occasions, various governments have embarked on programs that would have ensured better social and economic life for the people. There was Green Revolution of the Obasanjo Administration; the Operation Feed the Nation of the Shagari Administration. There was also the Babangida Institution of Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the Better Life for Rural Women among others (Udoidem, 1992, 18). All these served as agents of rural and community development in the country. But why did they fail? They failed because there were no genuine will powers or so-to-say, no political will and determination on the side of the government to execute and power them.

4. Inclusive Policies and Development

A community is developed when all the full human potentials are harnessed for the purpose of promoting mutual welfare, growth, creativity and meaning in striving for good over bad and right over wrong (Udoidem, 1992, 30). Therefore inclusive development is that kind of development that is both human-centered and structure based or centered (Ezebuio, 2015, 34-44). Countries differ in the economic success of their different institutions, the rules and policies that influence how this economy works and the incentives that motivate people. Therefore, authentic development is that which is built on solid values that make the human person blossom fully and integrally. Human development involves the totality of all aspects of the human person. Its focus is on the centrality of the human person as a being with a purpose in life. This human development involves education.

Education frees the human person from the prejudices and irrational assumptions and entanglement of everyday life. It enlarges the horizon of their existence and experiences for authentic development of human existence. This is why John Dewey (1987) defines the task of education as the emancipation and enlargement of experience. Therefore inclusive development finds its essence in inclusive educational policies, and regulations. Government should have inclusive institutions that make inclusive educational policies and regulations work for total growth and development of both man and the society in which he lives.

Investments in the context of inclusive incentive education achieves high rate of literacy and drives development goals accurately. It prepares the citizens for skilled works and engenders creativity and productivity together with entrepreneurial initiatives that augment the efforts of government. It engenders the capacity to secure property rights, the laws, public services and the freedom to contract and exchange help to define the essence of inclusive government.

5. Conclusion

The Nigeria that we all have today is sitting on the concrete condition of state in turmoil. It is groaning as it is in a deplorable social, political, religious and economic condition that is near death. There is the historical factor that mainly brought her to the mess that she is now living. The event of colonization and neo-colonization can be traced as fulcrum of the current decadence; where policies that maintain and breed colonization and imperialism are still been fanned into flame by the powers that be.

Besides, the drift from brotherhood to geocentricism, honesty to dishonesty, right conscience to fraudulent activities, conscientious service of the public to monstrous irresponsibility, and lack of public commitment and finally from pious lawfulness to near anarchy contribute very immensely to the deplorable condition that Nigeria is bleeding from right now. Nigeria is politically jaundiced, unstable and orchestrated. Economically, Nigeria is in servitude; hence the reason why politico-socio-economic disorganization and malady have engulfed Nigeria to a confused mélange.

Lack of appropriate policies and responsible politics are direct causes of this malady. They lead to parallel ruinous societal retrogression and impede on development processes. But good policies breed development, which lay down the foundation for inclusive government. There is need therefore to entrench development-oriented values into policy-making. Attention to politics and policies that anchor development is as important as it is also necessary for sound development and human flourishing.

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