

## **FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND STATE POLICIES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES.**

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### **Abstract**

The paper examines fundamental objectives and state policies in Nigeria. It adopts the social contract theory as its theoretical framework to have an insight into the objectives of the state policies, which are to ensure national integration, transform the economic fortunes of country, ensure equity, fairness and equal opportunities for all; promote education, cultural heritage, national ethics, values and mass media; preserve the nation's environment and promote foreign relations with countries of the world. Efforts by the Nigerian state to actualize her fundamental objectives and state policies has not been successful due to unbalance nature of Nigerian federalism, corruption, ethnicity, favoritism and lopsided government policies. The paper recommends that the country should be governed on the principles of democracy, rule of law, constitutionalism and due process. Also that Government and people of Nigeria should be patriotic and nationalistic both in thoughts and actions to save the country from disintegration.

## **Introduction**

The report of the 1979 Constitution Drafting Committee proclaims that fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy are laid down by policies which are expected to be pursued in the efforts of the nation to realize the national deals. The state policies in Nigeria are reflected in our national values, identities and symbols such as the National Anthems, National Pledge, the Coat of Arm, National Flag, National Passport and even the National currencies like the naira and coins. Our national symbols are signs of our National Unity as reflected in our National Motto: Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress.

In addition, state policies intend to transform the economic fortunes of country, ensure equity, fairness and equal opportunities for all; promote education, cultural heritage, national ethics, values and mass media; preserve the nation's environment and promote foreign relations with countries of the world. Efforts by the Nigerian state to actualize her fundamental objectives and state policies has not been successful due to corruption, nepotism, unbalanced nature of the Nigerian federalism, and lopsided government policies. Therefore, the paper uses the Rousseau social contract theory to examine the relationship between government and people in pursuing the fundamental objectives and state policies in Nigeria and what can be done to actualize them.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts the Rousseau (1712 to 78) social contract theory as its theoretical framework. The significance of the theory is that it provides the basis for democracy and rejection of autocratic rule. Sidgwick, cited in Appadorai (1968), posits that the Rousseau theory rests on the following principles: that men are by nature free and equal, that the rights of government must be based on some compact freely entered into by these equal and independent individuals, and that the nature of the compact is such that the individual becomes part of the sovereign people, which has the inalienable right of determining its own constitution and legislation. Rousseau argues that 'will' not 'force' is the basis of the state, that government depends on the consent of the governed. These are reflected in fundamental objectives and state policies in Nigeria which states that the Federal Republic Nigeria be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice; and sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from Government through the constitution derives all its powers and authority; and the security and welfare shall be the primary purpose of Government.

Rousseau, goes further to say that man is essentially good and sympathetic; ... men being free and equal. Soon, with the introduction of private property and the growth of numbers, quarrels arise and man is compelled to give up his natural freedom. His problem is "to find a form of association which protects with the whole common force the person and property of each associate, and in virtue of which every one, while uniting himself to all, ... remains as free as before". The problem is solved through a contract and the creation of civil society (Appadorai, 1968).

The proponents of the social contract theory like Rousseau believed that the state or government emerged as a result of a contract. The contract is, citizens accepted to submit to the authority of the state and government believing that it governs well. As part of the contract, a government that violates the condition loses its legitimacy and will be thrown out through voting. By this, government is a product of mutual consent and cooperation among the people in the society. In his contribution, Thomas Hobbes was of the view that before the contract man was living in a state of nature, where life was solitary, nasty, wicked, and brutish, miserable and short. This implied that life during the state of nature was lawless, anti-social and unjust. This condition necessitated the need for government to provide for security of lives and property as well as cater for the welfare of citizens.

The theory is not without some defects, this is because the general will of the community could not be for the common good of all; the theory is illogical as it assumes that during the state of nature men are equal, as Maine puts it, primitive society rests not upon contract but upon status...men were born into the station and the part they were to play throughout life...he who is born a slave, let him remain a slave; the artisan, an artisan; the priest, a priest. With this, inequality is natural in human history.

### **Issues on the Fundamental Objectives and State Policies in Nigeria**

Chapter 2, sections 13 to 24 of the 1999 constitution address the primary aim of government. Section 13 states that it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authority and persons exercising legislative, executive and judicial powers to conform, to observe and apply the provision of this chapter of this constitution. This is in line with the fundamental objectives and directives principles of State Policy in Nigeria. That the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice.

It declares in section 14 that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this constitution derives all its powers and authority. The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. The participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.

The composition of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby, ensuring that there will be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

The composition of the government of a state, a local government council, or any of the agencies of such government or council and the conduct of affairs of the government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of

the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people of the federation.

Enimue (2005) cited in (Obi, 2008) posits that in order to ensure “unity in diversity” in Nigeria, factors of ethnicity, state of origin and “federal character” are usually taken into account in making appointments into public service and in the distribution of scholarships, in the award of contracts, in the citing or location of development projects etc. The word “federal character” was designed and introduced by the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) which drafted the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thus, the principle of federal character has envisaged that the affairs of Nigeria shall not be predominated by “persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups”. It has manifested, among other things, in the application of quota system in job placements and recruitments into military services, in the granting of special considerations for educationally disadvantaged states, in admission into institutions of higher learning, and in the requirement for national spread in appointment into public offices and so on (Uroh, 2000).

Political positions and appointments are zoned in order to ensure “equitable distribution of political offices and other prerequisites”. The military regime of General Sani Abacha had divided the country into six geopolitical zones, namely: North-East, North Central (Middle belt), North-West, South-East, South-West, South-South (Niger Delta) (Obj, 2008).

#### **The six geopolitical zones in Nigeria and States that Composed them are as Follows**

S/N	ZONES	STATES IN EACH ZONE
1.	North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe
2.	North-West	Kebbi, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara
3.	North-Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, FCT
4.	South-East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo
5.	South-West	Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo
6.	South-South	Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers

**Source: Obi (2008) Public Policy Analysis and Decision Making: 77**

The composition of the government at all levels- federal, states and local governments shall reflect the diversity of the people of Nigeria. Government shall be responsive and accountable; and its policies shall have a human face (Aii, 2017).

#### **Perspectives on the General Provisions of the Fundamental Objectives and State Policies in Nigeria**

The fundamental objective and directive principles of state policy expresses the desire of government to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Nigeria in order to attain the following objectives.

### **Political Objectives**

The focus of the political objective is to promote national integration or unity in diversity. This is reflected in the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is “unity and faith, peace and progress”. The Nigerian state shall discourage any form of discrimination on the ground of place of origin, sex, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties; ensure full residence right for every person from different places of origin, religion, ethnic or linguistic association. Loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties and abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power. Encourage inter-marriage among persons from different places of origin, ethnic or linguistic association or ties; promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religions or other sectional barriers.

### **Economic Objectives**

The thematic preoccupation of the economic objectives is the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development. Government shall harness the resources of the nation and use it to promote national prosperity and an efficient, a dynamic and self-reliant economy and securing maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity. The Nigerian state shall encourage every citizen to engage in any economic activities out of the major sectors of the economy, the ownership and control of business enterprises operating in Nigeria, the provision of adequate shelter, food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions; unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled through the instruments of law.

### **Social Objectives**

The state social order is anchored on the ideas of freedom, equality and justice. The state shall ensure that every citizen shall have equal rights, obligations and opportunities. All government actions shall be humane, the exploitation of human and material resources shall be for the good of the community, the conditions of work are just and humane, adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religions and cultural life, health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and children, young persons and aged are protected against any exploitation.

### **Educational Objectives**

The state policy on education is geared towards the provision of equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. To this end, government shall focus its attention on the need to promote science and technology education; strive to eradicate illiteracy by ensuring the provision of free compulsory and universal primary education; secondary education; and free adult literacy programme.

### **Objectives on Mass Media**

This is anchored on the fact that the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all time be free to uphold all the objectives of the state and uphold the responsibilities and accountability of the government to the people. The media shall uphold the truth in disseminating information and make government responsible to the people.

### **Objectives on National Ethics**

The state shall instill discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism to improve the moral standard of the society.

### **Objectives on Culture**

The state directs its policy to protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian culture which enhances human dignity and encourages development of technological and scientific studies which enhance cultural values.

### **Objectives on Foreign Policy**

The state shall promote and protect national interest, promotion of African integration and support for African unity, promotion of International Corporation for the constitution of universal peace and mutual respect among all nationals and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations and respect for international law and treaties.

### **Objectives on Environment**

The state shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria.

### **The Conformity and Observance of the Fundamental Objectives and State Policy by Governments and People of Nigeria**

Governments in Nigeria from independence to date have formulated and implemented policies to ensure sustainable growth and development in the areas of economic, social, cultural and political lives of the people of Nigeria.

- i. In order to ensure and promote national integration, various governments have initiated certain policies or programmes and created certain bodies such as the National Youth Service Corps, Unity Schools, Federal Character/Quota System in appointment and admission into tertiary institutions, delimitation of the country into constituencies, electoral district or wards to ensure fair and equal representation; and encourage inter-ethnic or religious marriages etc. all to promote national integration.
- ii. To promote national prosperity, efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy, Nigerian governments have introduced some economic and industrial policies or programmes like Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, Back to Land, Agricultural Development Programmes, Agricultural Development Banks, National Directorate of Employment, Structural Adjustment Programme, Privatization and Commercialization Policy, Monetization Policy, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), Foreign Direct Investment Policy etc. to enhance economic prosperity of Nigeria.
- iii. To ensure freedom, equality, justice and better conditions of work Nigerian states have introduced pension policy, National Housing Scheme, Health

- Insurance Policy and Rule of Law and due process in the execution of government contracts and infrastructural development etc.
- iv. In order to provide equal and adequate educational opportunities and improve literacy level, Nigerian governments have introduced some educational policies such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE), 6-3-4-4 Education Policy, National Policy on Nomadic Education, National Policy on Adult Education, National Policy on Technical Education, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, (TETFUND), Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF), Scholarship and Sponsorship of Researches and Students etc.
  - v. To promote discipline, dignity of labour, social justice, patriotism, tolerance and self-reliance in Nigeria, government has created certain institutions and policies such as War Against Indiscipline (WAI), Code of Conduct Bureau and Code of Conduct Tribunal for public officers on complex issues of assets declaration; Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and National Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) etc. to ensure discipline and sanity in the Nigerian society.
  - vi. In order to protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian cultural heritage and values which enhances dignity of human person and promote technical and scientific knowledge through arts, government has established the National Gallery of Arts in Lagos, promotion of cultural festivals like Federation of States Arts and Culture (FESTAC), the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State, Ogani Fishing Festival in Umaisha and Ireha Cultural Festival in Shafa Abakpa all in Toto Local Government in Nasarawa State; Eyo Cultural Festival in Lagos, Osun festival in Osun state etc. All these festivals play vital roles in the protection, preservation and promotion of our cultural heritage and values.
  - vii. To protect, preserve, promote and safeguard the Nigerian environment and the water, air, forest, land and wild life, government has introduced the National Policy on oil spillage, Environmental Boards and National Environmental Standard Enforcement and Regulatory Agency etc. to look into issues of environmental degradation etc.
  - viii. To have free flow of information through the press, radio, television and other agencies of information dissemination, the enactment of information bill is a very significant stride to guide misinformation and public abuse.
  - ix. In her effort to protect and promote national interest, promotion of African integration, global peace and security, the Nigerian state is an active member of African Union (AU), Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), United Nations Organizations (UNO) and several other international organizations. Nigeria has Embassies all over the world and supports the African Union and United Nations' peace missions in Sudan, Somalia, Congo, Liberia and host of others.

### **Challenges of the Fundamental Objectives and State Policies in Nigeria**

The Government efforts at realizing the fundamental objectives and state policies in Nigeria are faced with a lot of challenges; and one of such is corruption. Sorkaa (1999) provides that corruption exists when an individual illegally or illicitly puts personal interest above those of the people and the ideals he or she pledges to serve. It involves immoral actions or behaviours by public officials for pecuniary or status benefits. Allegations of corruption are leveled against law enforcement officials or agencies and the courts. Judicial corruption plays on the relative position of buyers in the social structure and the use of wealth to secure police attention, bails and court ruling favours.

The manipulation of byelaws, constitution, court injunctions and the neglect of judicial procedures by the powerful is a fundamental form of judicial corruption (Barnes, 2011). When wealth, status and position are used to determine judicial and court processes, fundamental objectives and state policies is bound to be undermined.

Another challenge of the objectives and state policies in Nigeria is favouritism and ethnicity which have become the permanent features of politics and governance in Nigeria, as politicians and public commentators complained persistently over one region, ethnic group and clan dominating the political space. The composition of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs are always subject of debate since the country returns to democracy in 1999, as the composition does not reflect the federal character of Nigeria, thereby negatively affect national unity and national loyalty. There is the predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in government or in any of its agencies at all levels. Political positions and appointments are not properly zoned in order to ensure equal distribution of political offices and other benefits. Hence, those entrusted with positions of authority turn out to champion the cause of their tribe, clan, religion, and region. In his letter to President Muhammadu Buhari in Leadership News Paper, January, 24<sup>th</sup> 2018 former President of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo observes that:

“...But there are three other areas where President Buhari has come out more glaringly than most of us thought we knew about him. One is nepotism bordering on clannishness and inability to bring discipline to bear on errant members of his nepotism court. This has grave consequences on performance of his government to the detriment of the nation. It would appear that national interest was being sacrificed on the altar of nepotism interest. What does one make of a case like that of Maina: collusion, condonation, ineptitude, incompetence, dereliction of responsibility or kingship and friendship on the part of those who should have taken visible and deterrent disciplinary action? How many similar cases are buried, ignored or covered up and not yet in the glare of the media and the public?”

In addition, the unbalanced nature of the Nigerian federalism, where the Northern part has more than half of the territory compare to the Southern part, this gives the North upper hand in terms of census, and representations in government; the North has more members at



the national assembly and the federal executive council. This is against the spirit of the political objective of the Nigerian state.

Another fundamental problem is the leadership crisis that has bedeviled the country; the country is always confronted with the problem of who is to rule, when, where, and how. The struggle to acquire political power by the ruling class, from the North and the South in recent times has degenerated into a do or die affair, as politics in Nigeria is perceived to be a zero sum game where the winner takes all. The mad struggle to capture political power in Nigeria is not done for the common good of the citizens, but it is done because of the benefits attached to power; the struggle has always produced serious political and electoral violence, and break down of law and order. Anifowose (1982) opines that political violence is often a natural concomitant of the political process especially where there is fierce competition over the sharing of power and resources. Electoral violence does manifest in varying forms which include murder, arson, abduction, assault, violent seizure and destruction of electoral materials (Jegede, 2003). The perpetrators of electoral violence are not limited to the socially uprooted youths seen on the street hijacking electoral materials, killing innocent people or burning private public property. Perpetrators also include party leaders who frustrated the right of these to participate in the electoral process, electoral officials, the police and the judicial officials who manipulate the structure at their disposal to violate the legitimate rights of others (Saka, 2008).

Another challenge of fundamental objectives of the Nigerian state is the lopsided economic policies that are not in agreement with the realities of time. There is the problem of double taxation, unnecessary currency devaluation, stringent exchange policy, discouraging of import without a corresponding export, bloated budget, delay or near non implementation of budget to the later and lack of proper national plan. This has led to unfavourable balance of payment, low income per head, unnecessary external borrowing, job loss, inflation, and general economic hardship. Obasanjo (2018) further observes in his letter to President Muhammadu Buhari that:

“Let nobody deceive us, economy feeds on politics and because our politics is depressing, our economy is even more depressing today...Our constitution is very clear, one of the cardinal responsibilities of the President is the management of the economy of which the value of the naira forms an integral part. Kingship and friendship that place responsibilities of governance in the hands of the unelected can only be deleterious to good government and to the nation”.

This development has negative impact on political economy of Nigeria and the economic objective of the Nigerian state which is geared towards ensuring the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The paper concludes that state policies are designed to provide for the primary purpose of government, which is the protection of lives and property as well as provision of welfare to the citizens of Nigeria. In doing so, Nigerian state intends to unify the country into one political entity; transform the economic fortunes of country, ensure equity, fairness and equal opportunities for all; promote education, cultural heritage, national ethics, values and mass media; preserve the nation's environment and promote foreign relations with countries of the world. Efforts by the Nigerian state to actualize her fundamental objectives and state policies have not been successful due to unbalance nature of Nigerian federalism, corruption, leadership crises, ethnicity, favoritism, and lopsided government policies.

Therefore, the paper recommends that:

- i. The country should be governed on the principles of democracy, rule of law, constitutionalism and due process.
- ii. Government should be structured in such a way that every section of the country is given fair and equal representation.
- iii. The exploitation of human and material resources should be for the benefit of all.
- iv. Government action should be human and people should be given opportunity to choose their leaders without any fear of molestation.
- v. Government should provide the enabling environment for businesses to thrive. This will go a long way to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country.
- vi. Government should instill the spirit of discipline, self-reliance and accountability in our public and private life.
- vii. Government and people of Nigeria should be patriotic and nationalistic both in thoughts and actions to save the country from disintegration.

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