



Understanding the dynamics of the life span of a political system in light of Ibn-Khaldun postulations: Nigeria in view

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Abstract

Historical accounts of many countries and regions have shown a metamorphosis of state building process in different stages of human civilizations especially on how nations evolve, rises to the peak and finally collapses. The aim of this study is predicting the future of Nigeria looking at its various aspect of political development within the framework of Ibn-Khaldun's theory of the life span of a political system. Through a descriptive study of analysis of past and present events the study shows a correlation between the events in Nigeria and the events discussed in the stages of the life span of a dynasty by Ibn-Khaldun. However, the findings of the study shows that so far, the lifespan of the Nigerian political system is yet to reach the last stage of Ibn-Khaldun's theory. But interestingly due to political prebendalism, bad governance and selfishness the country has acquired all the features of the last stage which portends a bleak future. The study therefore predicts three likely phenomena for Nigeria: Perpetual stay in underdevelopment, the return of the military into power and breaking away into smaller nations. Thus, it concludes that unless with political creativity and reinventions the country has no future.

Keywords: Dynamics, life-span, Political system, State-formation, Understanding.

1. Introduction

Before the advent of modern-day Nigeria, there exist a variety of political systems from different tribes living within the country. Although the political development of such entities varied considerably from one part of the country to another. This is also common with many parts of Africa, Latin America and other part of the world. The documented history and other oral sources show not just the formations of such polities but the events leading to the unprecedented collapse of such political systems and the eventual rise of other political systems or the transformations of the existing system into modern systems. The rise and fall of the systems are characterized in some cases with violence and sometimes through a

peaceful means especially if it was done through intellectual means. The cyclical nature, the collapse, the birth of a new system forms the historical life span of a polity.

In Nigeria there exist a lot of hypotheses regarding the formations of states from different historical sources by different historians. For the Hausa-speaking people specifically in the present-day northern Nigeria, there exist the hypothesis of the legend of the "Hausa Bakwai" which is popularly thought in our primary and secondary schools. Thus, engraining a false mindset of the evolutionary start of the Hausa political system. However other Hamitic hypothesis traced the state formation process from the events of the Barber invasions in the early 7th and 8th

century, the Bornoan influence in the 14th century, the Tuaregs invasions in the early 18th century and other forms of migrations from Chad Basin due to desiccations caused by climate changes. Abdullahi (1987) observed that the influences of such events may have been responsible for the state formation process in stages, from, Family Heads (Mai-gida), to Area Heads (Mai-unguwa), to Head of Towns (Masu-gari) and finally to Cities States (Birane, headed by Sarakuna).

These evolution stages are significantly characterized with a unique political developments strategy of institution building process. From the forgoing start, the political authority is based on kinship relations by one in which authority was based on control of territory, accompanied by replacement of a very large number of small and mutually independent political units possessing institutions of a centralized characters.

A good example is the study of past political system in Katsina by Bala (2006), which succulently captures sequences of transitions starting with the evolution *Corporate towns and Cities* (city states). an example of city states which got transformed in the mid 1450 AD through revolutionary changes. Then the rise of *Sarauta systems* between 1450 to 1804 (Feudal system) which got established in spite of powerful conservationist forces of resistance. Much later, it got transformed to *Jama'a system* between 1804 to 1816 led by a group of Islamic intellectuals which expanded and created a much bigger system called the *Emirate system* between 1816 to 1903. The overthrow of the Emirate system through colonial conquest thus created the *Native Authority systems* of Nigeria between 1903 to 1960 whose authority is derived from the British government.

These change-over shows the dynamic movements or changes taking place in a political system which can best be explained within the context of its political events leading to the cyclical rise and fall of

a dynasty or political systems. The Nupe's and the Yoruba's also evolved systems of Administration with sequences of change-overs as shown (Idris, 2005).

Even at present times we have seen political change-overs from Native authorities' systems of the past regional governments under colonial rule to independent political entities recognized by the United Nations (UN) as independent countries. Nigeria as an independent country transited from various forms of civilian regime to military regimes with so many trials and tribulations. The state building process of the various regimes were approached in different fashion all aiming at solving different problems.

Unlike other countries, just fifty years after independence, Nigeria presented a sorry spectacle. The records of the successive government have been abysmal irrespective of whether it is Civilian or Military. Both governments are characterized with inefficient public service, decaying schools and hospital, bad roads pitted with potholes. In fact, it was recently noted by World Bank (2022), that, the country needs to inject N36tr annually to close its infrastructure gap for the next 30 years. Widespread embezzlement of public funds, armed banditry, terrorism, kidnappings and secessionist movements creates more challenges to development in the country. Reflecting on these problems and relating it to the events that lead to the complete collapse of the briefly above-mentioned government before the existence of modern-day Nigeria, this study, therefore deems it fit to predict what is next for Nigeria by theorizing and analyzing modern day Nigeria within the context of the ideas of Ibn Khaldun theory of the life-span of a political system.

Therefore, the main objective of the study is to predict the outcomes of the current negative happenings in Nigeria viz-a-vi what the study foresees for the future.

The study first overviewed the theory of Ibn-Khaldun and then briefly juxtaposed



the discussions base on facts of history and modern-day reality specifically focusing on the stages of the theory. Followed by analysis with final conclusions.

2. Research Design

The study adopted a mixed design approach using a descriptive and case study model. The study attempts a description of events in Nigeria using historical methodology. The historical inquiries embrace aspects of *Ex post* descriptive research by reporting what has happened or what is happening through a review of past documents and record of events, such official publications, books, manuscripts, and other relevant publications of professional private institutions. The derived data were then contextualized in the case study used in analyzing the institutional functionality and the metamorphosis of Nigeria as a country from past events (prio-colonial, and colonial) to present times. In other to abstract reality from the analysis of events and to also predicts the future the research applied the theory of the life-span of a dynasty founded by Ibn-Khaldun as the tool for discussion. As such, due to the nature of the sources of data, the study applied a qualitative analysis of data.

3. Overview of the Theory of Ibn-Khaldun on the Dynamics of the Life Span of a Political System

The scholar of many ideas, Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami (1332-1406), postulated ground breaking theories in Economics, Geography, Human civilizations, Military warfare and more specifically in Politics. In his abstraction of political reality and reflection on its experience he came up with theory of the life-span of a dynasty in generations.

Based on his academic sojourn he claimed that the life span of a dynasty last for three generations considering the opinion of physicians and astrologers. The three generation is equivalent to the natural life span of an individual which is One-hundred and Twenty years (120 years). On the

average a generation is identical with Forty years (40yrs), but within the same generations, the life span may differ according to conjunctions. Meaning that it may be either more or less. In the course of these three generations, the dynasty grows senile and is worn out. In The fourth generation the ancestral prestige is destroyed and a new dynasty emerge. Thus, he claimed that each of these generations is characterize with unique political behaviors demonstrated below.

First Generation

It is considered as the birth stage of political systems where the political stakeholders retain the desert qualities in other words toughness and savagery. Its members are not just used to privations and sharing their glory which each other but they are brave and rapacious. The groups are bonded and strengthen through a group feeling called 'asabiya' which continues to preserve the unity of a political system. As a result, people submit to them because they are sharp and greatly feared. Also, characters of truthful propaganda and religious propaganda gives the dynasty or political system additional strength to that of the group feelings. In this stage religious coloration does away with mutual jealousy and envy among people who share a group feeling and causes concentration upon the truth. As such having a common accord and willing to die for their objectives. He further claims that the group feelings are the core value for the take-up of all dynasties and is considered as the single most important element for the institution building process.

Second Generation

This is accompanied with life of ease because of the change-over from desert attitude to sedentary cultures, from privation to luxury and plenty, from state in which everybody shares in glory, to one in which one man claims all the glory for himself, and from proud superiority to humble subservience.



The territory of the dynasty expands through military and non-military actions due to the numerical strength of its supporters. Sedentary cultures, luxury, tranquility and peace is attained with improvements in education, agriculture, town planning/architectural designs, music, eating habits, business enterprises and other crafts thrive well in these generations. All these elements are proportionate to the power of a dynasty or political system as it relates to the extent of territorial possession.

However, due to the accumulation of sedentary cultures, the vigor for group feeling of these generations is dissipated to some extent, retaining some of the old virtues with them because of its contact with the first generation. The generation lives under the illusion that the virtues of the first generation still exist.

Third Generation

is a generation which has forgotten the period of old desert life and toughness, as if it had never existed. It has lost the taste for the sweetness of fame and for group feelings because they are dominated by force (an extractive state). Luxury is at its peak because they are so much given to life of prosperity and ease. The citizens are so dependent on government and are like women and children who need to be defended at all times. Most times, they forget to protect and defend themselves and press their claims (rights) from the government. At the same time, the government becomes not just corrupt but overburdened with unnecessary expenditures on unproductive luxurious goods. The poor becomes poorer due to harsh economic conditions imposed by the government in order to meet up with expenditures. In that way, the weakness of the system recoils upon the government. Thus, the fall of the system becomes imminent. The military or its militia men respond to insurgent claims or demands because they cannot repel external aggression or seek for military external help in order to cure its senility.

Once a claimant for the power of the state appears, the dynasty has to opt but to relinquish power without much resistance because it is too senile to fight. In consequence, most of the people in the dynasty migrate and go to some region with government property they have acquired. In this way, the life span of a dynasty corresponds to the life span of an individual. It grows up and passes into an age of stagnation and thence into retrogression.

4. Discussions on the Relevance of the Theory

The scope of this discussion centered around the historical events and development of Nigeria from Native Authority system to modern day Nigeria.

The conglomeration of Native Authority Systems in the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria gained self-independence at different years due to reasons of regional differences in cultures, exposure to western cultures, infrastructural development and other political considerations. The governments operated a loose federation with autonomous regional governments in terms of politics, economy, and public administration arrangements. Thus, regional governments enjoyed the support of their citizens through a common group feeling (*asabiya*), which fostered a concrete regional development through agriculture, education, arts and cultures. The phenomenon of *asabiya* was demonstrated and applied to various regional governments looking for the provision of Macpherson Constitution of 1951. The provision of the constitution is in a nutshell subservient to local interest. The Northern and Western region had Bi-cameral legislatures (Houses of Assemblies and House of Chiefs). The House of Chiefs is a true reflection of *asabiya*, an allegiance to cultural affinity. Due to regional autonomy, especially as regards revenue generation, the economy was growing very fast at an average of 4% GDP between 1950-60 and at 6% during the period from 1958 to 1967.



as observed by World Bank (WB). At the same time, the manufacturing sector grew at an average of 12% as noted by Adebayo (1979). However, despite the allegiances of individual patriotism and nationalism to region, this stage was accompanied with expansion in various forms of infrastructural development ranging from Education, Health, Communications, Transportation and other thriving private small-scale industries in different part of the country. In many instances the development was deriving through religious and cultural propaganda creating an enabling ground for the unity newly birth country.

Throughout the period of independent to Military regime, Nigerian government evolved a great deal of expansion in infrastructural development with improvement in almost every sector of the economy. The rapid growth was accompanied with important structural changes due to discovery of oil (Olalokun 1979).

Tomori and Fajana (1979) claimed that despites challenges in under-expenditure and distortions in national plans due to civil war between 1967-69, the executions of major projects in vital sector of the economy contributed immensely to the modernization and diversification of the economy. A GDP growth of 8.2 % was recoded as against projected growth rate of 7% in the Seconded National Development Plan between 1970-1974.

Hence the upsurge in public enterprises like, the Nigeria Breweries, and Bottling companies, Textiles and leather, National Petroleum Corporations (NNPC), Ajakuta Steel Industry, National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA), National Telecommunication Services (NITEL), Nigerian airways (NA), Nigerian Railways Corporation (NRC), Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Public universities, and many others. Similarly, businesses and other productive activities flourished alongside direct foreign investments in

various sector such as Leventis super stores, Bata shoes making, Steer automobiles etc.

To a certain extend there was a forward and backward economic linkages in the existing sectors of the economy. In spite of her low ratio of foreign trade to GDP, Nigeria accounts for the large share of Africa's total foreign trade. In 1970 her share of total foreign exchange in the continent were 10% and 40 % respectively (Olufemi, 1982).

At the international front, Nigeria was so strong that it not just played a leading role in building and sustaining the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but at the forefront of the initiations of the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Umar 2003). The country also used its monetary strength to fight neo-colonist repressions in Angola by supporting *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA) with \$100 million against the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) proxy, i.e. the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA). In similar circumstance the country used its Military might and strength in institutionalizing and restoring democracy in some west African countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia in 1991. In addition to that, Nigeria has been and is providing human capital supports to some African countries and Latin American countries through Technical Aid Corp (TAC) arrangements. Therefore, this generation of Nigeria adequately fits into the second stage of the theory because it was characterized with enterprise, courage, tranquility, comfort and determination. Many African countries look up to Nigeria for solutions due to its great image. Although the brevity and commitment to national interest in this stage is low compared to the first generation. Religious crisis, arm robbery, official corruption, slowly crept in to the fabrics of this generation.

With the exit of the Military government from 1999 to date, preferably called the era



of democracy. The political sphere remains dominated and controlled by Ex-military Generals who were at the helm of the affairs of the past Military governments or better described as ‘old wine in a new bottle’. From economic view point, this generation may be termed derigistic from the view of Schumpeter (1939) because it is characterized with policy shift by adopting the ideas of neoliberalist economy. Most of the state-owned public parastatals acquired in the past generation disappeared in name of privatization, commercialization and downsizing. Institutions such as NEPA, NITEL, Ashaka Cement, etc in various sectors including the public pensions were not spared. The sole aim was to enhance efficiency in services delivery, expand the scope in service coverage, create competitions, attract inflow of foreign capital, create more job opportunities and above all deal with corruption.

The expected positive miracles turned negative. Instead, the country thrived in corruption, and prebendal politics, that is, the politics of corruption, impunity and opportunism (Nuhu & Asmau, 2014). Politically, despite claim as the biggest democracy in Africa, the government has become extractive rather than inclusive. Powers are concentrated in the hands of few elites with few constraints on its exercises. It is structured in such a way that the monopoly of power is used to extract obedience at the expense of the majority. At best, the economy is described as a rentier state i.e a state that receives substantial amount of money from the sale of oil resources but is unaccountable to its citizens and alienated from the society. Endemic corruption has eaten into almost every fabric of Nigerian systems where it has become a symbol bedeviling innocent Nigerians living in foreign countries.

The concomitant rise of underdevelopment due to harsh economic conditions has thus created poverty-stricken society in Nigeria. Records shows that over 7 million Nigerians lost their jobs due to inflationary

pressure in 2020 translating to over 83 million (40%) of the population. Similarly, recent records of July 2021, shows a headline inflation at 17.38%, based on this projections Nigeria is expected to have the fifth-highest inflation rate on the continent by 2021 behind Zambia, Zambia, South Sudan, and Angola (State of State Report, 2021). Inflation creates poverty because of its impact on households, business and overall security.

Connected to inflationary pressure is deficient revenue, accompanied with high cost of government (expenditure) resulting to high debt profile due to external and internal borrowings. Proshare report (2021) argues that Nigeria’s debt service to revenue stood at 98%, indicating that for every N1 earned, N0.98 was spent on debt servicing. Connected to this economic calamity is rise in the costs of governance which has increased from N2.29tn spent in 2019 to N4.11tn in the proposed 2022 budget, (Tunji. 2021). This shows an increase of N1.82tn or 79.48 per cent in three years, signaling a rise in the cost of recurrent expenditure. The N4.11tn personnel cost in the 2022 budget proposal does not include allowances for members of the National Youth Service Corps who are not medical doctors, contract staff and anticipated promotion projections of existing staff. More worrisome is the lack of clear-cut direction on how the country intends to efficiently manage expenditure, a sign of looming fiscal distress. Despite recent government interventions (Covid-19, Agemis-loan, At-Risk children, Cash Transfer etc.) through the Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN), and Federal Ministry of Finance, business are not thriving well in Nigeria because inflation especially in household consumables is eroding real income and purchasing power of individuals.

long awaited capital projects for critical infrastructure development on areas of electricity eg. Mambila, roads constructions eg Kano-Maiduguri, railways connectivity



eg linking all state capital with Federal Capital Territory, dredging of Niger-Benue trough for Inland water ways etc remain a smoke-screen or best described as *an opium for political-politics* in other to win votes for elections.

The massive capital exodus of productive labour in academics and medical field has left those sectors in shambles were citizens have to seek for better education and medical care abroad.

By and large the decadence has now translated into insecurity of life and properties through insurgencies, arm banditry and kidnaping, secessionist movement, and worsening religious crisis retarding development administration from all angles.

It is perhaps for this reasons that the spirit of national integration keeps depreciating to the lowest of the low. Thus, creating a state of lawlessness to the extent that the state cannot adequately defend its boundaries let alone its citizens. This explains the reason why the government respond to the demand Terrorist (kidnapers, bandits, insurgents etc,) by paying huge amount of money as ransom for its citizens and also recruiting volunteer militia to defend itself against annihilation. The national security apparatus has become very weak due to corruption, and poor training. The desperate situation recently made the Executive Governor of Katsina State (Aminu B. Masari) to call on the citizens to take of arms for self-protection against armed bandits (Premium Times 2021). Claiming that it is more legitimate for a law-abiding citizen to take up arms for self-defense than a criminal who get away with the destructions of innocent life and properties.

5. Analysis

Going by the ideas of Ibn-Khaldun that the lifespan of a dynasty ends approximately 120 years following through three generations (40+40+40). Nigeria is now barely fifty years plus. Contextually It is supposed to be squared within the early

stage of the second generation of Ibn-Khaldun's theory. However, looking at the historical development in Nigeria, it is as if it had exhausted the prescribed development stages in a span of just 60 years. Surprisingly, the features of Twenty (20) years Nigeria adequately fits in to the first generation of Ibn-Khaldun's hypothesis, with the next 20 years in the second generation and the final 20 years in the third generation.

In a normal setting, the ageing of any country is expected to be accompanied with progressive growth and development. By extension, it means where problems and challenges of development process is addressed through political innovations and creativity in satisfying human needs.

However, in recent past and the present political situation portends a very serious under-development condition. There are multifaceted challenges in Education, Transportation, Health-care, Economic uncertainties, Corruption and especially that of Security. The inability of the government in arresting these problems shows that the political system is not working. As observed by Claude (1979), the working of a political system depends on the extent to which a country poses effective regulations, distributions, extraction, and responsibility. As a country, Nigeria's regulatory capacity is contested within its territories by elements of Boko Haram, IPOB, and Kidnapers. These elements also set independent rules and regulations as regards tax, security and other aspect of social relations within those territories. Its ability to also provide goods and services is also contested by elements of corruption within the governments, and business circles. That is the reason why the Privatization of NEPA is yet to provide efficient and affordable electricity to common man in Nigeria. Kidnapers also use the private communications services licensed by the government to arrange for ransoms without been caught etc. It is not surprising for such a government to decline



to the common demands of a retired civil servant of various Local government and States by paying him his gratuity and pensions. While in contrast the ruling class lives in abundance and luxury.

Based on the theory of Ibn-Khaldun, a country with such features of constant regression, the country will cease to exist, unless with political reinventions. As illustrated in history by what happened to the rules of Ad, Thamud, Amalekites, Himyar, Tubba, Mudar, Kayyanids, Persians, Sasanids, and the Muslims of Spain. A kind of cyclical change over from one system to another.

It thus important to note here that the collapse of past political systems lead to the emergence of Nigeria and the collapse of Nigeria might also lead to the emergence of new political system unique from what we have today.

Therefore, if Nigeria refuses to reinvent itself politically, three situations are likely to be its destiny. Firstly, there might be a return to Military Government as seen in neighboring countries of Mali, Sudan, Chad, and Burkina Faso. Most probably, it will be the only chance for the country to reinvent itself because the practice of the present-day democracy is elite-driven and pro underdevelopment.

Secondly, if it remains without the Military take-over for the purpose of political reinvention, it will perhaps remain as a failed and sick country becoming the most widely celebrated *sick-man of Africa*.

Finally, the country will likely split not just between the North and the South as popularly envisage. The North may also split into three parts or more. The turbulence northcentral will take away many parts from the northeast, west and central. Although it will not also be able to take away the whole of the Central parts. The South will share a similar faith by splitting in three parts or more (East, West and Central). The splits in different part of the country might even form alliances with some splinter's groups from other

neighboring countries like Cameroun, Chad and Niger. In effect it means the dissolution of the country and the emergence of new countries

6. Conclusion

The study was an attempt to predict the future of Nigeria using the political lifespan theory of Ibn-Khaldun. The first part of the study looked briefly at pre-historical Nigeria and early history of modern-day Nigeria. The second part looked at the theory of Ibn-Khaldun in the three stages as regards the political life span of a dynasty. The discussions centered around modern-day Nigeria looking at issue from independent to date. Political, Economic and Social realities of Nigeria formed the basis of the discussion. The analyzed issues were then summarized to form the basis of the conclusions of the study.

However, just like every other theory, the theory can be criticized of been short of fitting into the contemporary political realities of the present political systems. Also, the implication of 40 years generational stages is not very applicable due to circumstances of historical evolution of different political systems. Yet it shows a great deal of similarities of events affecting Nigerian political systems in early stages and last stages of development. Thus, the study concludes by predicting the perpetual underdevelopment of the country as a failed state, Military intervention and the faltering-away of the country in to different parts. Unless off course through reinvention.

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