Democracy and Development Paradigm Relationship: Emulation Possibility for Nigeria?

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Abstract

The symbiosis between democracy and development is almost irrefutable. The democratisation wave globally lends credence to the above. The expectations that democracy should serve as springboard for development as well as good governance is a mirage in Nigeria. The paper submits that over five decades of Nigeria's independence, with close to thirty years of civil rule, democracy has not been able to midwife development. This is the worry of over 140 million Nigerians. The work affirms undeniable relationship between democracy and development. It examined why Nigeria's case is an aberration. It relied on secondary source of data. The paper concluded by making some recommendations.

Keywords: *Democracy, Development, Paradigm, good governance, Symbiosis, Independence.*

Introduction

The transmutation of virtually all authoritarian regimes the world over can be hinged on the universal declaration of fundamental human rights. The democratisation wave globally that has taken a swipe on Africa where Nigeria belongs is a further attestation. The resistance to imperial power with the mobilization of human and material resources in the pre-independence era and equally the renunciation and open confrontation to militarization of Nigeria in the post-independence era are evidences of the appreciation of what democracy can offer. The above prologue finds fulfillment in the work of (Fukuyama, 1992) when he submitted that:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the cold war, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such… that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.

The strength of democracy as a catalyst to development lies also in the speech of President Obama in Accra in his first trip to Africa on July 11, 2009 in his famous remark that:

Africa doesn't need strong men, it needs strong institutions. In the 21st Century, capable, reliable and transparent institutions are the key to success… strong parliaments, and honest police forces; independent judges and journalists; a vibrant private sector and civil society…"

The above captures the fact that Nigeria's hope of ever attaining development centred on democracy. It is this line of thought that ignites this work. However, the reality in Nigeria is that all the descriptions above are seriously lacking making pundits to query the credentials of the so-called democracy.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Democracy as a concept is certainly not amenable to a single definition by scholars. In fact, it is remarkable that as a discursive category, democracy has attracted massive scholarly works due mainly to the diverse experiences of countries and the different stories following from these experiences (Kothari, 2007; Lumumba – Kasongo, 2005). However, the term "democracy first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of Athens during classical antiquity led by Cleisthenes.

Athenians established what is generally held as the first democracy in 508-507BCE (John Dunn, 1994). In the minimalist conception, a democratic system can be defined in procedural terms as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote (Schumpeter, 1976). Expanding on this definition, (Dahl, 1971) identifies seven key criteria that are essential for democracy or what he prefers to refer to as "polyarchy". These include:

- Control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials
- Relatively frequent, fair and free elections
- Universal adult suffrage
- The right to run for public office
- Freedom of expression
- Access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolized by either the government or any other single group
- Freedom of association (i.e the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties, interest group e.t.c).

In a similar vein, (Lansford, 2010) argues that modern or full democracies: are those systems in which there are universal suffrage, regular elections, an independent judiciary, relatively equal access to power for all groups, and extensive civil liberties that are combined with protection for minorities and disadvantages groups.

On another plain, (Leininger, 2010) argued that besides procedural features of democracy such as the existence of civil and political rights, democracy requires substantive values or features economic, social and cultural rights. This is noteworthy since the practice of democracy even in the so called advanced world has revealed that political elites driving representative democracies undermine substantive values of democracy.

Development, like any other concept is a complex issue, with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. Until recently, great reliance was placed on Cross National Product (GNP) per capital as convenient index of development. Yet, experience has shown that increases in national income do not necessarily lead to solution of social, economic and political problems.

An alternative approach has been created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with their Human Development Index (HDI) focusing on measures of health, life expectancy, education and access to resources. Human development is defined as.

"The process of enlarging the range of people's choices – increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment, and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedoms. Human development is concerned both with developing human capabilities and with using them productively. The former requires investments, in people, the latter that people contribute to GNP growth and employment. Both sides of the equation are essential" (UNDP, 1992).

In the opinion of (Gboyega, 2003), development implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, but everybody in the society. It demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life changes.

Lending his voice to conceptualizing development, (Ugwe, 2003) says "development involves the structuring of society in such a way that will improve the quality of live as well as the satisfaction of psychological wants of members of any given society'.

This work is anchored on the theoretical framework of structural functional theory which holds that society is best understood as a complex system with various interdependent parts that work together to increase stability. Although, the label structural functional theory has subsumed multiple perspectives, there are few basic elements that generally hold for all functionalist approaches in sociology: social systems are composed of interconnected parts; the parts of a system can be understood in terms of how each contributes to meeting the needs of the whole; and social systems tend to remain in equilibrium, with change in one part of the system leading to (generally adverse) changes in other parts of the system. (www.sociologyenclopedia.com). This theory engenders promotion of solidarity and stability. Herbet spencer and Robert Merton, were major contributors to this perspective. Important concepts in functionalism include social structure, social functions, manifest functions and latent functions (www.education_portatcom)

Democracy – Development Correlate

The polemy on whether democracy conduces development or the other way round has pictched scholars against each other and the jury is still out on where the pendulum swings. Even the three surveys of the empirical literature have revealed three different conclusions: One by (Sirowy and Inkeles, 1991) is supportive of a negative relationship between democracy and development; one by (Campos, 1994) is of a generally positive relationship; and the one by (Przeworski & Limongi, 1993) is agnostic ("we do not know whether democracy fosters or hinders economic growth". In the words of (Lipset, 1959), "perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political system to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development".

In the opinion of (Akinyemi, 2012) "democracy was able to respond favourably in the case of the United States by producing Franklin Roosevelt who succeeded in rescuing the American economy from collapse. But it was touch and go as the same democratic elections had produced president Herbet Hoover who proved incapable of addressing the economic collapse that public opinion was starting to flirt with the German Nazi experiment". Not done yet, (Akinyemi, 2012) argued further that "even though economic issues were not at stake in Britain, these was also an upsurge in right wing fundamentalism before Winston Churchill stepped into the breach thus ensuring the survival of democracy in Britain. But democracy failed woefully in Italy and Germany producing fascist regimes which rescued Germany and Italy from economic ruin.

The tentative conclusion we can reach at this point is that well established and well entrenched democracies have the capability to lead to and sustain development. It is the capability that is certain. Whether that capability will translate into actuality is another question entirely. (Akinyemi, 2012).

The Democracy – Development dichotomy can equally be situated within the historical experiences of Russia, China, South Korea, Singapore and other Asian tigers. They were purely dictatorships driven development leading to phenomenal growth through sustained economic planning and discipline and all dragging their countries from the Third World to the First World. (Akinyemi, 2012).

It is the inability of the democratic template created in Nigeria to foster development that the next segment of this work will be dedicated to.

Why Democracy is a Mirage in Nigeria

Of all the major ingredients in a democratic setting, election occupies a scentral position. It is a barometer to mention political stability or otherwise. The inability of past elections to guarantee reasonably free and fair polls is a perennial problem in the nation's democratic drive. Elections have been characterized by massive rigging and fraud resulting in protests, conflicts and almost endless litigations in courts and election tribunals. Virtually all electoral processes in Nigeria is questionable giving the impression that the democratisation process is in chain. The aftermath of the 2011 elections in Nigeria especially in the North cannot be forgotten in a hurry. According to Buhari, "Nigeria risks an Arab spring of some sort. In 2012, he gave a dire warning of what would happen in 2015: 'if what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood" (www.eastandsouth.worldpress.com).

Again, political party is taken "as a useful index of the level of political development (Lapalombara and Myron, 1966). Put differently, (Omodia, 2010) submits that the structure and operation of party politics tend to serve as measuring rod for determining the fragility or otherwise of democratic systems. That a situation where political parties are poorly structured to perform articulative, aggregative, communicative and educative functions, such a system is likely going to be associated with poor political culture which tends to make the democratic process so fragile. Conversely, in a situation where political parties are well structured to perform the above functions, such a system is often associated with participant political culture which tends to ensure a stable democratic process. (Almond & Verba, 1963). The former reigns supreme in Nigeria. The relationship between political parties and democratic consolidation can equally find solace as observed by (Akindiyo & Siyaka, 2014).

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

As rightly pointed by Claude Ake, our politics was dissociated from issue of ideology and social forces. "Political parties were created, abstracted from social realities – "they belonged to everyone in general and to one in particular and thus constituted anarchy of ambitions" The patterning of party politics along the above line since the first republic till date have inverse relationship with democratic sustenance.

Not only that, the leadership question cannot be glossed over in a discourse of this nature. For the purpose of clarity, "accountable leadership" simply means responsible governance, that is, a government that recognizes the superior authority of the people and is willing to submit to this authority as seen as a means to an end-good governance, which in simple sense can be used to indicate the extent to which the government lives up to the expectations of the people and meets the needs of the generality of the people (Omololu, 2006).

Addressing the leadership issue as one of the missing gaps in the nation's democracy, (Achebe, 1983) has this to say:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership

The belief in leadership is equally echoed when Napoleon Bonaparte submitted that a leader is a "dealer in hope" or as John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States put it "if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, you are a leader".

Corruption, to say the least is one of the major challenges to democratic consolidation in Nigeria and by extension good governance. In the United State Reports, part of which states that … the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Lack of accountability is one of the banes of democracy in Nigeria. Massive, widespread and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government and the security forces (Punch, 2013). Small wonder, or no wonder the World Bank described Nigeria as a study in contradiction "so rich, yet so poor indeed" (EFCC Magazine, 2010). For a country that has over the years earned billions of dollars from crude oil, the inequitable distribution of wealth amongst its teeming population continues to stun the world. Accountability is a desideration in the nation's democratisation. This is a knotty issue that has almost defied solutions inspite of anti-corruption agencies such of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Another twist to the nation's democratic drive is ethnicity. The incorporation of ethno-religious sentiments into Nigerian politics is not just now. The tripodal arrangement of Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), and National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) witnessed in the course of party formation in the first republic confirmed the above while subsequent republics have not moved away as such from this pattern. "The diversity of Nigeria, which is supposed to be its greatest asset, has unfortunately become the most potent instrument of manipulation in the hands of the political elites. Thus, the selfish ambition of a few are easily articulated and sold as group, religious, sectional, and ethnic interest to the citizens (Ekweramadu, 2014). This is an albatross to establishing let alone deepening democracy in Nigeria. This has been presented in the form of power rotation with ominous sign as the nations prepares for 2015 general elections.

Addressing another pertinent issue (Ekweremadu, 2014) submits that there exists overwhelming lack of political literacy and sophistication among the followers in Nigeria, hence, the political elites have become so adept at playing up certain mundane sentiments to position themselves as champions of the political interest of their people. This lack of political education is seriously crippling the nation's democracy as electorate are not enlightened and informed on the choice of candidates and their manifestoes.

This chasm, is acknowledged by the Holy Bible in (Hosea 4:6(a) that "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge".

Finally, all institutions of government such as the legislature, executive, judiciary at all levels of government; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the police and other security apparatuses, the public service, EFCC, ICPC, e.t.c are grossly dysfunctional thereby not providing the needed synergy to driving the democratisation project in Nigeria. In view of the plethora litany of challenges to providing a base for development, the question now is where do we go from here?

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper perceived democracy as capable of igniting development as far as Nigeria is concerned. It pictured an undeniable relationship between democracy and development. It is equally summed up that Nigeria's case is redeemable. This is based on the single reason that the democratic experiment since 1999 till date is the longest in the nation's annals. While not exhaustive, the following recommendations are made

- Building of institutions such as INEC, EFCC, judiciary, the police that would sustain democracy, rule of law and end the vicious circle of impunity so that a solid foundation can be laid for democratic sustenance.
- Encouragement of the formation of political parties that have bias for ideologies as opposed to ones that operate like business concerns.
- The need for committed leadership with the political will to lead by example as the needed tonic to creating a democratic template capable of fostering development.
- Embarking on political education by political parties, government agencies, e.t.c so that it will manifest in the choice of candidates during elections.
- Preaching the spirit of accommodation, tolerance, peace e.t.c amongst the component units of Nigeria so as to work jointly towards nation-building.
- Overhauling school curriculum at all levels of education so that it will be in consonance with building an enduring structure that can guarantee consensus, loyalty, faith and others so that life can be meaningful for the citizenry.

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