

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the nexus among the 'embattled trinity' (democracy, good governance and development) using a contextual analysis of the Nigerian experience under the fourth republic. It argues that whereas democracy, defined as the process by which exercise of political power is vested on the people through their elected representative (s), could be a harbinger of development, with good governance as the link in the chain, much of it would however depend on its time-frame, depth and the context within which it is pursued. It applies institutional analysis to explore the connections between democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria. Data was generated mainly through secondary sources of publications and report. The study reveals that the present state of democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria gives cause for concern, as it tends towards the direction of disempowerment. Indeed, challenges were outlined and were critically examined, leading us to the basic question of whether if Nigeria is really making steps to democracy, good governance and development. While democracy, good governance and development have been on course, it has not taken a firm root, because it has so far been pursued and predicated on western institutions. Given this scenario, the paper recommends for an urgent need for a reversal of the trend, if democracy, good governance and development must be genuinely nurtured and sustained in Nigeria, in the circumstance, we consider social mobilization in all its ramifications as a highly useful and pivotal option.

Keywords: Democracy, Good governance, Development, Fourth Republic, Nigeria

Introduction

Development goes hand in glove with democracy and good governance. Thus, the role of the state in development can be predicated upon democracy and governance. It therefore, goes without saying that development cannot be left to market forces alone. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent emergence of a New World Order, no doubt produced significant impacts on the world system. One outstanding area of its impacts is the global resurgence of democracy; or to borrow the term crafted by Huntington (1991), it has brought about the 'third wave' of democratization. This development, in the view of some scholars, has brought an end to the struggle for supremacy as to which system of government is best due to the hegemonic emergence of liberal democracy as the final form of human government (Fukuyama, 1989). Put differently, democracy has become "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan, 1996:15).

Evidently, African states are no exception. The wave of democratization that swept through Africa was largely a product of pressures exerted on the state by both internal and external forces (Lawson, 1991:1-25; Agbu, 1996:1-16; Osaghae, 1999:3-25; Zack-Williams, 2001:215-218; Omotola, 2002:1). In its wake, it elicited high hopes and expectations across the continent. The reasoning, perhaps, is that democracy offers better opportunities for self-actualization and development. Such optimism is not misplaced giving the fact that democracy represents a fulcrum in the values, which the 'global wind of change' has imposed on the global system.

Stemming from the foregoing, the principal objective of this paper is to assess the state of democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria, peris coping it's high and low points. The argument of the paper is illustrated with the recent experience of Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. The paper argued that while it will appear that democracy has impacted positively on development in Nigeria through good governance, the evidence on ground seems to point to the contrary. The question therefore arises as to whether democracy is really a necessary and sufficient condition for development. If only in the interim we

hold this to be correct, then a more fundamental question would be whether Nigeria has really democratized. These and other related questions constitute the major thrust of this paper by illustrating the nexus between democracy, good governance and development of Nigeria with reference to the fourth republic.

Methodology

The study employed a desk research approach. The paper hugely relied on secondary source of data, where materials were consulted from newspaper, journals, textbook, library, internet and other publications. However, the scope of the study critically evaluates the impact of democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria assessing forth republic.

Conceptual Clarification

Though the triple concepts of democracy, good governance and development have generated mounting international discourse; and a sizeable amount of literature developed therefrom, there still exists widespread confusion about their meanings and relationships. The conceptual ambivalence, as well as confusions, that hover around them could be attributed to the fact that, all seems to be, though in varying degrees, multidimensional and value laden. Hence, they can be appropriately grouped in the category of words like power, justice, peace, equality and freedom, which Gallie (1962:121-146) referred to as "essentially contested concepts" (Ojo, 1999). Believe, they remain "an embattled trinity", yearning for more amplification and illumination so as to unravel the ambivalence surrounding their relationships.

Democracy

Rulers are selected by the people; the will of the people, imperfectly revealed through the political process, is the primary determinant of the powers of the state. Democracy means majority rule. Certain auxiliary constitutional rights such as freedom of speech and assembly and procedural due process are assumed. All such rights, however, are interpreted and enforced by officials elected by the majority. (Ojo, 1999).

It is instructive to note that a democratic regime, being the ultimate goal of democratization, operates on certain fundamental principles. It is reasoned that the extent to which democratization establishes these elements may provide the basis for evaluating its success or otherwise. These principles include:

Pluralism and multipartyism, including free and fair competitive politics... and relatively autonomous civil society.

Popular participation in the political process... provided those elected remain accountable and can be voted out if they no longer enjoy the people's support.

Rule of law, respect for human rights and equality of access to all citizens and groups to the state power and resources (which does not, however exclude policies designed to enhance the access of members of disadvantaged and marginalized groups); and

Constitutionalism or respect for the "rules of the game", which includes civil control of the military and the efficacy of representative, judicial and oversight institutions (Osaghae, 1999:7). Be that as it may, it should be noted that democratization has generally been seen as the solution to Africa's multifaceted problems. This is what Ottaway (1995:235) called the 'democratic solution', which he considers as "certainly the most desirable and probably the only viable one in the long run". The validity of this claim only remains to be supported by empirical realities across the continent. May be a little more time is needed before a comprehensive assessment could be undertaken. Yet, a preliminary evaluation is desirable.

Good Governance

Good governance, as a concept is a problematic one. For one, it is value laden and therefore subjective. The meaning attached to it may largely be a function of the intents and purposes of the analyst. Nevertheless, it remains a useful concept for obvious reasons. As Doornbos (1995. Doornbos, 2001:94) rightly posited, the concept of good governance "could be used to invite judgment about how the country... concerned was being governed: it enabled the raising of evaluative question about proper procedures, transparency, the quality and process of decision making, and other such matters". In fact, "it helps to differentiate the professed or actual self- understanding of the ruling groups from their real causal

contribution to the prosperity or misery of their subjects (Chabal, Simbine, 2000). For Eyinla (2000:22), good governance means accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy, which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes. Moreover, good governance has been closely linked to 'the extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities; and equitable in its conduct' (Landell-Mill and Seragelden, Simbine, 2000:17). The World Bank has offered a more comprehensive explanation of good governance. It defines 'governance' as "the means by which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" and 'good governance' as synonymous with "sound development management" (Potter, 2000: 379). It encompasses a broad sphere of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development (reforms); information and technology; the legitimacy of government; the competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions; implement them effectively and deliver services, the point has well been made that good governance is pivotal to a successful democracy and by extension, development. The presumption is that for an enduring democracy, the basic tenets of good governance as enunciated above must be well institutionalized and internalized. With such sound management of resources, the goal of development is considered assured (Potter 2000:379).

Development

Like most other social science concepts, the problematic of the term development is evidently manifest in the literature. This is exemplified by the current pluralism in the development literature, as being dominated by different schools of thought (So, 1990). The fact that development is a multidimensional as well as a value loaded concept (Lane and Ersson, 1997:15-16) has been a complicating factor. In general terms, however, development has been viewed from political, economic and social dimensions. These various aspects of development are well reflected in the extant literature on the subject. Todaro (1985) for example; conceptualizes development as: "a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty" (Lane and Ersson, 1997:19). In another work, the same scholar identified three core values of development (Todaro, 1989:89- 90). These include the ability to provide as many people as possible with their basic needs or the ability to acquire adequate food, shelter, health care and protection. It also entails the perception of individuals or groups of self-worth and esteem as a respected member of the society; and freedom in the sense that individuals and society at large have an expanded range of choice, not only with respect to the material necessities for self-reproduction but also in their ability to have a say in, if not to determine, the method and process by which values are allocated in the society (Ogwu, 2002:12-13). The widely cited political economist, Amartya K. Sen, has offered more illuminating thoughts on the concept of development. For him, development connotes 'capacity expansion' (Sen, 1990), and synonymous with freedom (Sen, 1999). As capacity expansion, development requires adequate empowerment of the state and the society such that they can adequately distil their complimentary responsibilities. It requires an enhanced state capacity as well as institutional and governmental stability. It is only within such framework that individual members of the society can find fulfillment in terms of the basic necessities of life. As freedom, development demands great latitude of autonomy for the political community and its constituent parts; as well as for the individual members of such communities. In that case, the level of popular participation, measured in terms of the quality and quantity of participation is highly decisive.

Understanding the Nexus

The attempts to understand the nexus between democracy, good governance and development have produced divergent views. For scholars of liberal dispositions, democracy and development are inextricably linked, with emphasis on good governance as the link between them (See World Bank, 1992). The centrality of good governance to the whole process has been well recognized. Kofi Annan (1998 Potter, 2002:386), puts that the UN has increasingly begun to focus on good governance because "no amount of funding, no amount of charity will set the developing world on the part of prosperity. Member states have increasingly recognized that good governance is indispensable for building peaceful, prosperous and democratic societies". According to Bhalla 1997 Potter, 2000:375), democracy is strongly associated with greater freedom; whereby greater freedom leads to improved economic growth and development. Counterpoised to

the above is the argument that democracy impedes development, particularly in the underdeveloped societies. In that circumstance, authoritarian regimes are considered as better placed to enhance development. Yet some have contended that there is no direct or systematic causal connection between democracy and development. The various propositions have been buttressed in varying degrees with empirical evidences (Lane and Ersson, 1997; Potter 2000:374-379).

The line of argument pursued in this paper is that there exists a link between democracy, good governance and development. This rationalization is informed by the fact that conceptually, these concepts are closely interconnected and interwoven. If development is about establishing consolidated democracy; the conditions for such attainment are implicitly embedded in good governance. Besides, both democracy and development share certain basic virtues such as popular participation, capacity expansion as well as freedom (Nwabueze, 1993:94; Adedeji, 1997:7; Mazrui, 2002:23-46). Evidently too, these constitute part of the intrinsic values of good governance. It is however important to emphasize the point that while democracy may engender development, much of it depends to some extent on the context within which the analysis is carried out. Moreover, the impact of democracy on development could be a reflection of its time-spell as well as the depth of the democracy process itself. It could also be inspectoral, especially in the short run, giving the fact that development is a multidimensional concept. Development in a given aspect, say for example at the political level, may in the long run induce development in other aspects. That being the case, caution must be exercised in making generalized statements about their relationship. This explains why a contextual analysis would be of high utility having been reputed for its ability to account for differences in the same phenomenon in different systems (Osaghae, 1994:137).

The Nigerian experience, forth republic

Nigeria's march to constitutional civilian rule has so far been a tortuous adventure, characterized by moments of hope raised and hope dashed. The democratic processes that ushered in the fledging fourth republic were particularly daunting. It could be said to have effectively begun with the setting up of the Political Bureau in 1986 by the General Babangida regime. Reputed as the most ambitious, imaginative, complex and expensive transition in the world (Diamond, Kurk-Green and Oyediran, 1997:1); it however ended in fiasco with the tragic and arrogant annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. This was not minding the fact that the election was rated free and fair in the electoral history of Nigeria (Izah 2003:3). The attendant impasse that followed the annulment however proved a hard nut for the regime to crack. Hence, the institution of an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (See Ojo, 1998). This was not without some resistance and resentments from prodemocracy and human rights groups such as Campaign for Democracy (CD); National Democratic Coalition (NADECO); as well as labour movements such as Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC); Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers (NUPENG) etc. However, the regime remained undeterred and relied on +

The sudden death of General Abacha on June 8, 1998 however paved the way for the emergence of General Abdulsalami Abubakar as the Head of State. The basic concern of the regime would appear to be a successful transition to a democratically elected government within the shortest possible time. In seven months, the regime has successfully completed a transition to civilian administration, which climaxed with the handing over of power to a democratically elected government, headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999. This development certainly poses some challenges for the new democratic government (Agbu, 2000:59-69; Eyinla, 2000:21- 27). These include how to nurture the nascent democracy to maturity such that it can no longer be reversed or eroded (Omotola, 2002:1); good governance, human rights and civil liberties; participation and empowerment; power sharing, executive-legislative relations etc.

In realistic terms however, the democratic expansion or the opening up of the democratic space, which these measures presuppose is everything but real. Indeed, they all represent a 'pretentious' opening of the democratic space. The report of the Oputa Panel, for example, is still being kept away from the public, a development that has elicited doubts about the sincerity of the government in that regard. The registration of more political parties offers a more graphic illustration. Ordinarily, more parties is supposed to imply more participation and higher freedom of choice. However, the reverse has been the case. In almost all the parties, old and new ones alike, the process of selecting party flag bearers was neither open nor competitive in the real sense of the exercise. For instance, the National Conventions of most of these parties, where presidential candidates were elected, were mere 'charade' meant to create the impression that the process

was open and competitive. The All-Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) convention witnessed a situation whereby the four presidential aspirants from the South walked out of the convention ground, protesting that General Buhari and Dr. Chuba Okadigbo have already been endorsed before the convention. With respect to the People's Democratic Party's, which appear a little more open and competitive, subsequent revelations have shown that it was not as opened as one would have imagined. (See Tell, Jn.13, 2003:16-22). Every other party merely handpicked their presidential candidates. Even at the state level, there was no meaningful difference. This is true to the extent that all the incumbent governors were returned as their flag bearers, without really passing through any open and competitive process, save for their pragmatized conventions. The only exemptions were in Borno and Anambra states, where the incumbents could not clinch their party tickets. They however contested under the umbrella of the Alliance for Democracy. Moreover, the process of voter's registration also served to contract and choke up the democratic space. For reasons such as time constraint; shortage of registration slips; and other administrative bottlenecks, the exercise was fraught with many inadequacies. Chiefly, many eligible voters could not secure registration and were ultimately precluded from the whole electoral process. At the crossroad of the critical test of second election as a crucial stage in the democratization process, there have been mixed-feelings concerning the process and outcomes of elections. In varying degrees, the electoral process has been generally rated as relatively poor (TMG, 2003; EU, 2003). The reasons adduced include irregularities; electoral frauds; as well as partisanship on the part of some electoral commissioners. As such, the results of the elections, particularly the presidential election, have been vigorously rejected by a coalition of other political parties (The Punch, 8th May, 2003). This is a worrisome dimension because if free and fair election could be regarded as just the beginning (Carter, 2001:17-20); the implications of an election of a reversed order are easily discernible. The legitimacy crisis such may create for the emergent government would certainly task the energies and ingenuity of the government to manage. In the event that the opposition parties prove recalcitrant, the government may resort to draconian measures to contain them. This will further contract the political space with greater consequences on popular participation and development.

Is Nigeria Really making a step to Democracy, Good Governance and Development?

To conclude this section, it is pertinent that we critically examine the state of democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria. This expedition becomes inevitable against the background of the fact that the Nigerian situation, as shown above, seems a deviation from the expected outcomes. It is even more pressing because a cautious note has been well sounded about the need for circumspection in projecting the prospect of democracy in Nigeria (Osaghae, 1999:3). Generally, doubts have been expressed about the ongoing democracy wave in Nigeria. For Agbu (1996:1); the latest democratization in Nigeria could best be regarded as positive. Yet, many other scholars have queried whether the democratic experiment could be nurtured to maturity and sustained (Lawson 1999:1-26; Ake, 1996; Suberu 2001; Baker, 2000). The consensus on the impact of democracy and good governance to the development of Nigeria seems to be that some progress has been made at the political and formalistic level of multipartyism, periodic elections, and civil society in several countries. However, the emergent democracies like Nigeria have continued to lack depth, and their growth have been stunted by the several thorns which have historically suffocated it" (Osaghae, 1999:4).

With respect to Nigeria, the democratic process is on course. Though fraught with many inadequacies, which have hamstrung it from adequately coping with the hopes and challenges placed on it abolition, it is nevertheless the preferred option; first in line with global dictates and second, for the eruption of civil society and their persistent struggle to energize the process. While it certainly lacks depth in concrete terms, it has been able to elevate Nigeria and Nigerians from the abysmal valley of despair to the exalted mountain of hopes, to borrow the language of Professor Jerry Gana, a former minister. As the situation is now, it leaves much to be desired.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the above, various attempts have been made to explore the concepts of democracy, good governance and development with a view to unravelling the ambivalence surrounding them, particularly as regards their relationship. In doing so, the paper attempted to contextualize the discussion, using the Nigerian experience (1999-2015), the paper argued that democracy may very well be a real harbinger of development. This would however depend on its time-spell as well as the depth of the democratization itself. It has also been stressed that democracy could also engender development aspect orally giving the

fact that development is multidimensional. In the long run however, the developed aspect could induce development in other aspects. Be as it may the paper recommends that there is therefore the need for adaptability to make the democratic process amenable to Nigeria realities. As Elaigwu (2002:13) has pointed out, what is needed is "institutional, processional and attitudinal changes in order to meet the challenges of Democracy, Transparency and Accountability". It is only by so doing that democracy can take a firm root in the society and from there derives the nourishing ingredients for growth, maturity and consolidation.

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