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Democracy, Development and Insurgency: The Nigerian Experience in the Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The paper examined the interlocking relationship among democracy, development and insurgency in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It interrogated the western orthodox conception that democracy necessarily brings about development. It made use of literary materials in its analysis after subjecting them to textual and contextual analysis.

The paper posited that since 1999, Nigeria's ruling elites have marginalized and impoverished the vast majority of Nigerians. It contended that the failure of the ruling elite accentuated insurgency and terrorism and concluded that the prophylactic is for the Nigerian people to remain the focus and 'raison d' etre' of democracy and not pursuit of 'self' and 'class' interests.

Key words: Democracy, Development, Insurgency, Terrorism, Fourth Republic.

Introduction

When Nigeria returned to civilian democratic rule on 29, May 1999, after many years of predatory military dictatorship, Nigerians and the international community alike were hopeful that democracy and increased democratisation would propel rapid socio-economic development in a country, which is now derogatorily referred to as a "sleeping giant" or a "crippled giant". It is important to reiterate that this expectation was not at all misplaced considering that it was fashionable then to approximate democracy to good governance, which in turn was believed to have all the ingredients that propel socio-economic and political development (Adejumobi, 2004).

Unfortunately, fifteen years into the new democratic rule, the hope and expectations of Nigerians and the International Community has been dashed in this regard. Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been a paradox in many respects. Thus, contrary to the Western foisted orthodoxy that democracy necessarily fast track development, income distribution and good governance, the contrary has been the experience in Nigeria since 1999. It is largely for this reason that there has been so much discontent and revolt against the Nigerian state, which is largely perceived as the principal instrument for the perpetration of the gross inequality and injustice, in the country. This paper, which is based essentially on secondary materials, would argue that insurgency, and lately, terrorism, are the fall outs of the general discontent arising from inequality, deprivation, disempowerment and exclusion in the country.

Although a lot has been written on insurgency and terrorism in contemporary Nigeria, the linkage among the practice of democracy in the country, corruption and underdevelopment on the one hand and insurgency on the other, has not has not been properly analysed. It is this linkage that this paper seeks to explore. It shall be argued that rather than bring about development, the country's democratic experiment in the Fourth Republic has resulted in the

undermining, underdevelopment and impoverishment of the vast majority of Nigerian people. Moreover, one and a half decades of democracy has resulted in increasing spate of the phenomenon of unemployment and poverty in the country. The paper shall posit that since 1999, the country's ruling elite has succeeded in marginalizing and impoverishing the vast majority of Nigerians. It is this situation that has resulted in the increasing spate of the phenomenon of insurgency, and lately, terrorism. Thus, the paper shall argue that insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria since 1999 is attributable mainly to the frustration and/or disappointment that rather than bring about development, democracy has brought the vast majority of Nigerians misery and poverty.

Conceptual Clarifications

Democracy

According to Adejumobi (2004, p.12), although in its classical sense the concept of democracy is "uncharacteristically precise" and connotes popular power or popular expression of power by the people, different scholars define the concept in different ways based on their understanding, background, ideological learning, political persuasions and interests. It is for this reason that the concept has been described as "relative and elusive" (Fatile and Adejuwova, 2010:29). Be that as it may, for the purpose of this paper, democracy shall be defined as a system of government that allows the people to choose their leaders and representatives, and can replace them at regular, free and fair elections (Diamond, 2005, p. 1).

Although Adejumobi (2004, p.12) has identified three types of democracy, namely: liberal democracy, socialist democracy and social democracy, this paper is mainly concerned with liberal democracy. Liberal democracy ought to promote free and fair elections; extensive public freedom of speech, press, information, association, movement and choices; participation and inclusion; responsiveness of elected officials to the needs and concerns of the people they represent and some degree of political equality (Diamond, 2005: 1). Democracy ought to promote good governance which is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective efficient, equitable, inclusive and follows the rule of law (UNESCO, 2005). What Nigeria has experienced since 1999 is essentially a contradiction of these lofty ideals.

Development

Development is one of those concepts that have not lent themselves to any precise and generally acceptable definition. Be that as it may, for the purpose of this paper, it could be defined as a multi-faceted progress or improvement in the existing conditions of a society (Ogunfiditimi and Olawoye, 1979, p. 2). There are at least eight important components of development. The economic component is concerned with the creation of wealth and improved condition of material life, which should be equitably distributed. The social component measures the well-being of people in health, education, housing and employment.

The political dimension of development includes such human values as human rights, political freedom, enfranchisement and some form of democracy. Development also has a cultural aspect, which recognises the fact that culture confers identity and self-worth on a people. The full-life dimension is concerned with systems, symbols and beliefs concerning the ultimate meaning of life. There are also the human development and human quality of life dimensions of development. Equally importantly, there is the aspect of development that has to do with commitment to ecological soundness and sustainability so that the present generation does not undermine the conditions of future generations (Aiyade, 2013; Unumen 2015; Unumen, 2014).

Insurgency

Insurgency has been defined as a political and/or military activity directed towards completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular political organisations and/or military forces. The activities of insurgents are aimed at weakening government control and/or legitimacy while increasing the insurgent group's control and/or legitimacy. One common feature of insurgent groups is their desire to control a particular area of a country or to create an alternative government capable of controlling a given area of a country or even take over the control of the entire country (US Army, 2006).

Generally, insurgency occurs when the gap between political expectations and the opportunities of a certain group has become unacceptable for them and they believe that the issues can only be solved through the use of force. Insurgent groups always rely on the population for active support and/or

passive acquiescence. It is this support that provides the insurgent groups "personal, supplies, and, critically, an information advantage over the state and the counter insurgent forces" (Grandia, 2009).

Among the tactics of insurgent groups are guerrilla warfare, terrorism, propaganda, recruitment, open and covert organisations and international activities. Insurgency normally begins with the emergence of a dominant leadership in response to domestic grievances or outside influence. If the issues are not resolved by the state, the group then build organisational infrastructure, recruit guerrillas, train them, acquire supplies and seek domestic and international support. The next stage is the era of guerrilla warfare when the insurgent group engages in deceptive activities including, hit-and-run tactics to attack government and/or civilian groups. Although many insurgencies never reach the final stage of mobile conventional warfare, if necessary counter insurgency measures are not taken, it could get to this last stage (US Army, 2006).

Terrorism

As alluded to earlier, terrorism is one of the tactics of insurgent groups. Although the definition of the term terrorism is a contested issue even in the United Nations (UN), it has been defined by the former Secretary General of the United Nation (UN), Kofi Annam, as "any action intended to cause death or a serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or international organisation to do or not to do something" (Imobighe, 2007, p.15). According to Unumen (2014, p. 235), quoting Imoibighe, the different categories of terrorism include: domestic terrorism, international terrorism, state terrorism and proxy terrorism. Terrorist activities in Nigeria fall under the domestic terrorism. A cursory look at the spate of killings recently, even under the Muhammadu Buhari administration, in spite of its doggedness to stamp out insurgency by the end of its first year in office, shows that over six hundred deaths were recorded in addition to properties destroyed (Oropo, 2015, p.19).

The Democracy/Development Debate

The democracy/development debate came to the front burner in the late 1980s and 1990s with the decline of centralized states systems and the concomitant end of bipolarisation of the world, the decline of most authoritarian governments, the emergence of new organisations spawned by civil society signally the dominance of the Western capitalist ideology (Boutros-Ghali, 2002,

p.7). This was part of the grand design to spread the gospel of capitalism and Westernization all over the world. Then, it became fashionable to argue that democracy is an outcome of a particular economic system and a stage of development, which can be found in some societies and not in others (Adejumobi, 2001, p.1). According to Adejumobi (2000, p. 5), the argument then was that the values of liberty, freedom of speech and association, the rule of law, multiparty systems and elections, the protection of human rights and separation of powers create the institutional context and processes for economic development to take place. In addition, it was argued that democracy facilitates economic empowerment, provides a stable investment climate and ensures rapid mobilization of national energies and resources for economic development.

However, it is important to reiterate that although some form of democracy could be a necessary condition for development, liberal democracy is not a sufficient condition for development as the examples of many African countries have shown. There is no doubt that there is a nexus between democracy and development properly defined. Both democracy and development are about people. On the one hand, and as has been defined earlier, democracy connotes popular power or popular expression of power by the people. Development on the other hand is also about people. According to Ekpo (2014:3), for development to be said to have occurred, it should bring about increase in rate of employment, provision of health care services, provision of housing, food and water, reduction of poverty and reduction in inequality.

Another fundamental linkage between democracy and development is that the former brings about political freedom, which ought to usher in freedom from poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease, which are now considered as aspects of socio-economic development (Igbusor, 2011, p.1). Boutros Ghali (2002, p.12) also argued that:

Democracy and development are complementary, and they reinforce each other. The link between them is all the stronger because it originates in the aspirations of individuals and people and in the rights they enjoy... the interlinking of democratization and development helps both of them to take root durably.

However, and as Adejumobi (2000, p.7) has pointed out, liberal democracy does not constitute a magic wand for economic progress and social transformation. He argued further that it is the content of democracy and the way it is constituted that has some implications for development. As he articulated it:

The nature and constitution of democracy determine the extent to which the people participate concretely in decision making beyond elections, and how their collective efforts influence their life chances. Democracy in its constitutive elements must give practical expression to an organised and predictable life for the people, engender equity and fairness both in power and resource distribution, and facilitate the empowerment of the people. It is through this that democracy can provide a base or conducive milieu for socio-economic development.

This paper intends to argue in the next section that democracy and democratisation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has not been able to engender the empowerment of the vast majority of Nigerians. It would then examine the factors that have been responsible for this situation in "Africa's biggest democracy".

The Reality of Democracy and Disempowerment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

As alluded to earlier, Nigeria transited to a new civilian democratic rule on 29 May, 1999, after many years of predatory military dictatorship. The expectation of the vast majority of Nigerians was that democracy would engender efficient, accountable, transparent and participatory governance. This situation, it was thought would in turn promote sustainable socio-economic development. Moreover, it was the expectation of Nigerians that democracy would then translate to the empowerment and improvement in the lives of a vast majority of the population resulting in a corresponding narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor. It is against this background that the fervency with which pro-democracy groups in the country dared the military in the 1990s can be easily understood.

Contrary to these expectations, fifteen years of democracy has not significantly improved the socio-economic conditions of the lives of the vast

majority of Nigerians. Rather than being empowered, they have been disenfranchised and disempowered. This has been so partly because in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, political power is gotten not because of the vote of the people but through election rigging and imposition of candidates. According to Unumen and Emordi (2012, p.11), politics in the Fourth Republic has been largely "clientelist" and patronage-based.

Through an informal network of power-based relations, pragmatic alliances, financial deals, monopolisation of information, corrupt and primordial distribution of patronage, real power in the Fourth Republic has been hijacked by self-serving politicians, business persons, political fixers and god fathers. In the process, Nigerian political and economic elite trade offices, coopt rivals, distribute concessions and contracts within the clientele constituting of political party members, political thugs and political godsons. Unumen and Emordi (2012, p.11) have also contended that it is this situation that has partly made corruption prevalent, endemic and systemic in the country.

Thus, rather than popular expression of power by the people, there is an obvious disconnect between the government and the ruling elite on the one hand and the masses of Nigeria on the other. This situation is made worse as the hug flow of oil wealth means that government does not necessarily rely so much on taxpayers for its income. As a consequence, it does not feel an obligation to answer the people. This development fosters "rampant corruption and economic sclerosis because there is no investment in infrastructure as the country's leaders cream off its wealth" (Burleigh, 2013. p.1). This is a contradiction of what prevails in a genuine democracy in which real power belongs to the people.

The Paradox of Wealth and Poverty in the Fourth Republic

The Nigerian state in the Fourth Republic, rather than being developmental has become predatory and clientelist. This accounts for the situation in which:

...the ruling elite can afford luxury homes in London and Paris, and top-end cars that, across West Africa, have led to the sobriquet 'Wabenzi', or people of the Mercedes Benz. Yet 70 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line of £1,29 per day, struggling with a falling infrastructure and chronic fuel shortages because of lack of petrol refining capacity, even

though the country produces more crude oil than Texas (Burleigh, 2013, p.1).

Corruption is a major issue in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It is a contradiction that so much corruption should be registered in a democratic dispensation. Under the "watch" of Nigerian leaders, in a democratic dispensation, corruption has become a parallel system. Corruption in the public sector in the Fourth Republic has degenerated to outright looting of the nation's treasury and wealth by unscrupulous politicians and corrupt public servants at the different level of the country's governance and administration (Unumen & Emordi, 2012; Omole, 2010). In the oil sector, for example, has become the bastion of corruption in the country. It has been reported that "136 million barrels of oil worth \$11billion (£7.79billion) were illegally siphoned off in first two years from 2009 to 2011" (Burleigh, 2014, p.1). The country can afford to pay its legislators the highest salaries in the world, with a basic wage of £122,000, nearly double what British MPs earn and many hundreds of times that of the country's ordinary citizens (Burleigh, 2013, p.1).

This situation has resulted in the paradox of poverty in the midst of wealth. The country with abundant potential and real human and natural resources is valued among the ten poorest countries in the world. Nigeria is the 6th largest oil producer in the world and the second largest in Africa, after Angola. Between 2004 and 2010, the nation's economy grew strongly at an average annual growth rate of 6.6% making it the 5th fastest growing economy in the world. By 2010, the country's growth rate stood at 7.8 percent and by 2014 it had become the largest economy in Africa. It must be reiterated that all these were largely due to the billions of dollars the country earned from export of crude oil and not necessarily due increase in production activities. The country is the 7th largest oil exporter in the world.

Paradoxically, the vast bulk of the Nigerian population has remained poor, living on less than one the United States of America (USA) dollar per day. In some states in the northern part of the country, as high as 75 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Indeed, by all indices of development, the country remains an underdeveloped country (Aideluoghele, 2014; Inilusi, 2014; Unumen, 2014). The country's relative poverty rate increased from 54.5 percent in 2004 to 69 percent by 2010. In 2009, the country was ranked 158th out of 183 countries on human development. With regard to Human

Development Index (HDI), the country was 0.51, making it to trail behind less endowed countries such as Uganda and Lesotho that were ranked 157th and 156th respectively. Life expectancy in Nigeria is 47.7 years while adult literacy rate is 70%. The country's Human Poverty Index in 36.2 while infant mortality rate is still as high as 99 percent per 1000 births. Thus, the country has the 13th highest infant mortality rate in the world (Unumen, 2014, Imilusi, 2014).

In the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP) "Assessing Progress in Africa Towards the Millennium Development Goals" in 2013, Nigeria was not at all close to the best performing country in any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the continent. However, in the different targets category, the country's name managed to appeared in Goal 7, in which it trailed behind less endowed African countries, including Egypt, Gabon and Morocco (UNDP, 2013, p. xiv).

Again, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of inequalities in the world. The elite, especially the political class that has become super wealthy, not due to any productive activities but through stealing and looting the nation's treasury, control the political and economic system of the country. This is the major cause of the Nigerian paradox. As Jeyifo (2009, p.15) puts if "vast concentration of wealth and power exists only and precisely because there is always a corresponding dispossession and marginalization".

Thus, according to Unumen (2014, p.17), the Nigerian experience represents a paradox of growth without development, a situation where in the face of abundant resources and economic growth, there is poverty, inequality and high rate of unemployment. This development conflicts rational economic and social theories as well as historical trends, and has reinforced the "resource curse" theory. Resource curse is the paradox that developing countries, such as Nigeria, with an abundance of natural resources tend to enjoy worse economic growth as well as worse quality of life than countries without natural resources. In the Fourth Republic both incidence of poverty and unemployment has increased to 63.7% and 23.9% respectively. This situation has resulted in general discontent among the masses. Hence democratic rule in the country's Fourth Republic has been bedevilled by violence, insecurity of lives and property, political assassinations, kidnapping for ransom, ethno-religious crisis, insurgency, and lately, terrorism (Unumen, 2014).

The Nexus between Poverty, General Discontent and Insurgency

There is an explainable interlocking connection between democracy, poverty and insurgency in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. According to Hilary Clinton, the former United States of America (USA) Secretary of state and current presidential candidate, the most immediate source of disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is the failure of governance at the federal, state and local government levels. She argued that the lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the emergence of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state (Unumen and Emordi, 2013, p.13).

Again, according to Unumen and Emordi (2012:13), the situation in the country's Fourth Republic has failed to engender, maintain or sustain the belief in Nigerians that democracy is the most appropriate system of government in the country. The average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with corruption, cyclical crisis of legitimacy, institution decay, chronic economic hardship, underdevelopment, volatility, insecurity and violence. According to Muzan (2014:232), inequality and discontent result in bitterness, and bitterness generates envy and hate. From the Niger Delta to the indigene/settlers crisis in Jos and the Boko Haram movement, inequality, bitterness and resentment are at their roots. According to Muzan (2014, p.234), inequality, frustration, bitterness, discontent, economic and political discrimination and neglect were:

The primary motivating force behind the realignment of the erstwhile warning forces of the Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urghobo in Warri Delta State against the federal government in the Niger Delta insurgency and, according to MEND, the insurgency's primary propellant. In the Niger Delta before the emergence of the insurgency, there was a widespread feeling of deprivation and discrimination, since the evidence showed that the rate of unemployment, the general standards of living and the rate of poverty in the region were clearly disproportionate to other parts of the country and clearly worse than the national average.

Similarly, the emergence and popularization of the *Boko Haram* movement, which has now transformed into a terrorist group, has been directly

linked to poverty and frustration. Although there are other causative factors, including religious extremism, indoctrination, Islamic culture and politics, poverty is a major factor. Explaining the role of poverty in the emergence and huge success of Boko Haram, Mailafa, as quoted by Muzan (2014, p.236), noted that:

The prevalence of poverty makes it easier for extremist groups to mobilize disenchanted mobs in the pursuit of their own political goals. In Northern Nigeria, where over 70 percent of the population live under the internationally-defined poverty line, it is easy to see how any demagogue or religious extremist can mobilize the poor and destitute as instruments for his own political goals. There is the added factor of youth unemployment, especially within the growing stratum of university graduates. When people are pushed to the lowest levels of desperation and hopelessness, they can fall easy prey to religious demagogues who offer them a sense of belonging.

On the nexus between poverty, inequality, disempowerment and the emergence of terrorism in the country, Muzan (2014, p.236) again argued that:

Persistent poverty, particularly in the midst of economic growth and affluence of the upper class, will lead to feelings of frustration among the poor. It will also breed hatred, mistrust and anger. These psychological monsters lead to loss of faith in the system, alienation and hopelessness. At the stage of hopelessness, there is a progressive, psychological diminution of the value of life, which eventually leads to a point of indifference between life and death. At this point, hostility, antagonistic conduct and indiscriminate aggression manifest rather spontaneously and automatically.

Thus, there is no doubt whatsoever that there is a direct linkage between the failure of democratic governance in the country's Fourth Republic to deliver on development and empower the masses of the people and insurgency, and lately, terrorism.

Conclusion

The major argument in this paper is that there is an interlocking relationship between the failure of democracy to empower the people and insurgency, and lately terrorism, in some parts of the country. Democracy is about people. It is about popular expression of power by the people. Power to the people should include empowerment and improvement in the condition of life. Where the reverse becomes the case, as the vast majority Nigerians have experienced in the Fourth Republic, insurgency and terrorism become inevitable.

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with corruption, cyclical crisis of legitimacy, institution decay, chronic economic hardship, underdevelopment, volatility, insecurity and violence. Unbridled corruption has resulted in poverty and inequality. Poverty and inequality in the midst of vast wealth have resulted in discontent and bitterness. This situation has degenerated in hate, envy and disillusionment that have in turn driven the nation's youths into insurgency, terrorism and other violent crimes both as a way of expressing their discontent and as revolt against a system that has disempowered and impoverished them.

It is hoped that the government, headed by President Muhamadu Buhari, which rose to power under the change mantra will be able to change the situation of the Nigerian masses. Democracy, governance and development should focus on the people. The people should not only be at the centre, they should also be incorporated to drive the process. For, the people are the "raison de'etre" and should be the ultimate beneficiaries of democracy, good governance and development.

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