



Democracy And Development: The Nigeria's Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between development and democracy with focus on Nigeria. The study used historical and descriptive methods. The study relied on secondary sources of data. Thus data for the study were obtained from textbooks, journals, newspapers, Magazines and internet. However, the study reviews the various positions on democracy and development and thereafter examines the Nigeria situation, using qualitative and content analytical approach. From the analysis the study found out that, although there is not a determinate relationship between democracy and growth, but the case of Nigeria shows that, democracy is necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. When a country only focuses on democracy above to span growth, it usually turns up to be a mirage especially, when such government does not increase production by creating an enabling environment. Without deliberately underestimating the influence of other factors, the basic disconnection between democracy and development in Nigeria is rooted in leadership problem. As a democratic state, leaders must function within the general parameters of democratic developmental state to guarantee development in our country.

Keywords: Development, Democracy, Electoral Process, Authoritarianism, Nigeria

Introduction

Democracy and Development is one of the most controversial and contested issues among scholars and practitioners of political economy, development studies and even economists. A great deal of literature on the subject exists with varying degrees of perception and conclusion. Despite the increasing number of studies on the subject, there is, no consensus or general agreement on whether or not the practice of democratic government enhances development. It is for this reason that inconsistent modeling argument and selection bias, with ambiguous scientific proof of result on causal-direction of democracy linked development in literature is a big problem for analysts and observers. This observation does not however invalidate genuine result of

meticulous studies that actually reveal variations concerning democracy-development nexus and vice versa.

Nigeria is one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of natural resources, yet its citizens remain the poorest on earth. There are many potential explanations to this irony, and one of these is the lack of democracy-driven development.

As Nigeria struggles to alleviate poverty, bring about rapid socio-economic development and integrate into the global economy, the debate over democracy and development becomes topical.

In 1999, Nigeria witnessed renewed hope about the birth of democracy in the Country. The process was actually supported by all segments of society who saw in it the

prospect of achieving development that will reverse the trend of political despair and disillusionment that characterized the political life of the Country during the military era.

Democratic interest of Nigerians, is not only confined to the area of election, and perhaps, granting of civil and political rights, but includes the demand for economic empowerment, better living standard and adequate social life. Indeed for the majority of the people, democracy is meaningful only when it delivers socio-economic goods and better living condition to majority of the citizens. However, as remarked earlier, the nexus between democracy and development has been the most debated issue in Nigeria across all the sectors. Those in support of the linkage between development and democracy argue that both concepts are intertwined and depend on or lead to the other. For instance, Alloysius (2016:21), averred that when compared to authoritarian regimes, democracy is more likely to foster an environment that facilitates the innovative and entrepreneurial processes so essential for development.

However, opposing views claim that the two concepts are independent of each other, and can easily be achieved without necessarily depending or leading to the other. Drawing insight from Nigeria, this article critically examines whether there is a link between democracy and development.

Method

This study employed qualitative research method. This method was adopted to investigate, explain and understand the problems under study. Kellstedt and Whitten (2013:95) noted that the qualitative method of research exposes the researcher to variety of data as it includes virtually any information that can be captured and is not numerical in nature. Data collection for this therefore, was mainly from secondary

sources such as; books, journals and internet sources and the method of analysis adopted was essentially normative, analytical, conceptual and historical to provide a clear perspective, the study will first define the two key concepts of Democracy and Development. This is followed by an analysis of a democracy-driven development and review opposing views to such linkages. The third section examines the subject in the context of element in a democratic dispensation.

Literature Review

Democracy, as a working system of government, originated in Ancient Greece albeit, on limited scale, and without organized political parties. Because of its values, democracy has gradually and ultimately emerged as an acceptable mechanism for inclusive development. However, as a concept, democracy, like other social science concepts has over the years been enmeshed in controversial definitions. To Osakede, Nkomah and Konge (2016:11), democracy is an institutionalized procedure directed to a free political participation and competitiveness. Chilaka (2014:106), considers it as constitutional constraint in the power of the state and popular control of it. Although democracy has been viewed from different perspectives, the common perspective is the universal desire to manage their affair and to have a say in who manages their affairs. Another angle is the liberal perspective which considers democracy as: *“set of social and political beliefs, attitudes and values which assumes the universal and equal application of the law and the existence of basic human rights superior to those of state or community... Derived from a variety of secular and religious tenets, liberalism affirms the basic worth of individuals, their thoughts, and their desires. In the liberal common, no one, whether king or majesty, has the right to tell*

people how to think or even act (except in instances of imminent threat to social well-being (Reno, 1997, cited in Mgba, 2017:89))

Democracy is a way of life, indeed, a culture and it expresses itself in features of civil liberties, tolerance, dialogue, negotiation and human engineering. Furthermore, democracy enhances people's freedom of expression to support their claims to political attention including claims of economic needs. Also, democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and practices. For democracy to serve a people well, it has to be played according to the rules of system. As a system of government, it has an inextricable relationship with politics which is the art and science of statecraft. The principle of statecraft involves, among other things, the struggle for power and the administration and management of resources of a state for the common good. To realize the promises of democracy, political strategies should be founded on justice, equity, fair play and good conscience. All these should ordinarily drive development in a democratic setting.

Understanding the Concept of Development

Most Scholars agree that "development" is one contested concept in behavioral sciences. There is a great deal of confusion as to what development really means or stands for. The problem occurs because scholars attempt to conceptualize development based on their ideological learnings and orientations. Besides, development is not one face off. The definitional problems notwithstanding, certain definitions are normally used. To liberal scholars, development is man-centered. In this way it involves man in his political, economic, socio-cultural and psychological relations among others, in his effort to master and subjugate nature and

natural forces of his environment to ensure improved living. To Ofoize (2000), development simply means "the satisfaction of basic needs in an economically, politically and structurally transformed society. It involves progression from former level to a level of higher standard. Therefore, development objectively includes positive changes in life. Thus development process and democratic government are constructive approaches towards the expansion of resources and potentials of the state through public participation for effective, transparent and accountable leadership aspired by the people (Aloysius, 2016).

Development without Democracy

This can also be referred to as the authoritarian development driven thesis. Policy makers and academia of this School of Thought postulate that authoritarian regime promote development. They argue that development can be easily achieved without democratic government. To them, the state contributes to development by providing excellent infrastructural projects.

They further argue that development in authoritarian regimes states is rooted in well-functioning institutions that are actively endogenous to political decision making. In this sense, good economic development policy is considered good politics. And the survival of it is tied to sound development policy and programme. This makes leaders to sacrifice personal self-seeking political goals on the altar of meritocracy to boost development. Poi and Ekekwe (2018) argue that such options tend to lend themselves to reduction in accuracy and foster the rate of development.

The rise of East Asian states as explained above, can be attributed to active government interventions, and credible institutions that constructively deploy public policies to transform the their society.

Democracy-Driven Development Thesis

On the bases of limited information, other scholars said the Lee thesis cannot establish general conclusion. They argue, further that the high economic growth and development of Singapore or China cannot really be taken as proof that dictatorship or authoritarian regime does better in promoting development. Edigheji (2005), said if this, was real, African countries should have been among the most developed countries in the world today. This is because most parts of Africa were under military dictatorship for several years. There is therefore no positive link between authoritarian states and development. However, a good number of empirical research studies would suggest impacts of democracy on economic development. Aloysius (2016) citing Bhagwati (2002) averred that democracy has a positive and significant impact on economic growth and development. In this context that democracy was used as proxy for development through political right. To them, political rights (democracies) are more inclined to economic growth and development than those that do not, and that democratic societies tend to protect political rights in a more efficacious way than other types of governments. Similarly, Feng (1997) and Rodrik (1997) cited in Ryan, Bourne and Thomas (2012) agree that not democracy itself that contributed to poor development, but certain weak variables, especially weak institutions that exist in democratic regimes that affect development. What is clear in the argument above, however, is that democracy contributes to positive economic development once people start to acquire higher levels of economic development and social maturity, and seek more accountability from their governments. The fact is that, democracy promotes the rule of law, protect property rights, and enhance economic freedom and stable politics. All

these factors contributes to a more efficient use of resources and create an environment conducive for the inflow of foreign direct investment that engineer development (Heckechuan, 2010).

Effect of Development on Democracy**Thesis**

There are copious studies that justify the effect of development on democracy. Some of these works date back to early 70s. For instance, Menocal (2007) investigated the impact of economic growth and development on democracy. He found that economic development promote democracy. Przeworski(1993, cited in Bueno de Mesquita et al (2005) in their cross national data study found that, democracy is more significant than the linear relationship. The report of Przeworski's result is that as economic development increases, democracy also deepens the system. Scholars like Tavares (2007), Kriechaus (2006) have shown that economic growth is an important tool of democracy. The findings suggest that, as economic growth increases democracy is strengthened.

Result and Discussion

Countries all over the world, strive towards the pursuit of a wide range of microeconomic objectives and goals in order to achieve improvement and sustainability and hence, development. The benefit of development in this context means access to better health care services, higher income, and greater individual freedom and more opportunities, access to better education, rich quality of life and better housing. These variables are globally used to measure development trends leading to the classification of nation as developed "or developing", "poor or not poor." These are used here to appraise Nigeria's democratic performance in this study.

Nigeria gained Independence in 1960 with a level of national development considered at

par with countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and China. The estimate of Nigeria's natural resources in global scale is very high. Nigeria's stock of political wealth include huge population of about 200 millions, the sixth largest crude oil producer with economic natural gas and hydrocarbon deposits. After several years of military rule, Nigeria returned to democratic government on May 29, 1999. The emergence of civilian-democratic government in the fourth Republic was heralded because of development promises associated with this system of governance, as reviewed in the preceding pages of this work; that democracy indeed, is the mandate for informed development. This is because, its singular obligation is to facilitate societal choice making and to act through conscious management of socio-political structures with a view to enhancing the citizens' well-being. Therefore, democracy steers the state and society towards the realization of collective goals, which implies that development means people and that the essence of development is the welfare of the people. According to Yofus (2000), development is not to be measured merely in terms of growth statistics but in human welfare, measured in real terms. Kizito (2017:4) earlier opined, that development is about people while growth is about things. Indeed, Kizito(2017) citing Seers (1973) advised that, while dealing with development issue, we should:

"Ask ourselves what are the necessary conditions for a universally acceptable chum – the realization or the human personality... The question to ask about a country's development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a

period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled."

The emphasis is that you cannot assume that a state, is developed only on the basis of increase per capita income, while poverty, unemployment and inequality are prevalent in such a state.

The Southern African Development Community Report (2015) consider development in terms of poverty and inequality reduction. This implies that human resources development in the form of poverty reduction, gender equality and wealth redistribution are crucial to formulating strategies to societal development.

Using the above criteria, Nigeria presents a huge paradox to many observers of the democratic government and development driven thesis. Nigeria is richly endowed with all the human and natural resources needed to transform the country to safe paradise, and with democracy, Nigeria should have no excuse, for lack of development, if the democracy-driven development thesis is anything to go by. On face value, there would appear to be no sign of Democracy and Development in Nigeria. The effect of democracy on development is moderately negative. For instance, World Poverty Clock (WPC) created by German funded Vienna based NGO, world data lab in 2017 shows that at the end of May 2018, Nigeria, the 7th largest and most populous nations on earth emerged as the country with the highest number of people sliding into extreme poverty, overtaking the 2nd most populated nation – India. By this report, 87.90 of Nigeria's total population suffer from extreme poverty, while 112 million Nigerians live below the poverty line. Nigeria ranked 20th among 126 world poorest countries.

WHO (2016) report indicated that approximately 830 women die from preventable diseases related to pregnancy and child-birth every day, high percentage of all maternal deaths occur in developing countries including Nigeria. Further proof by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2016, shows that "every single day, Nigeria loses about 2,300 children under 5 years and 145 women of child bearing age. This makes the country second largest contributor to the under-five and maternal mortality rate in the world. The United Nations estimates that one in every six children dies from childhood related diseases before age five. Under-five mortality in Nigeria is estimated at 191 per 1,000 live births. Almost one million children die in Nigeria, higher than other African countries, largely from preventable diseases (Onumera, 2010). The problem is poor coverage and lack of access to quality health care services. Literature has also been inundated with depressing picture of unemployment and its associated increasing crime rate in Nigeria. Unemployment in Nigeria varies by age group, educational level and sex classification. This is evident from the data provided by National Bureau of Statistics (2010). The report show that National Unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 2007 are on the increase. The number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000; 13.6% in 2001; 12.6% in 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; 13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in 2007; 14.9% in 2008; 19.7% in 2009; 21.1% in 2010; 23.9% in 2011.

Specifically, the data provided that unemployed persons between 15 and 24 years were 41.6%, 17% were those between ages 24 and 44 years. Those with primary education, 14.8% were unemployed. Also, for those with secondary education that were unemployed ranked 21.3%, 21.0% and

22.3% were respectively for those who never attended school and those below primary education. As regard sex, the records show that males constituted 17.0% while females constituted 23.8%. The unemployment challenges are captured by the growing number of unemployed persons roaming the streets all over the country. It is seen in the informal sector of the economy, as under-employment, decline real wages and medical incentives. The rising crime waves are consequences of this phenomenon.

It is rather sad that with huge human and natural resources, above all, in the last 10 years, the country made about \$484 billion US dollars (150 billion naira) revenue from crude oil, going by or using the current exchange rate of 305/\$1, yet little development is made. If democracy was actually the cause of development, such huge resources would have been deployed to fix infrastructure to reduce the vulnerability of Nigerians extreme poverty. The index is further exacerbated by the glaring discount between available resources and observed growth and development. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) record indicated 5.5% in 2013, 6.2% in 2014, 2.8% in 2015, 1.6% in 2016 and 0% in 2017. We reckon that the 2018 GDP growth rate of 2.5% against World Bank bench of 3.4% and the citizen's average GDP per capita of \$2,216 is abysmally low.

This show that the relationship between democracy and development is not very clear as, anti-development indicators such as poverty, lacks of access to better health and education, unemployment and poor infrastructure and above all, corruption have not only become endemic but are also at the centre of crisis of development in Nigeria. Consequently, the invidious life existence that makes people to live in anguish and keep languishing in poverty has a dramatic effect on the entire country leaving a legacy of vengeance- Seeking. Group grievances-

Boko Haram, Niger Delta Militancy, IPOB separatist groups, killer-herdsmen, arm robbery, kidnapping, child trafficking, drug trafficking, mounting demographic pressures, internally displaced people are all creating humanitarian emergencies, and many other such problems.

Thus, it is convenient to agree with others that, democracy is necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. No wonder, when a country only focuses on democracy above growth span, it usually turns out to be a mirage especially when such government does not increase production by creating an enabling environment.

The average growth performance since democratic governance has been negative as real GDP for the trend is simple. Nigeria's democratic governance is chiefly characterized by inappropriate macro-economic and political policies. For instance, the Boko Haram's NEEDS Policy, with focus on the elimination of public waste and the transfer of excess resources to the provision of infrastructure and social services and the Jonathan's YOUWIN Programmes and many others. These programmes had little or no positive impact on Nigerians. The government continues to run large deficit that had to be financed by borrowing both domestically and externally.

For instance, the report of democracy index (2016) shows Seychelles as the most developed country in Africa, ranking 63 in the world with Norway leading the rankings naturally maintains, the most democratic state in Africa, according to 2016 Democracy Index report, should have been considered the most developed on the continent, if the Democracy – development thesis holds way. Conversely, Seychelles, not listed among the ten (10) most democracies in Africa, eventually emerges as the most developed country on the continent. Libya's position in

the ranking further references our argument. Libya, listed as one of the worst democracies emerged as one of the most developed countries in Africa. This does not in any way ignore the fact that democracy drives development in Mauritius, Cape Verde, Botswana, and South Africa (Democracy Index 2016). However, the fact remain that with its reservoir of human and natural resources, Nigeria's development, either from the perspective of Lee thesis – with thirteen years of military rule, experience or the angle of Democracy – linked development, on one hand and effect of development on democracy on the other, should have justified all claims. Sad to say, but with all these opportunities, Nigeria has remained largely a veritable paradise in jeopardy; why this experience?

Without deliberately underestimating the influence of other factors, the basic disconnection between democracy and development in Nigeria is rooted in leadership problem. Achebe (1983) cited in Abeki and Kia (2018) was right when he contended that:

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

Nigeria is facing the problem of poor leadership in managing and harnessing the potentials of men and resources of the nation toward development. For many years, Nigeria has been under the control of leaders at all levels. Their attempts at propping up the economy ultimately fell short of expectations. These are reflected in the faulty nature of state institutions that are saddle with

formulation and implementation of public policies. The Lee thesis, confirmed certain features, especially, strong state institutions that are thought to characterize development Nigeria at present, does not have political leaders who are geared towards the ethical philosophy of enhancing development in the country. Leaders are blind to the fact that Nigeria is presently at the baseline of the development hierarchy. No wonder Nigeria has remained poor and impoverished and less developed. Mgba (2017) and Bratton (2008) provided the missing link between democracy and Development in Nigeria. They observed that since 1999, the experience indicates that the rule of law and democratic essentials are observed more in the breach. Rather than the rule of law we now have rule of men. Democracy as instituted by the electoral process in Nigeria is a struggle over the access to the resources controlled by the state. The whole idea of democracy has been equated with holding election. This system has made political leadership to use election as an instrument to capture state power for personal use.

Furthermore, Odusote (2014:25) carefully argued that, the Nigerian democracy has experienced a horrific cycles of corrupt inept leadership, despite civilians and civilian rules.

Another missing link between democracy and development is the fact that political parties in Nigeria are bereft of any noticeable development ideology and guiding principles on which their conducts are anchored. This lack of ideology has indicates that the political parties are a collection of strange bird fellows who have nothing in common apart from the desire to loot natural treasury (Ernest and Marvis, 2016:128). The lack of development-driven ideology is noted in the persistent inter and intra party squabbles, infighting and defections of politicians from one party another.

Another inherent problem is the fact that political parties in Nigeria do not capture economic development policies as their foundation. Rather, they are representations of deep seated political and ethnic traditions that do not help the electoral process. All we experience is ethnic chauvinism and parochialism.

There are number of key policy options and measures that could be considered to ensure that democracy becomes a major ingredient for development in Nigeria. This is particularly, important since democracy is meaningless for the majority of people unless it delivers socio-economic growth and benefits to the citizens.

One policy option is to put in place, strong institutions that are able to implement policies geared towards sustainable development. Nigerians and political leaders must do more to embrace the principle of democracy. This will mean to apply the principle of democracy to the letter with strong institutions to uphold the principle of democracy.

The political elites must also do more to ensure that the masses have a say in the way in which their resources are managed. Hence, prudent economic governance and equitable distribution of resources are vital to guarantee balanced development and stability.

Conclusion

Nigeria's democracy and development travels are traceable to leadership incompetence. The leadership challenges manifest in term related to large scale corruption, lack of accountability, absence of transparency and absence of nationalistic spirit. All these have collided to frustrate democracy and development. This is obvious, because, leadership will is at the centre of the various contending postulations about regime type either authoritarian or democratic. Leadership is a central factor in

the quest for development. When national leaders rise above the state and put development in the forefront of their activities, development occur irrespective of type of government. Though regime type produces specific type of leadership, but when they rise up to encourage credible institutions that encourage growth midwives development of the nation and such leadership enjoys legitimacy. As a democratic state, leaders must function within the general parameters of a democratic developmental state to guarantee development in our country.

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