

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The work examined the synergy between democracy and good governance in Nigeria. Related literature were reviewed and it was discovered that both words compliments each other and both especially democracy produces the environment that leads to economic development. For both to thrive, accountability by the public officers who hold political power in thrust for the citizen, strong institution and rule of law is invaluable. In addition, it was revealed that Nigeria brand of democracy is a true negation of real democracy; no accountability, no rule law, political power is domiciled with the few dominant ruling class, not with the majority population. Based on this, the work recommends proper investment in Nigeria democracy, and the developed world's financial institution who accept stolen wealth that will be used for invested in Nigeria and the isolation of any government that emerged from undemocratic process among others.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the very first premise of the state and those who occupy state power is to deliver public goods; good road, quality and affordable health care, portable water supply, quality and affordable education; security to the citizens; the real custodian of political power on whom the state; the Leviathan, hold the power in trust for. This responsibility of the state in modern democracy, according to John Locks and Rousseau in Anthony (2007) is a product of social contract between the state and the citizens. State failure on this mandate, according to these theories, is a violation of the contract, thus has grave consequences on the existence of the state. The contract allows the citizens to withdraw their allegiance to the state if they fail to perform.

Of great importance here in good governance and democracy is the sacredness of the people's voice as both are people centred. This voice starts with the right to decide who rules/manage public wealth for the interest of all. That is, good governance is measured first, by the involvement of the public; the citizens, in determining their leaders who occupies various offices for the people. This, by implication, means that good governance and democracy should not exist inversely.

The existence of this makes the government a popular one. Such government is considered majority rule; a liberal democracy where the people' will is supreme. So, modern

democracy is fundamentally founded on the principles and values to ensure and guarantee political freedom, and rights of the people; equality of all men and sovereignty of the people.

Given this affinity between good governance and democracy, no need contesting the fact that democracy is the primary vehicle for development and the fulfillment of individual aspirations especially freedom, justice, equality and good governance. Secondly, both are necessary complements for development. From the scenario above, what will constitute good governance is a government whose public officers conduct public affairs in respect to the wills and decision of the people/public. In such government, constitutional reforms are expedient to capture recent developments not captured in the current constitution. Such government must exhibit accountability, devolution of authority; political pluralism, strong hate for corruption and professionals and apolitical civil servants with the capacity to design and implement good public policies. In doing this, the concern of this paper is Nigeria. The objective here is to genuinely galvanize international efforts to resolving Nigeria and by extension Africa underdevelopment challenges through true democracy and good governance.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

As observed above, modern state is a product of social contract, with the automate intent to, in Abeki's term, promote common good of the citizens. In a more specific term John Locke in Anthony (2007) asserts:

Men being by nature all free, equal and independent, no one ought to be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent, which is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living. And thus, that which begins and actually constitutes any political society is nothing but the consent of any number of free men capable of majority to unite and incorporate into such a society.

A negation of this allows the citizens to withdraw their allegiance. Good governance, arising from this, is one that is predictable and enlightened policy- making bureaucracy that is imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of transparent process and strong civil society participating in public affairs (World Bank, 1994). Such government is committed to prudent/fair allocation and management of public wealth with the interest to solve collective problems. As a result, is not devoid of the principle of collective participation; transparency, accountability; rule of law, equity and strategic vision. In other words, good governance exists when government is operated in accordance with legal and ethical principles as conceived by the society (Miller, 1992). These principles in reality translate into free, fair and frequent elections; a representative legislature that makes laws and provides oversight functions and an independent judiciary that interprets laws, guarantee human rights; the rule of law; transparent and accountable institutions.

In addition, good governance emphasis devolution of power and resources to local governance. Finally, good governance ensures that civil society plays an active role in setting priorities and making the needs of the most vulnerable people in society known. In sum, such governance is good if it supports a society in which people can expand their choices in

the way they live; promotes freedom from poverty, deprivation, fear and violence and sustains the environment and women's advancement. By this, good governance represent the degree to which its institutions (like the parliament) and processes (like the role of political parties in election) are transparent, accountable to the people and allow them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It is also the degree to which the private sector and organizations of civil society are free and able to participate.

What is clear from these principles is that good governance presupposes the existence of democracy. In this sense, democratic government is one that its government authorities are based on the will of the people and is responsive to them. Such government must of necessity be open; its democratic institutions allows or make provision for full participation in political affairs and whose human rights are protected or guarantee the right to speak and assemble. In addition, such government and its institutions must be pro-poor and help to promote its citizen's development. By this, good governance is a democratic government. It derive its power / legitimacy from the citizens, thus are accountable to the people. Given this, democracy provides the ideal setting for equitable distribution of values. This, therefore mean that good governance is a system of government based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and due process, the accountability of political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operations of government (Odock, 2006). Good governance therefore is interterm with democratic governance, rich with quality leadership.

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

From the literature above, the synergy between good governance and democracy is close, and both complement each other; both ,especially democracy produces the environment that leads to economic development (Okoli, 2005) in Orakwe, (2018). This is more as the primary role of government is to drive development. The absence of good governance and democracy manifest as underdevelopment. Such society is characterized by high rate of poverty, high rate of insecurity; electoral violence, wild spread corruption, poor human right violation, disregard for rule of law etc. This statement seems valid when one contrast development or poverty level in most developed democracies like United States with underdeveloped democracies in Africa or other third world nation's democracy. The former's poverty levels is by far lower than the underdeveloped Nigeria (the current world poverty headquarter) and African. All underdeveloped democracies have democratic deficit or exclusion as their common features.

A classical case is the Islamic world especially Arab region. It is belief that the main causal factor in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the world is caused by democratic deficit. Of a truth, all poor countries are not just poor, they are also democratic failure. Resting on this criteria over 90% of poor countries are located in Africa and Nigeria is one.

A cursory look at Nigeria democracy to any casual observer will agree that Nigeria democracy is a graphic opposite; a true caricature of developed democracy and government in the developed world. Even Nigeria political class often describe Nigeria democracy as an ascent one or experimental democracy even though Nigeria is more than 50 years. Nigeria election history is rich with political thuggery to the extent that violence is an integral part of Nigeria political culture. There is high gap between real constitutional democracy and good governance and the proactive democracy and good governance. Since independence till date there is no single election that is not rigged. The current electoral fraud is vote

buying and snatching of ballot box with the aid of security personnel. Until recently, most state governors appoint Local Government Care Taker Committee instead of conducting election into Local Government Areas. Local Government in Nigeria constitution is the closest government with rural development function, yet they are under the direct control of the state governors. Political ideology is simply utopian to the political class. Nwala (1997) in Anthony (2007) claim that Nigeria politics suffer from poverty of ideology. The lack of political ideology provides politicians with the impetus to decamp from one political platform to other.

Just as there is flagrant disregard for ideology, so there is excessive disregard for rule of law or constitutionalism especially among the political class. These have manifested in massive financial hemorrhage since independence in 1960. Summarizing Nigeria politics Nwala (1997) in Anthony (2007) sum them thus:

That in politics, money is everything. Without money you cannot achieve political power. That it does not matter how you acquire this money. What matters is having it and using it to achieve pre-eminence among the people. That the man who holds political office power in Nigeria is invisible and exercise so much unlimited authority and control over all our material resources. That the masses generally, have short memory. As a result, nothing you do now would matter especially if you succeed in making money and achieving political power. They believe that the masses are ignorant and do not appreciate the points of political deceit and betrayals p 40.

This level of corruption impacted on underdevelopment of democratic institutions and other institution that give good flavor to election. The cumulative effect of these is the current loss of interest in politics by the people; the real owners of political power. This act, has empowered thuggery; the only qualification to political recruitment. Commenting further on corruption, in Nigeria democracy Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) established that corruption is at the core of the crisis of governance, stable democratic order, and rule of law, development and the welfare of the citizens. Political corruption according to these scholars has manifold dimensions; outright seizure of public treasury by elected public officials and those who use bureaucratic power to amass wealth at the expense of the ordinary citizens. It is also extended to excessive use of money to undermine the essence of electoral democracy. Obasanjo (2003) in Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) stressing on this state thus:

With so much resources being deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level corruption. The greatest losers are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money not their will is made the determining factor in election Elective offices become more commodities to be purchased by the highest bidder, and those who literally invest merely see it as an avenue to recoup and make profits. Politics become business and the business of politics becomes merely to divert public funds

from the crying needs of people for real development in their lives p 184.

The implications of the above Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) observed is that it bring about a disconnection between the elected person and the ratio of a mandate. This is because the candidates who “win elections assume that they have rendered upfront payment for the votes; it provide incentives for channeling money from infamous sources including self-seeking private sector actors. It in addition, promote the interests of political parties in power and incumbent candidates who have the leverage to channel state resources into election campaigns, or attract campaign funds from organized private sector and foreign sources to the disadvantage of opposition parties and weak candidates. In this way, it promote to the highest level politics of patronage and the phenomenon of ‘godfatherism’ as one ‘powerful’ individual underwrites the cost of elections by providing money to induce votes.

This scenario according to Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) has been prior to 1960. Citing Sklar (1983) Forster- Suttan Commission and Coker Commission, Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) revealed how African Continental Bank (ACB) and key public officials of the former Eastern Region Government diverted public resources to their private business and how Coker Commission of defunct Western Nigeria in 1962 provides a chilling revelation of how the Action Group Party functionaries used a government corporation to “subvert” public money to private business ventures.

THE CHALLENGES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

Nigeria brand of democracy and governance is a complete negation of the least ideal of democracy and good governance where the citizens, the real owners of political power is the governor; determining the least of development and good governance, not just beneficiaries only. This is the real problem since independence. Other problems like distrust among the various ethnic groups, religious crisis; corruption, weak economy, poor infrastructure, weak institution; pervasive poverty etc exist, but they are off- shots of weak political leadership. And as long as exclusion of Nigerian citizens’ in decision making remains and so long as there is substitution or domiciliation of political power with Nigerian political class who gain political power not through the legitimate source; the citizen, remained so long will good governance and real democracy be a mirage in Nigeria. Currently over 90% of Nigeria political leaders lack the texture of engineering real development policies with respect to rule of law.

Nigeria is blessed with all resources including untapped human resources. Recent World Bank report put Nigeria as the least developed in the world, that in everyone hours six (6) Nigerians drift into absolute poverty yet Nigeria is one of leading oil and gas producing countries. Recently, the Prime Minister May of Britain and Angela Merkel, German Chancellor said that Nigeria is not just poor but has the highest concentration of poor youths.

THE WAY FORWARD

To achieve a reversal of the current odd democratic practice for real development is definitely difficult yet possible. One major visible therapy is massive investment in Nigeria democracy. This can be done through investment in human capital with bias in civil and moral education, information communication technology and youth empowerment. The position of Nigeria is very important in Africa, and the youth, the foot soldiers of the ruling

class are very poor and uneducated. If there is sufficient investment that will establish them outside the conventional public service jobs, they will be reluctant to be used as thugs during election. When we contrast this with civil /moral education they will be empowered to ask for their right despite intimidations from the politician.

Given Nigeria vital influence in Africa, investment in Nigeria election especially by the developed world in research and development is invaluable. For example since Jonathan accepted his defeat in 2015 general election in other Africa countries elections followed suit. This is aside Nigeria influence in regional peace and dethronement of military dictatorship in African. Research and development investment will be able to discover the best way to eliminate antidemocratic practices like vote buying, ballot snatching, thuggery, effective means of using electrons election with minimal difficulties. When electronic technology is introduced collection of results will be easy and it will strengthen all democratic institutions whether direct or indirect institutions. This way, sovereignty will return to the citizen; electoral corruption drastically reduced.

Beyond these, international community especially the developed world must stand firm against corruption in Nigeria and other corrupt leader beyond the usual leap service. Clearly, there is international network /collaboration between and among third world corrupt leaders and the developed world leaders in corruption issues. As it stands there is international demand and supply approach in financial bleeding of Nigeria public fund by Nigeria ruling class and the developed world financial institutions who are standing in for the developed world. Without the demand for corruption, there will not be any need for supply of Nigerian stolen wealth. Developed nations are the destinations of Nigerian stolen wealth. It is not enough to return or cease Nigeria stolen wealth; they should out rightly reject it and inform the nation. If public wealth looters are guilty of the act, the man /nation who accept same wealth for safe keep is equally guilty. With the current harassment from the Economic and Financial Crime Commission to suspected looters there is huge fear in the minds of fraudsters in Nigeria. Where international corrupt practices cut off the demand for stolen public fund, as their home is the safe distinction, financial looting will be reduced to a manageable level, at the same time reduce money politics like vote buying.

Beside these, international community must have a vested interest in Nigeria election beyond observer role to isolating any government that subvert peoples' sovereignty in election to emerge as a leader. This is a potent approach and it is possible. Such stand in Nigeria and Africa has stopped military regime and military takeover of elected government. Of important here is investment in education with civil education in mind. When this is reinforced with frequent seminars and conferences on human right education, the public will be properly empowered to defend their vote. This therefore should be a wake-up call for increased activity of international human right group. They need to consistently hold activities with Nigerian and other politician or members of the different political parties. This way, good governance and people driven democracy will be achieved.

A combination of these, no doubt, requires a vibrant press. Therefore this area need funding not just to cover election alone, but training to use more modern electrons machine that will be able to reach out to far away election events without necessarily being presence. By the time electoral crimes are exposed, most people who perpetuate it will be discouraged.

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