

POLICY SUMMERSAULT: A RECURING NIGHTMARE IN DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS IN AFRICA THE CASE OF NIGERIA AND ZIMBABWE

ROOSEVELT O. IDEHEN

Department of International Relations and Strategic Studies

Igbinedion University

Okada, Edo State, Nigeria

Idehen_roosevelt@yahoo.com, idehen.roosevelt@iuokada.edu.ng

Phone: +2348060685087, +2348055116517

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OAIKHENA IGBELOKOTO MARVELLOUS (PhD)

Department of Public Administration

College of Management and Social Sciences

Samuel Adegboyega University,

Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria

prince_marv12@yahoo.ca

Abstract

Policy somersault is one area that successive administration has lived with for some time now in most states in Africa. Each time a new government comes into power there seem to be a set-back as it reverses the policies of previous government, especially if they are not from the same political groups. This practice has becomes part of the social, economic, political, intellectual and cultural relations. Extra energy and resources are spent on designing and preparing plans for all kinds of policies with little or no thought given to the complex chains of reciprocal interactions and variables required in the translation of this policy in to actions even in event of change of government and this can be seen usually in the widening gap between intentions and results. The focus of this study is to identify possible courses of policy somersault and how to gauge the phenomenon, taking into consideration two Africa countries, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. This study took its framework from the strategic theory. It concluded that policy somersault accounts for major gaps in governance and inability to attract FDI to African states. It therefore recommends legislative framework to guarantee government against policy abortions.

Keywords: Summersault, Policy Inconsistency, National Development, Strategy, Governance, Civil service.

Introduction

The challenge of underdevelopment in states in Africa countries is clearly indicated by the poor human development index, the slow rates of economic growth the poor performance of

governments in the delivery of infrastructure, social services and public welfare, and the poor use of resources for development efforts.

In Nigeria for example, with an estimated population of 190 million people, which is expected to double by the year 2050, and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$510 billion, Nigeria is perhaps the largest market and biggest economy in Africa, (Ikelegbe, 2014), suffers grossly from policy misappropriations and abandonments. Ikelegbe (2014) argued that the framework of beliefs, values, norms and perspectives that influence policy making and that shape policy judgment, preferences and dispositions, is largely dysfunctional to optimal policy making. Therefore, the inconsistency in policies that ought to have been implemented has led the people to believe that government is not to be taken seriously, especially after policy pronouncements. This study argued that policies are central to the activities and operations of government, private organizations and communities. Public officials often spend much time making policy statements, declaring policy intentions, outlining policies, allocating and committing huge sums of money, to implementing them and explaining how actions fit into existing policies. However, the challenge is translating this intention into realities. Under this circumstances the moral and political injunction is that, we should not celebrate life-long struggles for survival and exonerate African states from social irresponsibility.

Nevertheless, the study is inclined to admit that rigorous institutional mechanisms at the center of government can help to reframe policy making within the realms of the affordable, by providing technical support and information; establishing and enforcing sets of procedures to enhance the rigors of decision making so as to avoid policy failures (Leon 1999) .

Stable policies and strong institutions are crucial elements of an enabling environment, which, is necessary for thriving prosperous economy. Sadly, good policies, when they are enacted, are not followed to conclusion. Failure to link policy, planning and budgeting, may be the single most important factor contributing to poor budgeting outcomes and policy summersault at the macro, strategic and operational levels in Africa, including the lack of adequate budgetary systems, in relation to funding. Unpredictability of funding, from one year to the next and within the budget year, is one of many factors that contribute to policy summersault and poor operational performance of policy in African's public sectors. The rate of policy summersault and reversal by the government is detrimental to the growth of the economy. As the study revealed, Zimbabwe (under former President Robert Mugabe) battled a 90 percent jobless rate and deepening economic crisis due to policy summersault.

The table hereunder revealed the procedure for the adherence of linking policies, planning; and adequate budget planning and management of resources in establishment (especially public domain):

Table 1: Procedure for the Adherence of Linking Policies

1. Policy Review	
Previous planning should be reviewed as implementation period is spelt out	
6. Evaluate and Audit Activities	2. Set Policies and Undertake Planning
Policy activities/effectiveness objectives are set,	Establish adequate framework, as and the results fed into future plans
5. Monitor activities and Resources	3. Mobilize and Allocation of
Account for expenditure	prepare budget
4. Implement Planned Activities.	
Collect revenues, release funds, And Deploy personnel.	

Source: Authors survey, 2019

Succinctly, table 1 revealed that, if there is no effective decision-making, policy making and planning would be disconnected from each other which also include budgeting. In a nut shell, this could lead to a massive mismatch between what is promised by government policies and what is affordable. As a result strategic objectives for clear policy choice will be jettisoned. Policy summersault therefore becomes inevitable.

One of The objectives of this study is to find out why there had been consistent policy summersault in Africa countries, with specific reference to Nigerian and Zimbabwe; and the effect or implication it had on the social, political and economic life of African states, specifically the two African states mentioned in this study. However, failure associated with policy formulation, pronouncement, and implementation, are problems mostly peculiar to developing nations. However, that does not extricate the advance economy of the West but it is endemic in the South. Several reasons had been adduced as to the course of policy failure and why in most cases policies are reversed. This reason has continuously slipped into the Maxim of Begging the question.

Effect of Policy Inconsistencies in Africa

Africa has suffered great deprivation and neglect of its citizens, with regards to policy summersault associated with government inconsistencies. This has culminated into bad and ineffective leadership style of governance as campaign promises are jettisoned against the wishes and aspirations of the people. It is the consideration of the thoughts on how to apply resources to achieve results in a specific strategic environment over time in the course of state building.(Jablonsky, 1995).Therefore policy outcomes might be construed by individuals as improving the general wellbeing or favoring particular social and political groups in the society. As a result the inclination to participate in policy formulation might be motivated by the desire to make things better for others and a desire to benefits as many people as possible for the purpose of social identification.

With regard to the above, two African countries (Nigeria and Zimbabwe)were taken into consideration, in view of the fact that they were ascribed to have neglected their people through policy summersault and inconsistencies which had hindered national development. This has also at times led to the emergence of dictators in some Africa countries. Accordingly, the study reacted to the effect of policy summersault in countries like Nigeria and Zimbabwe, citing the economic recession in Nigeria which, has been attributed to the frequent changes in policies by successive governments.

On the other hand, in Zimbabwe, there are the issues of policy inconsistencies. The government is often times plagued with crises ranging from cash shortage, and loss of confidence by investors(Zendi2009) he said that, Zimbabwe has over the years been ranked poorly on the World Bank doing business survey. He added that, "...before now, the country was ranked as the worst investment protector in Sub-Saharan Africa, as number 128 and had dropped to 170 from 128 on the ease of doing business in world rankings, as compiled by the World Bank compiled". In view of these, the study noted that, only government that subjects itself to the rules of law had any moral right to demand of its citizens, obedience to the rule of law.

Framework of Analysis

The study adopted strategic theory as framework for analysis. Strategists thoroughly examined the environments and developed strategy that identifies concepts, objectives, including resources that are required to accomplish policy goals. According to Smith (2011) the term strategy denotes the endeavour to relate ends to means. This could be the reason why Michael Howard's (1983) observed that strategy is the 'use of available resources to gain an objective'. Here, the term 'resources' or the 'means' refers not simply to the tangibles of power that may be employed to gain objectives but also to the many intangible factors that may impose themselves on any decision-maker, mostly the degree of political will, that an actor may put in place to attain its goals. Strategy for a country is neither simple nor easy, it requires the professional to step-out plans and adopt one or more suitable strategy for a strategic environment. Strategy formulation is recognized as both an art and science. Nonetheless, strategies are often linked to individuals' personalities in the eye of the public, and some individuals appear to have a particular talent for this art and science. Yanger (2006) argued that strategy focuses on root causes and purposes to ensure that direction of subordinate levels is sufficiently broad to be adaptable and flexible. It further examines the calculations of the

individual social actor, be it a state, a sub-state entity, or any other social grouping. Hence the theory describes to the actor the available choice and evaluates the quality of making decisions. Thus, strategic theorists assume rationality on the part of those whom they study since they cannot assume anything else (Smith, 1995).

Presumably an individual actor has to function in an environment full of other actors all trying to pursue their interests and objectives. It is constantly reactive to conditions in which, according to Schelling, is the ability of one participant to gain his ends, which depends on an important degree on the choices or decisions of the other participant [or participants'] will to make'. Strategic theory, thus accepts that clashes of interest, which might likely occur amongst actors and that in some instance, would lead to the resort of war as a means of obtaining objectives. In essence therefore, strategic theory is the study of correlations between ends and means, including the use, or threat of use, of armed force as a conscious choice of political actors who are intent on rationally pursuing their objectives (Smith, 2008). These have indeed been related to governance and policy issues.

Policy Summersault and Inconsistencies in Africa

According to Ikelegbe (2014) a policy is a declaration of an intention. Basically, for every country to have direction there is the need for clarity on policy and governance issues. Its reversal of a policy shows how government, horridly implement policies that, are neither as a result of well thought neither out processes, nor people friendly. Inconsistencies in policy lead to confusion and economic meltdown. Such inconsistencies usually, make strategic planning which is long term, impossible in a country. This gives a country bad image. Garba (2003) asserted that the current state of African society, politics, intellectual development and military capacity reflects its asymmetrical relationships with the main players and within the games of the current global capitalist system. No investor would be willing to partner with someone without clear policy matters. As one of the weakest points that some African Government has is policy clarification. The implementation of such policies that raise concern among the people shows both arrogance and ignorance with regard to policymakers. They think it is not necessary to consult relevant stakeholders on policy issues and they seem to be out of tune with peoples' reality. Policy inconsistency is nothing other than the height of poor governance and it must be rooted out of Africa countries if there is to be any meaningful development. Ikelegbe (2006), noted that the people are strategic in the planning and programming of development and therefore should be involved in the planning and policy processes. Guy (2000) opined that Nigeria's predicament was born out of endless policy summersaults.

Nigeria's Experience on Policy Summersault and Inconsistencies

The Nigerian economy has been said to be losing, an estimated annual revenue of N3.4tn as a result of the current crisis of poor infrastructure, poor policy implementation and corruption at the ports (Okon, 2018). Also according to World meters (2018), Nigerian's population is 190,886,311 million as at 2017, which accounts for 47% of West Africa's population and has one of the largest populations of youth in the world. It's political federation consists of 36 different states, with multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society, with an abundance of natural resources. Nigeria is also African's biggest oil exporter and with the largest natural gas reserves on the continent (world bank, 2017). Policy pronouncements has often times

witnessed dramatic changes right after independence in 1960. For almost 28 years Nigeria was under the military rule.

The political leadership maintains its control and influence over the instruments of power through the hierarchical nature of state strategy. According to Westport (2001), strategy incorporates learning from experience, and it is sufficiently broad in its construction to adapt to unfolding events and an adversary's countermoves.

Educational System Policy

Nigeria has witnessed undue interference in her higher education system. The educational sector like the universities, for example, had witnessed series of policy summersault. Series of policies were imposed on the system paving way for distortion and constraints on admission policies and programs. Between 1980 and 1990 the nations' educational system witnessed enormous demand for access into the Universities. According to Okeke (2016), the 2016 tertiary admission year could be the worst in policy summersault. Okeke observed that, the point system was introduced, using the graded points in a number of examinations for admission, then came the scrapping of post-UTME, the instruction then, was for universities to admit with JAMB scores; and then the reversal of the policy. This implies that self-serving processes are a sort of cognitive default that requires cognitive effort to override (Coalson, 2014).

As a result Universities were conferred with the sole authority of admitting students and with it came the issue of arbitrary rules and violation of the process by some University Governing Councils. At the end of all these, prospective students are left in the dark-uncertain, confused and helpless. This could be the reason why, Hon. Justice B. Kanyip (a Judge of the National Industrial Court) remarked that, rather than policies enhancing access to university education, they restrict access to higher education. He added that each year thousands of applicants sit for JAMB examinations and less than twenty percent on the average, gain admission into Nigerian Universities.

Federal Civil Service Tenure Policy

Another policy summersault which has received criticism in Nigeria is the tenure policy, whereby the Federal Government announced the suspension of the 2009 public service policy, which set eight-year tenure for permanent secretaries and directors this policy is said to be retrogressive and unnecessary (Oloko, 2016). The implication of this policy was that the eight-year tenure ceiling the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua government approved in 2009 was said to be a stabilizing factor in the civil service. The policy was to enable officers in the service, to rise to the highest echelon in the service, without the usual constrain by sit-tight officers at the Directorate and Permanent Secretaries level. In other words, prior to 2009, some Directors and Permanent Secretaries were usually in office for 16 years and above. Thus preventing other officers from rising as there were no vacancies. This policy was approved by the former President (late Yar'Adua) in August 2009 it was known as "Tenure of Office for Permanent Secretaries and Directors" in the federal bureaucracy. In amemo dated August 26, 2009 conveying the new policy on tenure to all public servants, the then Head of the Civil Service of the Federation - Mr. Stephen Oronsaye, had said that "the President's approval was part of continuing reforms in the federal civil service". He added that, the reform began under the

President Olusegun Obasanjo's led administration with the setting up of Bureau of Public Service Reforms in 2003, headed then by a Director General who was later appointed Permanent Secretary (Shehu, 2016).

Zimbabwe Experience on Policy Summersault

Economic Policies

The country's population is said to be 15.2 million, GDP growth rate annually is .5% under the regime of President R. Mugabe (1987-2017). Inconsistencies in the application of policies have left the Zimbabwe economy in a terrible shape worst, than that of a country that has never had steady and consistent government. In the educational sector, for example, the government is not clear about teachers' incentives, whether it wants them to stay or not, as the rural teachers get more from the government than those living in urban areas (Makanga&Mutsagondo, 2014).

Nquobani (2014) also reported that in 2010 the government announced that it would phase out the importation of cars that were five years old and above, but after a public outcry this was reversed. Nquobani added that it is not clear what the government hopes to achieve through such policy inconsistencies. What is clear however is that this situation has led to corruption and profiteering among a certain people who thrives in looting and policy confusion.

Zenda (2015) observed that, the different and conflicting economic policies in Zimbabwe, led to policy summersault and inconsistencies. Some of these policies are:

- In 1981 the "Growth in Equity" policy
- The "Three Year Transitional National Development Plan (1982-1983)",
- The "First Five-Year National Development Plan(1886-1890)".
- The 1990, Zimbabwe five-year Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), a World-Bank programme that sought to liberalize the economy from a semi-socialist to a full capitalist one.
- The economic blueprint named "Framework for Economic Reform" (1991-5), which sought to privatize state-owned enterprises.
- In 1998, the government of Zimbabwe unveiled the second leg of its economic structural adjustment programme, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST), which was said to be years behind schedule. ZIMPREST (1996-2000) sought to create a stable macro-economic environment to support increased savings and investment in order to achieve higher growth and improved standards of living for the people.
- The new millennium-2000 with its Millennium Economic Recovery Programme, (August 2001-2002). The policy sought to stop the economy from bleeding violent, chaotic and land reform exercise.
- The 10-point plan (2002) under the Post-Election Economic Development Strategy and Economic Recovery Programme.
- In 2003, came the National Economic Revival Programme (NERP).
- The Macroeconomic Policy Framework, which was implemented, between 2005 and 2006.

- The year 2007 brought with it the National Economic Development Priority Programme. While the Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy suffered a stillbirth in 2008 due to that year's economic meltdown.
- The advent of a coalition government brought with it the short term emergency recovery programme (STERP) which sought to get Zimbabwe moving again, between February and December, 2009.
- This was followed by its successor STERP2, a dual policy document encompassing the Three Year Macro-Economic Policy and the Budget Framework (2010-12).
- The Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim-Asset) which runs from 2013 to 2018. Zim-Asset was said to be a policy document, which many government officials struggle to explain.

Therefore, the level of policy uncertainty and the impact on investor/business confidence in Zimbabwe could be meaningfully reduced, if the process of policy formation encompasses rationality, coordination, consultation, collaboration and constructive criticism. Also, the policy measures that caused the massive shrinkage of the whole economy are not even recognized in the document, let alone addressed.

Economic Distortions in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, it is a fact that property rights are officially disregarded as savings and bank balances are appropriated, without the owners' consent, thereby undermining confidence and discouraging investment inflows that might have transformed the country's prospects. Meredith (2006), argued that African societies, commonly claimed, traditionally, indigenous aspects of socialism; the communal ownership of land; the egalitarian character of village life; collective decision making; extensive networks of social obligation; all were cited as examples. Zimbabwe sometimes ago celebrated 37 years of independence, but on the economic front there is a regression.

A social commentator Maxwell Saungweme, once remarked that the independence promises by the government, included a Zimbabwe of milk and honey, where everyone is equal and enjoys equal protection of the law and full access to opportunities to unleash their full potential. This promise has been turned into a nightmare by selfish political elite. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Zimbabwe formal unemployment rate is 95% as the country's economy is dominated by the informal sector and mainly street vendors.

A Political analyst Pedzisai Ruhanya, also remarked that there was an obsession with political power at Independence in 1980 instead of a focus on economic transformation. He maintained that, the Zimbabwe of today is a decomposition of corruption epitomized by Robert Mugabe's rule, as the former President, completely lost touch with what is on ground, attributing his physical appearance to be the exact description of Zimbabwe's economy.

Conclusion

Good, stable policies and strong institutions are crucial elements of an enabling society, which necessitate a thriving and prosperous economy. Sadly, good policies, when they are enacted, are not followed to conclusion. It was with regard to this that the study advocated for good strategic thinking to avoid the level of inconsistencies in policy implementation/failure. The

rate of policy summersault and reversal by the government of some African countries as captured by this study is detrimental to the growth of the economy. [For example the](#) government of Zimbabwe need to deal with impediments to Foreign Direct Investments and the political situation prevailing in the country, which has instilled a wait and see attitude among foreign investors, who are wary of the volatile economic and political environment prevailing in the country.

Corruption has taken its toll on the economy of Zimbabwe, as the former President, Robert Mugabe had proved to be one of the biggest liabilities with his endless foreign trips, that gutted millions of dollars, at a time the country was grappling for international support.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's policy somersault will go down in the memory of all Nigerians as a recurring decimal. Beautiful policies are allowed to wither away on grand of some sort of superficial flimsy reasons, such as differences in political parties, geographical locations and its attendant's politics of special distributions within the Nigeria polity.

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