

Democracy, good governance and development in the nascent democracies: A case study of Nigeria's fourth republic

Bright IGHOROJEH & Biliamin Adekunle ADEYEYE

Abstract

Since its debut in the Greek city state of Athens in the 5th century, Democracy has grown to become one of the most popular forms of government among nations of the world. Overtime too, a common notion suggestive of a positive correlation between democracy, good governance and development seems to have emerged amongst scholars and politicians such that democracy is now considered as a measure of good governance and a catalyst for development. Nigeria chose the path of democracy at independence in 1960. Since then, Nigeria has had four attempts at democratic governance amidst fits of military coup and interregnum. The aim of this paper is to test the veracity of the seemingly held notion of a positive correlation between democracy, good governance and development against evidence based positions in the nascent democracy of Nigeria's fourth republic. The study observed some deficits of some vital ingredients in the nature and practice of democracy in Nigeria and the fundamentals being the issues of accountability and transparency needed for growth and development in any nation. The study situates the low level development and lack of a positive correlation between democracy, good governance and development on the problems of accountability and transparency in the practice of democracy in Nigeria. The study submits that these problems are not the result of lack of requisite statutes but of statute enforcement. Appropriate recommendations were provided to tackle these problems in order to facilitate much needed growth and development in Nigeria.



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Introduction

One of the chief pre-occupation of man right from the pristine and the simple/pre-historic era to the contemporary time has been the constant search for methods and systems by which he can organize himself fully with due consideration to things that are befitting to his true nature as a rational being. The common result has been that he can only realize himself fully under a well organized political state or society. Man has not only achieved the political state but has in the course of time evolved various political organizational structures to ensure efficient and effective governance in the political state. In the process, men have taken positions indicating what occurs to them as most desirable, the most just and the most pleasing. One of such political organizational structure is democracy. Democracy in its classical form originated in ancient Greece in the 5th century particularly the city-state of Athens. The word derives from two Greek words "*demos*" which means the *people* and "*Kraten*" which means *rule of or by the people*. According to Heywood (2003:67) democracy means "*rule by the people*" and was originally meant to allow all citizens to have a say in matters that affects them. In addition to the Greeks/Athenian antecedent is the liberal or representative form of democracy ushered in during the enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th century in Europe. The liberal or representative form has its roots in such institutions as the British parliament, the jury and political theories of that time on equality of men, natural right and sovereignty. Under the representative democracy, citizens surrender their rights to an elected group who in turn work for the interest of all and sundry. The subject of democracy gained more boost from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address delivered in 1864 at the height of the American civil war when he used the phrase "*government of the people by the people and for the people*" (Heywood, 2005 in Gyong, 2010). Since the Lincoln's address, democracy and its deals has grown to be the most dominant form of government in the world and is also commonly considered as the measure of good governance, and a very important harbinger for socio-economic and political development.

Nigeria effectively chose the path of democracy at independence in 1960 and since then has had four attempts at democratic governance amidst fits of military coup and interregnum. The first attempt between 1960 and 1966 was aborted by the military. The second attempt between 1977 and 1883 suffered the same fate. The third attempt was initiated by the Babaginda led administration in 1989, but in what appeared to be an anti-climax was aborted by the same regime following the annulment of the June 12 Presidential election that same year. The fourth attempt took off in 1999 following the general election of that year. That it has come uninterrupted this far is unprecedented. Election is a primary and very crucial stage of a democratic process. It is supposed to be a preference revelation of the electorates. The level of legitimacy of a democracy is dependent on the nature and degree of the quality of its election or electioneering process and the qualities of the leadership type produced from the process. The nature and level of quality of election determines the level of functionality of a political system and do have consequences on governance and development in a political system. Against this background, this paper seeks to test from evidence-based position the veracity of the notion of the common notion of a positive correlation between election which is a crucial aspect of the democratic process on governance and development in the nascent democracy of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Specifically, it seeks to critically assess how elections have impacted on governance and development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Conceptual Clarification

There is no consensus among scholars on the exact definition of democracy. Scholars have defined and conceptualized it from different perspectives. However, as noted earlier democracy in its classical form originated in ancient Greece in the 5th century and particularly in the city state of Athens. According to Anifowose (2000) the practice of democracy in ancient Athens was characterized by vesting of supreme power in an assembly of all male citizens of which each was entitled to participate by discussion and voting; the system permitted freedom of speech and also made all political offices opened to all citizens who were chosen by lots. Checks and controls were put in place to prevent any individual from acquiring excessive powers. To sum up, democracy as conceived in ancient Greece provides a platform for conscientious and collaborative participation of the entire citizens in decision making and the affairs of the state. Another perspective identified by Held, 1993 (as cited in Anifowose, 2000) comes from the Marxist tradition sometimes referred to as “people’s democracy” and described by Lenin as ‘democratic centralism’. According to Held (ibid) Democracy is seen by the Marxist as a structure that seeks to expand equality of all citizens’ from the political to the economic and the social facet of life. This notion is to be accomplished through equal ownership of the means of production through the nationalization of key enterprises and non discriminatory distribution of social welfare in the areas of education, pension, medicare, insurance, right to job, maternal and child care etc. In addition to the Greek/Athenian and the Marxist perspective is the liberal or representative form of democracy which gained grounds between the periods of the 17th and 18th centuries. It was introduced especially through such institutions as the British parliament, the jury and subjects of political theories of that time such as equality of men, natural rights and sovereignty (Anifowose 2000). Under the representative democracy, citizens elect their representatives who dutifully work for the interest and welfare of all (Gyong 2010). According to Held (1993) liberal democracy bears a collection of rules and institutions allowing for a wider participation of citizens in the choice of representatives who alone can make political decisions on their behalf. As noted earlier, the subject of democracy gained more boost from Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg address.

Since the Gettysburg address, democracy and its ideals have not only grown to be the most dominant form of government in the world but have also become a measure of good governance and seen as a catalyst for socio-economic and political development. This position has been largely enforced by the fact of a positive correlation between democracy, good governance and development among Western European nations especially the United State of America, Britain, Germany and France. From the experiences of these nations, a kind of world view seems to have emerged among a large number of scholars and politicians alike which sees democracy as a basic tool for good governance and a ‘condicio-sine-qua-non’ for development. Very prominent among such scholars in Africa are Peter Anyang’ Nyongo and Claude Ake. Nyango, 1988 (as cited in Anifowose, 2000) is of the view that a strong correlation exists between lack of democracy in African politics and the declining socio-economic conditions on the continent. He advocates democracy as the remedy which is capable of building the type of accountability that can lead to more responsible use of public resources and engender high levels of development. Ake (1990) on his part re-echoed Nyango’s position and noted that ‘Africa needs democracy because it will greatly facilitate socio-economic development. More than any factor, these views gave serious impetus to the spread of democracy the world over and especially among African and European nations under one party dictatorship or military despotism to the extent that it has become the

standard for participation in international affairs and a yardstick for the nations seeking international relevance.

Governance

Different scholars have come up with very remarkable conceptualization of the term 'Governance'. Nanda (2006) defines governance as how people are administered and regulated. He also referred to it as a nation's system of politics and how such system functions in relation to public administration and law. Oladoyin (2012) views governance as general management or administration and control comprising certain elements such as political accountability, bureaucratic efficiency and visible legal framework. The Commission on Global Governance sees 'governance' as the sum total of the many ways individuals and institutions: public and private manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting interests may be accommodated and actions of common interest may be taken (Commission on Global Governance: 1995 in Badamasuiy & Bello, 2013). There is good governance and there is bad governance. Grindle (2010) refers to good governance as a bundle of admirable characteristics comprising well-defined political machinery charged with the responsibility of promoting, projecting and protecting the interest of the state and of the citizens. 'Good governance is a positive feature of political system and bad governance is problem that countries need to overcome. Badamasuiy and Bello (2013) notes that the concept of good governance emerged to offer explanation for the perpetual poverty, wretchedness and malnutrition that many developing countries have been grappling with for decades. In some quarters, it has also been conceived as a fig leaf invoked by international development agencies to invade the domestic politics of some nations. From the foregoing, the concept of development can be summarized to mean a process of management and administration critical to the welfare of a nation and its citizenry.

Development

Many writers have come up with different notions of development. However, notions that are considered germane to the proper understanding of this paper shall be examined. Iyoha (1996) defines development as growth in Gross Domestic Product or Per Capital Income of a nation. Within the context of this definition development is conceived and adjudged only by increase or growth in the total value of goods and services produced by a country and the average earnings of citizens of that country. Ebijuwa (2007) defines development as the whole gamut of change through which an entire social system could move away from condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a satisfactory condition which is materially and spiritually better. While Iyola captures development from an economic perspective, Ebijuwa conceptualized it from the stand point of the material and spiritual lives of citizens of a nation. The definitions are quite instructive in their contents but they still do not appear adequate in the light of contemporary views of the concept. The concept of development has evolved beyond just economic and material conditions of a nation and their citizens to include for example issues that are considered contemporary measures of development such as freedom of citizens, human dignity and respect. An attempt at contemporisation of the concept can be found in the definition of Todaro. Todaro (1981) defines development "as not purely an economic phenomenon but rather as a multi-dimensional process involving re-organization and the re-orientation of an entire economic and social system." Todaro (1981) posits that, development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives by raising people's living levels, creating conditions conducive to

growth of people's esteem, promotion of human dignity and increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables .

In terms of content, Todaro's conceptualization reveals a more comprehensive characterization of the concept. Apart from being very instructive, it also captures the essence of this study. The summation of it all is that development must be judged by its impact on the people not only by changes in their income but more generally in terms of their choices, capability and freedom.

The Nature of Democracy, Governance and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The success of a democracy is dependent on the quality of its elections and electioneering processes. A quality electioneering process legitimizes power and makes democratic political system works. Election or voting is supposed to be the preference revelation of the electorates and the primary stage in the efforts towards realizing a democratic political system. The nature and quality of election do have consequences on governance and development in any political system. The story of elections in Nigeria is long and tumultuous, since the inception of the nascent democracy of Nigeria's fourth republic in 1999; five elections have been conducted (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015). The narratives of all these elections are fraught with alarming cases of electoral fraud with very dire consequences on governance, development and democratic stability in the Nigeria state. The facts of fraud in Nigeria's electioneering process are well documented in the report of various groups that have monitored elections in the country. All the reports bore condemnable commentary pointing to fraud in Nigeria's electoral process. The report of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) on the 1999 general elections revealed that voters recorded for the National Assembly and presidential election were in excess of accredited voters. In 2003, the European Observation Mission reported that in a number of states the conduct of elections did not comply with Nigeria's and International laws. Furthermore, Suberu (2007) observed that the 2007 election was more fraudulent than the previous ones and indeed the worst in contemporary elections in the history of Nigeria. In addition, another glaring revelation of electoral fraud in Nigeria's democratic process emerged from the magnitude of election petitions highlighted in the International Conference on 'Emerging Electoral Jurisprudence in Africa' organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) held in conjunction with Ford Foundation in Abuja on January 19, 2015. It revealed that the 2011 general elections produced 733 election petitions while the 2007 general election produced 3000. At a public presentation of the INEC 2015 General Election Report in Abuja, the Acting Chairman INEC reported that as at the last count INEC had recorded 611 petitions. Electoral malpractices in Nigeria have come in different forms. There are the pre-election rigging, during election and post-election rigging forms that are outstanding in the democratic experience of the Nigerian state. Studies have shown the common processes in these forms to include multiple voting and false registrations, vote buying, and voter's intimidation, ballot box snatching, stuffing and false declaration of winners. In addition, there are claims among political elites and public policy analysts of what is described as a new and sophisticated dimension to electoral malpractice in Nigeria. This has to do with the manipulation of the judicial process to produce false winners. A case in point was the claim of judicial manipulation in the hearing of a petition on alleged case of electoral fraud initiated by Rauf Aregbesola in respect of the election of Olagunsoye Oyinlola, as Governor of Osun State. The election was eventually nullified and decision was given in favour of Rauf Aregbesola based on a proven case of electoral fraud and judicial manipulation. Fundamentally, the incidence

and consistency of electoral fraud in the politics of the Nigerian state can be explained from two basic perspectives. The first being the overdeveloped nature or economic centrality of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian state rests on a unique economic base deriving from oil revenue and does participate in all sectors of the economy. It is majorly the only means of survival available to most Nigerians. By its very nature, the Nigerian state is a resource in itself. This situation does not only account for the desperation to acquire state power but also the disposition by political actors to resort to electoral fraud in the process. This position is well espoused in Ake (1981) and Suberu (1986). Another perspective of utility value to understanding the causes of the high incidence of electoral fraud in the Nigerian state can be attributed to the zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics where winner takes all. This situation accounts for the indisposition of winners and losers towards compromise and consensus building and a mentality that is unable to contemplate and accept the possibility of losing elections. The consequence is always a fierce competition for state power. This tendency leaves the politics of the Nigerian state not only open to electoral fraud but ultimately to conflict and crisis. This situation has consistently given room for the installation of a mediocre political elite class with disordered methodology of governance, lacking in leadership capital, sense of purpose and sufficient patriotic zeal for governance and national development.

Consequences of the Nature of Elections and Electioneering Process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic on Governance and National Development

The nature of the electoral process in the Nigerian state presents a picture of a state with high-level perversion and a very disappointing degree of naiveté about democratic electoral process. This situation has come with dire consequences for governance and development in the Nigerian state. One major consequence has been the consistent distortion of the preference of the people and their disempowerment and a throw-up of a self-serving leadership class with no sense of responsibility or duty to the people they govern. The major causalities are national development and the welfare of helpless Nigerians. Between presidents Obasanjo, Yar' Adua and Jonathan's administration in the fourth republic, Nigeria earned a total of 81 trillion naira from oil alone (The Vanguard, 2016). It was an amount quite sufficient to create an enviable nation with an enviable citizenry. Rather than have it properly planned for, everything was blown up through an unimaginable level of prodigality, profligacy and corruption by a ruling class lacking in gravitas and depth of the responsibilities of governance and development. It is disconcerting that in spite of its enormous resources the state of development in the Nigerian state is still very abysmal. In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report ranked Nigeria 152 out of 187 countries on the scale of Human Development Index (HDI) with other African countries like Algeria, Botswana, Egypt, South Africa and even Ghana coming ahead of the country touted as the giant of Africa. The human index (HDI) according to the UNDP is a summary measure of achievements in key dimension of human development which include a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. In the midst of so many resources, an estimated 110 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty with 145 dollars a day (Ishaq, 2016). This instructively places a seal of authenticity on the conclusion of the World Bank Development ranking and statement of the World Bank that Nigeria is one of the top five countries with the largest number of poor people. According to the report of Nigeria Forum on Rehabilitation of Street Children in the Vanguard (2016), 13 million children across the country live and survive on the street. 33% of school-age children are not enrolled in any school (Olukotun, 2016). Nigeria is touted as the largest economy in Africa yet with the largest population of the

poor, the largest population of unemployed, the largest population of citizens living in darkness and the worst infrastructure (Momodu, 2016). Policies of government are expected to result in reduction in unemployment, increase in access to basic needs of life such as food, shelter, water, healthcare, education, healthy environment, increase in transparency and accountability. On the contrary, the country continues to slip down the ladder on these fronts. The success or failure of a government is told in the lives of its citizenry. The story remains a potent symbol of incompetence on the part of the government and the political leadership class. Things have been made worse by the economic downturn the nation is currently passing through. The situation is such that majority of states cannot meet their obligations to their workers and the fortunes of most workers have been adversely affected. But while the working class is expected to adjust to the harsh times the leadership class does not compromise on their comfort. They spend far more time trying to ensure self-preservation than they spend on the welfare of those they represent. It is difficult to imagine that given the circumstances of the Nigeria economic and the very pitiable conditions of majority of Nigerians, the 8th National Assembly of the Nigerian state went ahead to budget a huge sum 4.7 billion naira to acquire new cars for themselves excused on the basis of their need for oversight functions despite the numerous vehicles in the pool of the National Assembly designated for members official assignments and oversight functions. As if things cannot be any worse, new houses costing 5.5 billion naira were budgeted for the Nations Vice President, Osinbajo, Senate President Saraki and leader of House of Representative, Dogara (The Nation, 2016). In the same budget the sum of 3.87 billion naira was allocated for capital projects at the statehouse clinic. This sum was 700 million naira more than capital allocation to all the 16 federal teaching Hospitals in the country yet the President still had the need to travel out for six days medical tripe to the United Kingdom (Modibbo, 2016). It is unnerving that all these profligacies are taking place when most Nigerians are not sure of where their next meal will come from. It shows the margin of disconnect between the political elite and the plights of the teaming poor Nigerian masses. One of the tragedies of the Nigerian condition is the dearth of shame among its leadership class. A leadership class not ashamed to live in comfort amongst a citizenry bogged down by poverty. A leadership class that does not have pity for those whose lives have been left battered and bruised by their nefarious activities. For them, humanity seems to be in short supply. The Nigerian situation places a big question mark on the adequacy of democracy as a guarantor of good governance and development. The Nigerian condition is a classical case of resource curse syndrome or paradox of plenty and contradictory utility of resource given impetus by a political class very lacking in requisite patriotic zeal for governance and development.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examines the widely held notion that democracy is a *condicio-sine-qua-non* for development against the democratic experience of Nigeria's fourth republic. The study argued from evidence-based positions that Nigeria's democratic experience of the fourth republic has neither yielded the expected good governance nor helped the development process of the nation. It posited that this situation is a direct consequence of the nature of the electioneering process in the Nigerian state and the nature of the leadership type produced from the process as well. From the records, the study noted that the electioneering process bore frightening credentials of electoral brigandage such that the leadership produce was not reflective of the representatives of the people but rather a self-serving leadership class lacking in sense of responsibility about their country' a leadership class who turn the country's resources into the main reason of being in power. For short, the problems of

governance and development in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the nature of its electioneering process and the political leadership type churned out from the process. The problems are not the result of lack of requisite statutes and institutions but problems of statutes enforcement, institutional fragility and most fundamentally the lack of sense of shame and guilt in the consciousness of the political leadership class. Nigerians consistently talk of electoral brigandage, corruption, self-serving, political leadership class as factors undermining the development of the nation despite the strength of well over 500,000 staff of law enforcement agencies including the judiciary for which the nation spends over 250 billion naira annually (Ribadu, 2006). Nigeria has 140 prisons, yet there is hardly any record of anyone convicted and sentenced on account of electoral fraud and corruption in any, rather the class of people we find are low-level scammers who are not sufficiently connected (Sanni, 2005). Furthermore, no sufficient political will has been exhibited by the leadership class to exist this situation because of the benefit they derive from it.

The solutions to these problems are simple and can be found in the following:

- i. There must be sufficient political will to enforce the requisite statutes and impartially too to serve as deterrence
- ii. The installation and restoration of the sense of shame and guilt in the consciousness of the political leadership class through a value revolution for them to know when an action is dishonorable and inappropriate. It is in this regards, that the change begins-with-me programme of the current President Buhari's administration is very timely.

In addition, there is need for social and political orientation where basic rules as they concern the conducts of citizens and consequence of breaching such rules are made very comprehensible and available to the people through for example regular advertorials in the print media and regular jingles in the electronic media.

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