The Strategy Approach: A Response to the Challenge of Ghana's Rapid Transformation by 2037

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1.0 Introduction

On the 6th of March, 1957, Ghana liberated herself from British subjugation. It was the culmination of nationalist struggles that had began after the first Europeans (Portuguese) set foot on the Western coast of Ghana at Elmina in the fifteenth century in pursuit of bullion. The modern Ghana that emerged knitted into one polity several others that had centuries earlier in the main been monarchies. It was the Convention People's Party (CPP) helmed by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah which led Ghana to independence after winning the 1951, 1954 and 1956 general elections. Ghana was the first African country south of the Sahara to attain political independence. Considered a model colony because of her abundant natural resources, efficient civil service and highly educated population expectations across the globe at independence were high. It seems that these expectations were not realized in the outcomes of Ghana's public policy formation efforts after the Nkrumah years.

Ghana's policy formation in the post Nkrumah era (especially in the last thirty years) has tended to reflect a preponderant market driven approach[1]. In part the analysis of political economists like Lal(1984;1986;1988) for whom the state in a developing country is 'predatory;' Bates(1981;1983) who considered a prominent role of the state in development as 'deleterious;'

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[1] See Killick(2010) who argues also that the policies of the Nkrumah era had a tinge of free marketry in spite of the nationalist and Marxian posture of the Ghanaian leader .

and the Ghanaian scholar Frimpong-Ansah(1991) who echoed similar sentiments by labeling the state in the policy sphere a 'vampire,' seemed to have laid the intellectual basis for such a turn not only in Ghana but in the other developing polities. Ghana's turn to the IMF and WB for support in the face of mounting economic and social hardships in 1983 marked her turn to market led public policy formation. These two institutions prescribed market fundamentalist policies.[2] State owned enterprises were simply sold off under so-called privatization (Uddin and Tsamanyi, 2005) schemes dogmatically pursued on the advice of these Bretton Woods institutions and the whole raft of benchmarks spelt out under what has become known in the development literature as the "Washington Consensus" almost religiously applied if not adhered to. The Government of Ghana (2005:18) asserted self admittedly that it has pursued a 'market-led[3] developmental strategy' since 1983.

2.0 Unpacking the Ghanaian Conundrum

Ghanaian economists Fosu and Aryeetey(2008:289) provide an informed view of Ghana's(post 1980s) rather confused national transformation record :

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[2] These were in the form of the Structural Adjustment Programmes(SAP) right through to the Poverty Reduction Programmes(PRP) and the Country Assistance Strategy(CAS) policies. Ignored or at least papered over were the trenchant counter arguments in the field of mathematical economics that questioned very robustly the rational market hypothesis anchoring such policy prescriptions. See for example Fox (2010) for an account of such counter arguments .

[3] Stiglitz(1986) provided an analysis of the limitation of the market as a driver of public policy.

It was fairly common in the 1980s and early 1990s to read *commendations* of Ghana's economic growth *achievements*……But this occurred at a time when many Ghanaians showed little appreciation of that growth achievement (Aryeetey and Tarp 2000). The continuing *fragility of the economy* and the *significant social costs of adjustment* made it difficult to appreciate economic growth in a period of reforms (italics mine).

A compatriot of the two scholars cited above and also an economist Nii Moi Thompson (2011:55) re-echoes their sentiments

Growth has averaged 5.0% per year since the Economic Recovery Programme of 1983, reaching nearly 8.4% in 2008 before tapering off to 4.7% in 2009……..

The worrying impoverisation of an increasing number of Ghanaians is not lost on Thompson (2011:55) as well:

Although overall poverty levels are said to have steadily fallen since the 1980s, inequality has risen simultaneously, reflecting an *unequal distribution* of the benefits of growth (italics mine).

What in our view is clearly evident is public policy formation under strain in Ghana since the 1980s as the process failed woefully to meet the basic existential needs of a majority of Ghanaians. It is our argument that the neo-liberal development[4] paradigm which has held public policy formation captive at the ontological level in Ghana lies at the nexus of this problematic. This neo-liberal paradigm which is essentially ideological in its intents, purposes and expressions, holds at the fundamental level, an almost virulent antipathy against the state in favour of the apotheosized, unerring, rational market as the central notion in the public policy process. For Ghana as in other developing polities this approach was virtually foisted through International Finance Institutions (IFI) via economic and political conditionalities (Amoah, 2005). A central corollary of this ontological tie of Ghana's public policy process to the neo-liberal paradigm in its most current forms has been the near total and mindless marketization of Ghana's entire public policy process[5]. While this unexamined logic of the market has held sway the state[6] has virtually abandoned its bounden duty as the primary guardian of the immediate and long-term policy interests of Ghanaians. The false binary of "market is good/state is bad" which has come to arguably define the ontological "software" of Ghana's public policy formation needs to be radically re-examined and robustly responded to if Ghana intends to find answers and quickly to her burgeoning social, political, economic, cultural, technological, spiritual and environmental challenges. The Strategy Approach(SA), a public policy process framework is here being offered as such a prescriptive response.

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[4] See Amoah(2010) and Amoah(2011; forthcoming) for a detailed account of neo-liberalism's dominance of the public policy space of developing countries.

[5] Attempts at public sector reforms in Ghana typically reflect this claim. See Amoah(2008)

[6] Ronald Reagan's infamous claim " The government is not the solution; government is the problem," provides a succinct example of the narratives against the state which have propped the global neo-liberal project.

3.0 Deconstructing the Strategy Approach (SA)

3.1 Overview

The SA is a response to gaps (highlighted below) identified in the literature on the theories of the policy process. The gap as construed in this work is reflected in the scant attention paid to- and as a consequence the virtually absent reflection of- the lived realities of developing polities in contemporary discourse on the policy process. The implication arising out of such a state of affairs is that the dominant policy process theories developed in the main by European and American scholars with their respective concrete realities as a background present arguably limited explanatory and prescriptive power with respect to policy formation in developing polities. The response is the presentation in this paper of the intuitively, interpretively and inductively derived and prescriptive SA in order to present practical guidelines and a conceptual framework for policy formation in developing polities.

3.2 Engaging the Literature

Sabatier lays out succinctly a crucial distinction between public policy research and political science when he asserts that while political science is preoccupied with understanding the way political institutions operate and function public policy research on the contrary concerns itself essentially with the impact of the actions and decisions of government as encapsulated in policy[7]. In other words political science with its inordinate focus on institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, local government, interest groups and the executive among others and with it the behavior, interests and preferences of the actors therein tends to lose sight of the broader policy

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[7] Sabatier, (1991).

environment and the key factors impinging upon it. In making such a distinction Sabatier goes on to make a compelling case for as he terms it 'reasonably clear, generalizable and empirically verified theories of the policy process.' The overriding concern therefore is an attempt to explain policy change over time across different policy arenas.

That the United States is the putative home of policy analysis is a historical fact[8]. Indeed public administration (the parent field of policy analysis) emerged as a self conscious discipline on the back of the seminal writing of Wilson[9]. In this work Wilson highlights themes-such as the linkages between politics and the bureaucracy, the facts versus value distinction[10] and the nature of public administration-which have occupied a key position in the work of successive generations of public administration scholars. The American antecedents of public policy analysis in particular manifest with the emergence of evaluation studies (after the debacle of the Great Society and War on Poverty programmes of the Lyndon Johnson era of the 1960s) as an attempt to better understand the impact of public policies[11]. Concurrent with and subsequent to this development various American scholars have tended to focus their work on various stages of the stylized policy process (referred to in the literature as the stages heuristic) viz agenda setting,

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[8] Skogstad puts it succinctly when she states that "by virtue of their sheer volume, analyses of American public policies dominate in the public policy literature." See Skogstad(2001:19-20).

[9] Woodrow Wilson, 1887:197-222.

[10] See Robert Denhardt, 2000). In this book Denhardt engages in a withering critique of the dominance of such themes in the public administration literature and underscores the culpability of same in the failure of public institutions in meeting optimally the needs of the public. The facts/value distinction here refers to the scientific turn in public administration which argued and posited that the morality need not be a burden of public policy as such.

[11] See Lester and Stewart, 2004:7.

policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy change and policy termination and the dominance of this approach arguably held sway throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century[12]. It is this segmentation of the policy process which triggered the search by some public policy scholars for overarching and generalizable theories of the policy process.

Sabatier is one of the leading public policy scholars[10] who made a robust case for the necessity of developing theories of the policy process. His reasons for making such a call were two fold. Firstly Sabatier argued that existing attempts[13] at theorizing about the policy process though significant contributions to the discourse had proved inadequate in offering holistic, logically consistent and empirically verifiable explanations of why policies change at all. In this regard he critiqued the stages heuristic which he considered the "dominant paradigm"[14] essentially because it was not a causal theory. Secondly Sabatier argued that the stages heuristic failed to account for

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[12] For the agenda setting literature the works of Kingdon, 2006, is one of the most cited. Any public policy student worth his or salt would have been exposed to the works of Simon(1965) and Lindblom(1959) on policy formulation. The works of Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983); Van Meter and Van Horn(1975);Pressman and Wildavsky(1973) remain some of the most influential in the policy implementation field. These examples demonstrate the buzz of intellectual activity in the various areas of public policy research by Americans. It must be stated here however that the categorization of the various areas in question does not imply strict separation as such but admits of various points of overlap. Kingdon's work cited in this paper for example though it deals with agenda setting really touches on all the various stages of the policy process.

[13] Nakamura(1987) also critiqued witheringly the stages heuristic.

[14] See Jones(1970) and Peters(1986).

longitudinal change in policy over a period of a least a decade and across different policy arenas and ignored pertinent policy concepts such the role of policy elites and technical information in policy formation. In effect the stages heuristic had overstayed its welcome. The public policy research arena has therefore been witness to attempts to craft new public policy theories in the last two decades It can be argued that theories of the policy process such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework(ACF),Institutional Analysis and Development(IAD)Framework, Multiple Streams(MS) Framework, Social Construction Framework(developed by Helen Ingram and Anne Shneider) and Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory(developed by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones) remain in contemporary times the dominant paradigms in the field. For this paper we discourse on two of these theories for economy of text purposes[15].

The ACF was elaborated by Sabatier (1986, 1987, 1988) working in conjunction with Hans Jenkins-Smith. In fact the theory's organizing concepts were first articulated by Sabatier at a Rotterdam Conference in 1983(Sabatier, 2007) and has since undergone important revisions. The central concern of this theory is to explain policy change over time within a given policy subsystem[16]. The ACF argues that to explain policy change over time the most important unit of

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[15] See Amoah(2009) for the comprehensive literature review.

[16] Here Sabatier is concerned about the need for the propositions and concepts of theories of the policy process to be among others logically consistent, empirically falsifiable and delineate clear causal paths. In evidence is Sabatier's self admitted penchant for scientific methodology even though he recognizes that other methodologies are equally valid to the extent that one is sufficiently " clear enough to be proven wrong(Sabatier,2007:3).

analysis is the policy subsystem (Sabatier, 2007:204) encompassing advocacy coalitions[17] composed of legislators, researchers, bureaucrats, journalists and interest groups. The hypothesized advocacy coalition reflects the theory's emphasis on the centrality of the policymaking role of policy elites given the complexity of issues of the policy process and with it the salient role of beliefs and technical information in the ACF.

Beliefs and policy change constitute the two dependent variables for the ACF. In the ACF the beliefs of policy elites are ordered in a three tier hierarchy made up of deep core (at a more fundamental level) and policy core beliefs (at a specific and less fundamental level).

Deep core beliefs which cut across most policy subsystems

> involve very general normative and ontological assumptions about human nature, the relative priority of fundamental values such as liberty and equality, the relative priority of the welfare of different groups, the proper role of government vs. markets in general, and about who should participate in government decisionmaking[18].

These deep core beliefs are the product of the socialization and humanization process that individuals undergo from childhood and thus deemed by the ACF as difficult to change. Policy core beliefs on the other hand are derived from deep core beliefs and extend across a given policy subsystem. According to Sabatier and Jenkins the components of policy core beliefs include

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[17] A policy subsystem is construed as an arena of interaction between groups and individuals in a specific area of interest (foreign affairs, economy, water policy etc) in a given territory (Zafonte and Sabatier, 1998).

[18] Sabatier, 2007:194.

the priority of different policy-related values, whose welfare counts, the relative authority of governments and markets, the proper roles of the general public, elected officials, civil servants, experts, and the relative seriousness and causes of policy problems in the subsystem as a whole[19].

These policy core beliefs are thus related to specific policy subsystems. To the extent that policy core beliefs entail issues of specific policy preferences (e.g. providing or withholding subsidies for Ghanaian farmers) the ACF terms such beliefs policy core policy preferences. In general the ACF considers policy core beliefs as the most critical nexus linking coalition members. At the bottom of the ACF belief hierarchy are secondary beliefs which are narrower in scope and deal with instruments for achieving policy ends such as the role of government within a given statute, budgets within a given program etc. Secondary beliefs are the most amenable to change on account of requiring little evidence (against) and less agreement from coalition members.

The preceding discourse on beliefs is vital essentially because for the ACF change in secondary and policy core beliefs sets the basis for major policy change. The ACF argues that the change in both beliefs however must be understood in terms of two critical paths namely policy oriented-learning[20] and external shocks caused by the impact of 'dynamic external factors'[21]; and

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[19] Sabatier, 2007:195.

[20] Sabatier and Jenkins's(1999:123) explication of policy-oriented learning which in effect is the impact of feed-back on members of the advocacy coalition(s) is instructive: 'relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and/or new information and that are concerned with the attainment and revision of policy objectives.'

[21] For the ACF these include effects from other policy subsystems, change in socio-economic conditions, changes in public opinion and changes in systemic governing coalition etc.

alternative paths to policy change in the form of internal shocks and negotiated agreements. Policy-oriented learning tends to change secondary beliefs while the other three impact on policy core beliefs (Sabatier, 2007). The ultimate effects of these paths are to alter among other things the notions of the severity of 'wicked problems,' the choice of instruments to deal with them and possible outcomes and thus engender major policy change. In other words these paths are the causal drivers of major policy change for the ACF.

It is clear that the ACF as a policy process theory turns on the beliefs of individuals (Sabatier, 2007:4) and how these impact on policy change. It will not be farfetched to assert that beliefs in this regard have tended to be American beliefs derived essentially from the experiences of American political economy. These beliefs as Sabatier himself writes encompass

> largely tacit assumptions about well-organized interest groups, mission-oriented agencies,
> weak political parties, multiple decision making venues, and the need for supermajorities to
> enact and implement major policy change[22].

Sabatier further admits that on account of this the ACF has been critiqued for ill fitting European corporatist socio-political arrangements[23]. We also argue on our part that the ACF in its 'tacit

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[22] Sabatier, 2007: 199. (op. cit).

[23] . Sabatier's(2007:200-201) response is to introduce the concept of Coalition Opportunity Structures(COS) which is concerned with how openness to(a function of accessibility and number of venues) and levels of consensuality of decision making arrangements within a polity affect the policy making process by impacting on the resources and behaviour of subsystem actors. In this typology pluralist polities display high (highest scale) consensus for decision

assumptions' cannot adequately capture the historical and present realities of the policy process in the developing world. The differentiating factor in this regard in our view lies in the role of the state and hence the place of the market. We submit that the history and contemporary realities of developing countries prescribe a greater role for the state in the policy process and by implication make imperative the elaboration of a policy process theory so attuned. In taking such a position therefore the value of the ACF will lie essentially in offering conceptual utility[24] rather than replicatory validity[25] in the task of constructing a theory of the policy process for developing countries.

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making and high openness of political systems while so called authoritarian systems on the same parameters score low(lowest scale). It is our view however that the while the COS offers an important conceptual tool for discoursing on the policy process in developing polities the policy empirics of these countries will confound the predictions of the COS at some points (e.g. though China may fit the authoritarian classification and thus may be considered closed its policy process involves a lot of actors and displays openness) and thus will need re-interpretation for its employment.

[24] By this we mean that a particular concept may prove useful as an idea but its practical application in a given policy environment may require another interpretation. See Kwasi Wiredu (1996) for a particularly enlightening discourse on this.

[25] In other words for developing countries the ACF cannot serve in its pristine form as a basis for understanding and indeed the formation of public policy.

John Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) remains one of the most cited[26] in the public policy literature. In what has become a classic book (Kingdon, 2006) Kingdon discourses on the key organizing concepts of his framework and their inter-relations. The MSF was inspired by the 'Garbage Can Model'[27] and essentially attempts to provide an explanation of the role of rationality in the policy formation process specifically at the agenda setting and policy formulation stages. The framework grapples with the notion of ambiguity which is characterized as the lack of clarity with respect to personnel, policy choices and instruments when dealing with policy problems. As consequence therefore policy making in this framework is seen as arising from ' not merely the derivative of individual efforts aggregated in some fashion, but rather the combined result of structural forces and cognitive and affective processes that are highly context dependent(Zahariadis,2007).' Central to this framework is the concept of streams of which there are three main ones viz the problem, politics and policy streams and are hypothesized as existing independent of each other(Kingdon, 2006:87).The 'streams' description is used to capture the chaotic yet organized character of the policy formation process.

The problem stream is concerned with how and why policy problems become or fail to become a matter of concern for policy actors. Here of crucial importance is the interplay of the socio-economic and political environment and factors that draw attention to an issue. The attention

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[26] A Google Scholar Search for (accessed on 11/06/2008) citations indicated that Kingdon's book (1995 edition) had been cited 2976times. Sabatier (2007) citing the Social Science Citation Index of 1996 acknowledges the popularity of the MSF in receiving the second highest citation of the leading policy process theories. Kingdon's research focused primarily on the health and transport sector in the United States.

[27] See Cohen et al, 1972.

drawing factors are indicators, focusing events[28] and feedback. These in conjunction with say the election of a new leader or president, the price of crude oil on the international market, the invention of a new technology draw or divert the attention of policymakers to a particular policy problem and determine whether policy solutions will be pursued on it (Kingdon, 2006:90-115). The politics stream describes the various activities of policy actors in their engagement with policy challenges and is underlain fundamentally by the processes by which those with political power are convinced to take a particular decision on a given issue. The core idea brought forward in the politics stream is how the changing political configuration(in terms of national mood, the impact of organized groups and administrative or legislative turn over) in a polity impacts on policy actors and the choices they make (Kingdon, 2006:145-164)[29] and the importance of consensus building in that regard. The primacy of the policy entrepreneur and ideas are highlighted in the policy stream which deals essentially with how a particular policy (in respect of framing the problem objectives, choice of instruments etc) comes to be rejected or accepted. Ultimately for policy change Kingdon argues that the three streams must be coupled. This coupling is achieved through the policy window which Kingdon describes as: 'an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or push attention to their special problems (Kingdon, 2006:165).' Policy windows are usually of a short time frame. For the policy entrepreneur the utility of the policy window is a function of her access, strategy and resources and with it the contiguity of her values to the dominant ideology of the polity at a given point in time.

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[28] See Birkland, 1997.

[29] See also Zahariadis(2007) who makes the same point.

For our purposes we argue that the MS with its focus on the American polity limits its utility in explaining policy change in developing polities where the state historically and empirically has tended to play a central role in the policy process. It must be stated however that the MS provides important conceptual devices that may be incorporated into any framework that seeks to explain policy formation in developing polities. Such devices include streams and policy windows and the bold assumptions about the centrality of ideas, serendipity and people in the policy formation process at the national level.

That Sabatier's ACF and the other theories of the policy process reflect deeply held Western philosophical tenets about human behavior is not an accident nor does one need to over flog this point. A pertinent question however has to do with how notions such as bounded rationality, pluralism and methodological individualism will fit in circumstances that have a different interpretation of such concepts or do not consider them as central. Skogstad underscores this point when she avers that '……..the merits of a host of policy "theories" on offer are contingent on a host of factors. Not least of these factors is the alignment of the theory's premises with the configuration of the society, economy and polity under consideration.'[30] It is this misalignment of the core assumptions of this menu of theories with the socio-economic and politico-cultural and historical conditions and realities of developing polities which needs to be urgently addressed to broaden the universal integrity of the theories of the policy process. It is true that attempts have been made to apply these theories in developing countries. These applications are however just

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[30] Grace Skogstad, 2001: 420.

too few and far between. Sabatier's ACF and Ingram and Schneider's Constructivist Theory has been applied only twice in Africa in Mozambique and Ghana respectively; clearly a not too impressive statistic. In any case it must be stated that applying such theories entails more or less an implicit acceptance of the key assumptions of the theory in question; clearly not the best path to beat regarding the crafting of public policy process theories for developing countries.

One will be remiss to suggest in canvassing the claim that constructing theories of immediate relevance to developing countries is imperative that the frameworks discoursed on above have no value in such an exercise. Their value for our purposes will lie essentially in their offering conceptual utility rather than replicatory validity. That is such theories if they are to be useful to developing countries can provide valuable concepts that can be adapted and adopted rather than presenting a mechanistic (and hence mimetic) necessity to apply them (if they can be applied at all).

3.3 The Strategy Approach: Antecedents, Building Blocks and Morphology

The Strategy Approach (SA) is conceived as an analytical toolbox for the explication of policy change over time in developing polities which managed to turn the corner decisively and as prescription for those developing countries intent on transforming themselves. This framework is derived from the synthesis of relevant concepts adopted and adapted from existing theories of the policy process. The policy empirics of two of the most successful countries in contemporary development history, China and Singapore[31], are employed to provide an empirical basis for the central hypothesis of the framework: policy change in successful developing countries is driven

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[31] See Amoah(2009) for a full engagement with the policy empirics of these two countries. The narrative omitted in this paper for economy of text.

by strategy. The SA is intended to provide an exploratory analytic framework of both theoretical and prescriptive value for policy formation in developing countries. In other words it seeks to provide explanations of why the policies of some developing countries produced arguably successful outcomes and holds them out as policy models for those (in the majority) that have yet to succeed.

Sabatier (2007) offers important guidelines for crafting theories of the policy process. He argues that policy scholars focus should focus on four main points if their frameworks, theories or models are to be taken seriously. These are specifying the model of the individual, unit of analysis, the key variables and causal drivers. We follow Sabatier in this regard by delineating clearly in the SA the unit of analysis, the central variables and the causal relations between them but depart from his essentially scientistic proclivity evidenced by his inordinate focus on the falsifiability of hypotheses (based on Popper's falsifiability principle)[32]. It must be stated here however that we acknowledge his concerns about the need for clarity in the crafting of theories of the policy process. Our model of science here however is closer to Davis's (2005) who canvasses for the need for the policy sciences to move away from the orthodoxy and grip of the traditional two-value logic (true or false) of so-called scientific enquiry in theory building and embrace a three-value logic(true/false/don't know yet or undecided). Davis's discourse on concepts is enlightening as he acknowledges their linguistic and culture sensitivity and therefore subjective character. In this regard then Davis makes a robust case for

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[32] Karl Popper in his magnum opus, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (1959) introduced the Falsifiability Principle which asserts that a proposition or hypothesis is scientific to the extent that it can be confronted with an observation that contradicts it.

abandoning the ideal of grand deductive theorizing and moving toward

a model of science closer to that of medical practice. Acknowledging

the limitations inherent in single-case or small-N analysis as well as

inductively generated inferences, the practitioner nevertheless can

develop explanations and understandings that are more than mere

opinion. And she may do so in ways that suggest points and methods of

intervention, either to promote or prevent outcomes that may recur

(2005:8).

The SA follows Sabatier (2007) in adopting a decidedly nuanced rationalist model of the

individual. In this regard therefore the SA does not accept the rather simplistic view that

individuals in making choices simply act as rational actors bent on maximizing the utility of their

simple material interests (methodological individualism). The SA holds the view that 'normative

beliefs must be empirically ascertained and does not a priori preclude the possibility of altruistic

behavior[33].' We will focus on the altruistic tendency here and hold it to mean that in the SA

policy actors do not simply pursue their personal material interests but the possibility also exists

of a culturally(or otherwise) derived moral imperative to also pursue the common good even at

the peril of such personal material interests. Factoring in altruistic behavior in the conduct of

policy actors in the SA attunes the framework to the communitarian social organization structures

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[33] Sabatier, 2007:194.

and philosophy of developing countries in Asia[34], Africa (Gyekye, 1995,1997; Wiredu, 1996) and Latin America (an issue that the literature on policy theories does not actively address). The SA borrows Sabatier's Policy Subsystem typology. Thus the SA assumes that because of the complexity and magnitude of policy challenges in developing polities there exists like elsewhere policy experts who specialize in given policy areas (e.g. education, foreign, social, environmental policies, etc.). Given the influence of globalization on policy formation we do not accept Sabatier's distinction (2007:192) between mature policy subsystems and nascent ones. Indeed the existence of policy networks across borders complicates such differentiation. For example the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have offices in most African countries. These offices interact (deliberately and consciously so) with a variety of policy experts across a range of fields in such countries and influence heavily their policy choices. The difficulty in characterizing such a policy subsystem as nascent or complex is obvious. The SA then theorizes that these policy elites are grouped in Strategy Partnerships (SP) straddling the public and private spheres. In other words the SPs are policy subsystems that are concerned fundamentally and primarily with questions of strategy. The SPs are interlinked via networks of interaction where the primary agenda is making inputs for and implementing strategy at the national level. These SPs need to possess resources to influence policy. These resources following Sabatier (2007:201-203) include legal authority, financial resources, public opinion, information and skillful leadership. The extent to which these SPs utilize their resources effectively determines their impact on policy and hence differentiates between dominant and peripheral partnerships. The dominant partnership has influence in key policy making venues such as the executive, commissions, committees,

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[34] Some Asian leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore have consistently invoked the Confucian ethic as being vital in understanding the policy choices of Asian countries in contemporary times.

departments, ministries, legislature, judiciary etc. and such influence may be in the form of personnel or the dominance of its ideas in policy formation. The SA assumes that the state will exercise significant autonomy and will act unilaterally at times. The fundamental role of the state however from an assumed dominant position is to 'attempt to manage the interdependent relations to promote joint problem solving in policy making (Adam and Kriesi, 2007).' The state thus forms a significant part of the SPs.

Strategy in the SA is analyzed as both a dependent and independent variable. The literature on strategy is vast and dense[35]. Suffice it to state here that in the literature it appears that it is through the strategy discourses of business management writers that the public sector began to take this concept seriously. Hence the rise of strategic planning in public policy formation (initially in the U.S. and Europe in the 1960s via the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System) which Mintzberg excoriated[36]. For Mintzberg strategy is a distinct process from planning (which is rather a vital aid to its formation) and encompasses the four concepts of plan, pattern, position and perspective. Following Mintzberg therefore strategy here is defined as a pattern of flexible decisions and actions undergirded by a clearly articulated world view aimed at meeting specific goals within a given time frame to ultimately gain a position of relative competitive advantage and /or benefit. The developing polity *ab initio* is historically and geo-politically competitively disadvantaged (Hira, 2007).The SA therefore assumes that at the core of its policy formation will

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[35] See John Middleton, 2003 who offers a synopsis of the some of the seminal writings on strategy that have impacted on governments and organizations in contemporary times.

[36] See Henry Mintzberg, 1994. In this seminal work he gives an informative account of the emergence of strategic planning as the product of an erroneous belief that strategy was an offspring of the planning process. Mintzberg argues convincingly against such a view and the term strategic planning which he considers a misnomer. Planning in his estimation is a mechanical process whiles strategy is fundamentally a creative undertaking.

lie questions of strategy; here strategy is construed in broad and all encompassing terms and not simply in terms of industrial and economic policy of the state as the development literature (Johnson, 1982; Deyo, 1987; Gerefi, 1992; World Bank, 1993) has tended to focus on. Strategy then is also understood to imply the complex of ideas, processes and actions by which efforts are made to transform the entire life of the citizens of a developing state through the utilization of its resources (both physical and human) and opportunities. Policy actors in the developing polity are engaged primarily with matters of strategy in industrial, economic, external relations, defense, etc spheres.

The SA proposes that strategy is influenced by: the international and national contexts. At the international level the emergence of new information/knowledge(including international legalo-regulatory frameworks) and realities exemplified in say new industries, new industrial organization concepts, new patterns of interactions between countries, influences and will influence strategy in the developing polity. This is driven by the impact of such ideas on the policy core and secondary beliefs of partnership members which in turn affect their contribution to strategy crafting. At the national level in focus is the interaction between the existing institutional structures (governance structures, legal and regulatory framework etc) and what we label as Critical Strategy Formation Factors(CSFF)[37] such as existing(and potential)skills set, national advantages and resources, serendipity, visionary leadership and political mood[38]. Here the extent to which the state can and is willing to deploy its power (a function of the institutional structure and the mind set of those in power) mediated by the CSFF and the impact (of CSFF) on
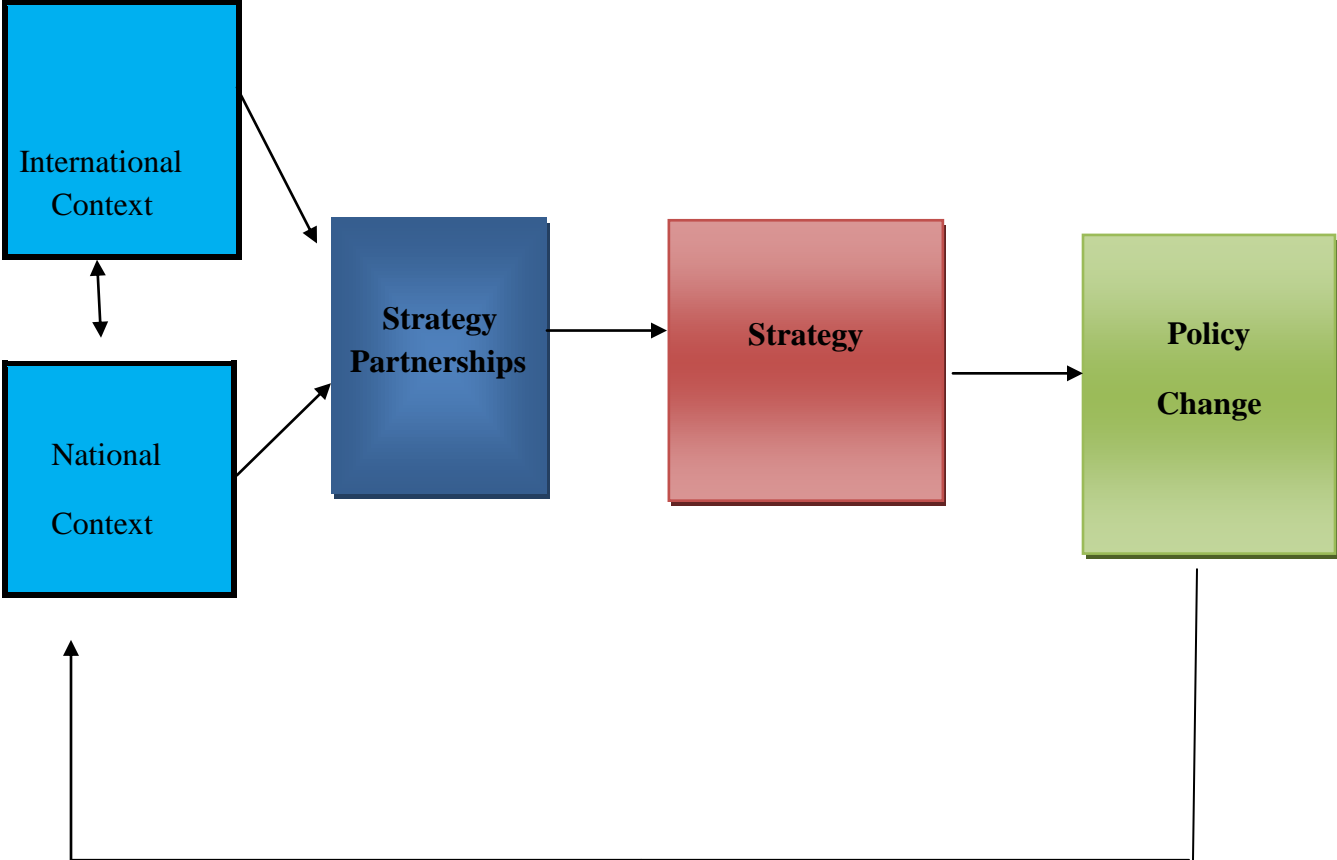
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[37] The CSFF are construed as necessary conditions in the absence of which strategy formation cannot take place.

[38] In this regard partnerships keep a keen eye on trends and opportunities in order not to miss them.

the policy core and secondary beliefs of partnership members' drives strategy. Strategy in turn drives (as an independent variable) policy change by its impact on what are considered national development priorities at a given point in time. A diagrammatic presentation of the SA is offered below.

Figure 2.0 **The Strategy Approach in schematic**

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┌──────────────┐
│International  │ ────┐
│   Context    │     │
└──────────────┘     ▼
      ↕        ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
┌──────────────┐│   Strategy   │ ──▶│ Strategy │ ──▶│  Policy  │
│   National   ││ Partnerships │    │          │    │  Change  │
│   Context    │└──────────────┘    └──────────┘    └──────────┘
└──────────────┘
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3.4. Key Claims(Hypothesis) of the SA

Here we look at the key claims or hypotheses of the SA. The term 'hypothesis' is used here advisedly conscious of the debate raging between qualitative and quantitative research approaches on this. The claims (following) derived from the SA are presented to facilitate following Sabatier further fine-tuning and development of the SA. The rational here is to be as clear as possible to be proved otherwise rather than following the positivist canon of falsifiablity. The claims (inductively derived) are as follows:

1. Policy change in developing polities is essentially driven by strategic concerns.

2. There exists in developing polities policy elites grouped in a network of Strategy Partnerships which tends to include the state via its assigns.

3. The shifts in the policy beliefs of Strategy Partnership members affect strategy formation and then policy change.

4. Any far reaching agitations in the national and international contexts affects the policy beliefs of policymakers and therefore forms a necessary (but not sufficient) basis for change in strategy and therefore policy change.

4.0 The Ghanaian Pathology, the SA and 2037

In December, 2008 China's influential English language magazine, *China Today*, published a special issue thirty-year retrospective on that country's water-shed Reform and Opening Period *(gaige yu kaifang)* which took off in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping. The editorial provided a triumphant but guarded insight into China's rapid transformation in a generation:

Over the past thirty years China's GDP has been growing at a rate of three times that of the world's average. The economic miracle, however, came at a price. But after savoring all the good and bad aspects of development, China has come of age and is heading in the right direction. The special report in this issue is a recollection of the changes in China over the past three decades, both in terms of physical transformations and public mentality (*China Today,* 2008: 4).

Singapore's development story follows broadly along the same lines: phenomenal national transformation in a generation. We contend in this paper that the Ghanaian pathology (marked by great potential but perennial underperformance in key sectors of national life) can be unraveled in a generation as the Asian cases demonstrate vividly. The SA is here presented as a policy process (and by extension a policy change) blue print in pursuit of Ghana becoming an Economically and Socially Advanced Society (ESAS)[39] by 2037.

The SA is presented to allow Ghanaian policy makers to incorporate (and clarify) three ontological notions into the policy formation process if the rapid and urgent transformation that Ghana requires is to be attained. These notions are ideational independence[40], the role of the state and strategy. The domineering presence of Washington Consensus ideas in Ghana's policy

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[39] See Thompson(2006)

[40] This is a conscious effort to develop and implement policies that are derived from an independent and critical assessment of national policy challenges taking into cognizance both domestic and international realities and which eschews blind application of policy prescriptions especially from without.

formation processes since the 1980s (Killick, 2010) reflect ideational dependence than independence. Singapore and China[41] showed ideational independence as construed in this work as they embarked on their respective national transformation projects. The hypothesized Strategy Partnerships as arenas of very critical policy debate and thinking should allow such ideational independence to take hold. The notion of ideational independence takes on an added significance if one considers Strange's (1988:115) admonition that:

> power derived from the knowledge structure is the one that has been most *overlooked* and *underrated*. It is no less important than the other three sources of structural power [military, production and finance] in the international political economy but is much well less understood. This is partly because it comprehends what is believed (and the moral conclusions and principles derived from those beliefs); what is known and perceived as understood; and the channels by which beliefs, ideas and knowledge are communicated-including some people and excluding others(italics mine).

Chinese scholar Justin Yifu Lin (2007) has in the same vein drawn attention to the debilitating impact of wrong ideas on the policy formation processes and choices of developing polities.

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[41] See Amoah(2009)

At this critical juncture in Ghana's history the nation's policymakers will need to provide well thought out answers to the role of the state in the policy process. The SA theorizes a creative, synergistic and problem solving interaction between the state and the market shorn of the demonization of the former and the lionization of the latter as so much of the literature has tended to project. For the next fifty years Ghana's policymakers must find ways to anticipate her challenges, intelligently exploit her vast natural and human resources and engineer her material, physical, cultural and spiritual prosperity. This must perforce involve long-term thinking, planning and implementation which are arguably the domain of strategy. The SA alerts Ghana's policy makers to the strategic thinking deficit which can be blamed for the nation's urban dystopia, creaking health and education systems, environmental catastrophes and widespread social distress among many other ills.

5.0 Conclusion

The central burden of this paper has been to present the Strategy Approach as alternative way of theorizing the policy process and for that matter policy change in developing polities. The SA was crafted in response to extant theories of the policy process which did not seem to take into account the historical and contemporary realities (socio-economic, political and cultural) of developing polities. In fleshing out the SA the policy empirics of China and Singapore as they went round their existential challenges in the last fifty years served as case studies[42]. As Ghana begins her journey into the next fifty years fresh policy ideas and impulses would be required if the nation is to emulate the so-called emergent nations and even surpass them. The SA must be seen as part of such novel attempts at understanding and approaching policy for developing

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[42] We think that the SA can explain policy change in these two countries today.

countries intent on radically transforming themselves. In the final analysis the question is whether Ghana like other developing countries considers her rapid transformation as an urgent matter. In that regard how Ghana approaches new ideas like the SA or any others concretely should be a significant test.

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