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INCIDENCE OF DEMOCRATIC RULE ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Towards the last two decades of the 20th century, there were strong agitations by most of the African countries and other developing nations of the world to enthrone democratic rule. Today virtually all the African countries are practicing democracy. Nigeria began to operate democratic rule since independence but the military intervention had always truncated it until 1999 when Nigeria began to operate an uninterrupted democratic rule. Therefore this paper is aimed at establishing the fact whether the Nigeria democratic rule for the past fifteen years has made any appreciable impact in the area of urban development. It equally assesses the level of urban development during the military rule and compares it with the present democratic government in operation. The scope of this paper is between 1999 to 2014 democratic dispensation in Nigeria. The paper concludes that the nature of democracy that is in operation in Nigeria is too expensive. The funds that ought to have been invested on developmental projects are being squandered by the politicians on political campaigns, elections at different governmental levels and other non-profitable ventures. This is being done at the expense of the urban developmental projects which could have benefited the lots of the citizenry and give the true picture of democratic rule in Nigeria as the trend is in most of the developed Nations of the world where by social welfare and rapid urbanization are always taken as top priority.

Keywords: Incidence, Democratic Rule, Urban Development, Evolution, Nigeria.

Introduction

The historic background of many Africa countries revealed that they had passed through different forms of political organization that survived for some time and later disbanded to pave way for the new ones until the last two decades of 20th century when there was internationalization of democracy. Many of these Africa countries embraced democracy and made a clear departure from erstwhile authoritarian and totalitarian regimes into popular political concept in the world. Odo (2007: 251) emphasizes that democracy is popular, generally acceptable, accountable, and it is a system of government that is formed by majority of the masses through the ballot box. Today, virtually all the countries of the world have imbibed at least minimally democracy as its form of government.

Nigeria as the most populous country in black Africa had in its historical antecedents of three distinct political organizations before the enthronement of democratic rule. The first form of

political organization was the traditional political system. This political system differed among the three major ethnic groups otherwise known as Nigeria- Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The Hausa/Fulani operated absolute monarchical political system; they instituted a politico-religious regime centered on the Emir who combined both religious and political authority. The Yoruba operated constitutional monarchical political system which was centralized to meet the needs of effective administration and as well encourage checks and balances against a despotic or a dictatorial Yoruba Oba (Akpeninor, 2007:2). The Igbo political system differed from that of the other two afore mentioned. Igbo did not develop the monarchical structure. They practiced republican system while the village and clan or family became the highest level of political organization.

The second political organization witnessed by Nigeria was as a result of the European incursion. The European introduced colonial rule which led to the amalgamation and establishment of one political system known as indirect rule. The adoption of the Indirect rule empowering the existing traditional institutions into absolute political authorities.

Shortly after the independence when Nigeria political organization would have been fully attached to the apron of this popular concept (democracy) there was sporadic incursion of military into Nigeria politics. This incursion re-wrote the history of political organization of Nigeria as largely as that of military (Bamigbose, 2002:198)opines that the continued stay of military coupled with the unruly behaviour of the Nigeria politicians have necessitated the persistent calling of military to stay on. Therefore Nigeria remained so long in the grip of the military government. The military held on to the rein of power in Nigeria for almost 30years.

All these political phases that Nigeria passed through caused changes in the structures and lives of the Nigerians. Therefore this paper sets to discuss the evolution and the establishment of the democratic political structure in Nigeria. Also how this structure transformed the lives and postures of Nigerians most especially in the urban cities.

Evolution of democratic Rule in Nigeria

Nigeria became one political entity in 1900 after the taking over of the territories of the Niger coast protectorate and the royal Niger Company by the British government. Two protectorates (Southern and Northern protectorates) were officially used to qualify this geographical expression (Nigeria) until 1914 when these protectorates were amalgamated and Sir Lord Lugard became the first Governor- General of Nigeria. Under Sir Lugard, there was the establishment of the council which was the National first legislative body which brought Nigerians from different parts of the country together for the first time and participated in the administration of their own country(Adu&Ibitoye,2005:55).

In 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford abolished the old legislative council and inaugurated the new one. He equally introduced for the first time elective principles. Nigerians were allowed to elect their representatives into legislative council. Sir Bernard Bourdillion became the Governor in 1939 and made adjustment in the political boundaries while the southern province was divided into two which eventually broke Nigeria into three regions. As stated by Omolewa (1985:168) "as a result, there was a Northern Region with Kaduna as the administrative Center, and an Eastern Region with Enugu as the administrative Center, a Western Region with Lagos as the administrative Center". With the introduction of Regionalism into Nigeria

politics by Sir Arthur Richards in 1946, Nigerian was able to secure greater participation in the discussion of their own affairs. The legislative council membership's increased and Regional assemblies for each Region were established with varying chambers. In the Northern Region, it was bicameral, i.e. House of Chiefs and Assembly, but in the Western and Eastern Regions it was only unicameral, i.e. House of Assembly.

The development that followed in 1951 with sir Macpherson as the governor extended the bicameral legislatures to both the Northern and the Western Regional assemblies. There was also the great stimulation for the formation of political parties. This marked the effective beginning of the development of political parties. In 1954 the then Governor- General, Lyttleton, introduced direct election into the Federal and Regional legislatures while both Western and Eastern Regions were granted self- government in 1956 and Northern Nigeria got their own later. This provided the basis for independence in 1960.

All these periods could be best described as gestation period in the democratic process in Nigeria. The full-fledged democracy at this time had not come into full blown since most elections conducted were limited and there were no uniform electoral system in the country. The legislative council was dominated by the Europeans while the key posts in the executive council were allotted to the Europeans. The British monarch still remained the active player in the political scene of Nigeria. Omolewa (1985:193) asserts that on 1 0ctober, 1960, the government of Nigeria was still under the British monarch who ruled Nigeria through the Governor- General who was at that time a Nigerian, but a representative of the British monarch.

The situation was changed in 1963 when Nigeria became a Republican state and had all the paraphernalia of self-government, with federal constitution which guaranteed a great measure of autonomy to the regions. Parliamentary system which was the British model of democracy was put into operation. This democratic setting derived its power from the consent of the people. This arrangement was short lived, it ended abruptly in 1966. As pointed out by Bamigbose (2002:199), that sad story that inevitably planted incessant political instability in Nigeria political milieu started in 1966. Since then, there had been a plethora of coup d'etat.

The period from 1966 to 1979, the military had been playing a dominant role in the political history of Nigeria. Three coups were staged while four head of states were emerged. The period between 1979 to 1983, democratic rule was briefly restored while General Olusegun Obasanjo accomplished the mission of his predecessor, General Murtala Muhammed and handed over to president Shehu Shagari (the first executive president). The awaited democracy which marked the journey to the second Republic was given a little over four years to survive before the military struck through another coup d'etat in December 31st, 1983.Democracy was briefly restored in 1979 to 1983 but for most of its independence history, Nigeria was ruled by a series of military juntas (Godiya&Atsiya, 2013:33).

There was an attempt of returningto democratic rule during the regime of General Ibraham Gbadamosi Babangida but this was truncated through the annulment of the widely acclaimed free and fair election believed to have been won by the late business Mogul, Moshood Abiola, on the 12th June 1993. The last but not the least military ruler was General Sani Abacha who died suddenly and was succeeded by General Abdulsalami Abubakar who eventually

returned the country into democratic rule. He put in place another transition programme and fixed May 29, 1999 as the exit day for the military. This was followed to the letter and marked the beginning of the journey to the fourth republic and ever since May 29 had been high marked as democracy day in Nigeria

Appraisal of democratic rule on urban development

Ever since May 29, 1999 when Nigeria had been liberated from the hooks of the military rule, democratic rule is on continuous process. It was recorded for the first time in the history of Nigeria during this fourth republic, a successive transition from one civilian rule to another. So far so good, this is the fourteenth year of uninterrupted democratic rule in Nigeria. The question now arises, how are the urban cities and the population therein developed through this democratic rule?

At the inception of Obasanjo democratic regime, several programs were designed mainly to meet the basic needs of the citizenry. Having realized the crucial principles of democracy as pointed out by Odo (2007:253), democracy as a matter of fact, has some key tenets and these stand on a tripod- free and fair election, better welfare for the people, and government's accountability or transparency in the art of governance. Obasanjo regime introduced the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) which was later replaced by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which consisted of four schemes: Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS) Special Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS), and the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). These programs were designed to tackle unemployment problem among the youths, alleviating or reducing the poverty level and inculcating better attitudes towards a maintenance culture in urban and rural roads and public buildings.

Mindful of the non-performance of the National Poverty Eradication Programme, there was introduction of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) by this regime. NEEDS recognizes that the fundamental challenge at this stage of Nigeria's development is to meet the basic needs of its people and reduce poverty on a sustained basis. He stresses further that NEEDS distinguishes itself from earlier plans by its participatory process (to ensure ownership and sustainability), larger scope and coordination (to reflect federalist planning), and content (more focused, realistic, and reform based). NEEDS therefore was holistic and elaborative, designed to address a wide range of socio- economic and political issues in the country. All the states and local governments embraced it. At the state level it was known as State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and tagged as Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the local level (Soludo, 2005).To sustain these programs the Eight years Obasanjo regime established some anti- corruption graffiti's such as Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) which were responsible for anti- corruption crusade.

The regime of late Umar Yar' Adua that came on board after him also concentrated on economic reforms through the introduction of the seven points agenda which include; energy and power supply, wealth creation, agriculture, poverty eradication through education, transportation, security and land law reforms. These laudable agenda died with Mr President while his successor retained some of these programs and equally established some new ones such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Millennium

Declaration was adopted in September 2000, committing countries both rich and poor to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. The goals include those dedicated to eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. Nigeria is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration and has a responsibility to implement the goals (Lawanson, 2006). Other ones recently launched are; Youth Enterprise with Innovation (You Win) and the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). These programmes were established in line with Mr President's promise to encourage wealth creation and mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the reinvestment of the petroleum subsidy funds to empowering young Nigerians with specialized skills to take up existing job vacancies in both private and public sectors.

All these initiated programs by various democratic regimes since 1999 were meant to foster socio- economic development. Ogaba (2003: 193-195), opined that socio- economic development leads to greater economic security and more widespread education, a lowering of socio- economic inequality and a reduction in feelings of deprivation and injustice on the part of the lower class as well as group that may feel marginalized.

Without losing the hind sight of destruction that the prolonged military rule caused on the Nigerian economy, Nigeria is classified as one of the poorest nations in the world with majority of her citizen living below the poverty level, This and many others might have informed the democratic regimes to initiate most of these programs. The question to ask ourselves here is that, did these initiated programmes enhance the socio- economic development in Nigeria society? This question could be best answered in the phase of transformations and changes that occurred in most of the urban areas in Nigeria during these democratic regimes as well as the challenges of most of these urban areas.

Urban Development in Nigeria during the democratic rule

Nigeria experienced rapid urban growth after the colonial rule as a result of the attempts made by the indigenous government to restructuring administrative system in response to the yearning of the people. With this restructuring many new administrative Centers were created and subsequently developed to become the urban areas. These areas kept on increasing when the Military took over the administrative control of this country. It was a common practice of military in Nigeria to create states and Local government areas. The country was divided into twelve states in 1967 from the previous five in 1963. While in 1976 the country was divided into nineteen states and in 1987 it rose to twenty one states. It equally rose to thirty states in 1991(Andrew & Gideon, 1994:148). Since 1996 up till the present day, the number of states in Nigeria had risen to thirty six states and the federal capital territory, while the total numbers of local government areas is seven hundred and seventy four (774). All these were the creation of different regimes of the military.

With this situation there was the development of many urban centers which attracted many people from rural areas due to its location, infrastructural facilities, job opportunity and administrative functions. Nigeria as a nation has been experiencing an accelerated shift of her populations from rural to urban areas. Today, strong population of Nigeria resides in urban

centers. Mabogunje (2002), estimated that the residents of urban centers in Nigeria in 1950 were less that 15% of the population. By 1975, this proportion had risen to 23.4% and by 2000, was 43.3%. He stressed further that the urban population growth rate is 4.8% annually; markedly higher than the national annual growth rate of 2.2 % (HDR, 2004). The projection is that by 2015, more than half of the nation's population would be urban dwellers. According to Mabogunje (2002), the 1991National Population Census recorded 359 urban settlements of at least 20,000 people in the nation and estimated the figure to have increased to 450 by 2000.

Therefore it could be viewed from the above that the distinctive features of an urban area is its higher population density, while its development could be understood on the premise of satisfying the socio-economic and environmental needs of the population which resides therein. According to Florence and Enaruna (2000:18), in measuring urban development these parameter must be considered; the degree of educational opportunities, mass literacy, a reliable communication and transportation network, steady water supply, adequate and reliable supply of electricity and other forms of energy. There should be adequate health and housing facilities, mechanized and highly productive agriculture and manufactured goods, high income per head and general high standard of living.

In Nigeria today some of the problems confronting most of the urban areas are lack or inadequacy of these parameters as itemized by Florence and Enaruna (2002:18). This is as a result of the lack of any visible change in the attitude of the present democratic leaders compared to the military. Corruption is at an alarming rate, while funds meant for provision of public amenities such as basic health and education services to the larger population of urban areas are squandered by the political office holders at the federal, state and local levels. Much of Nigeria wealth's are in the coffers of the ex or serving politician. Therefore Poverty in Nigerian cities is endemic. The Human Development Report (2004) records that 70.2% of Nigerians survive on less than US$1 daily, while 90.8% of the population live on less than US$2 daily. Jimoh (1997) claims that 8 out of every 10 urban households are poor. Poverty has a major feature of urban cities in Nigeria also connected with congestion and environmental degradation.

Another factor is the inadequate commitment to the policies and programs initiated by the successive government during this democratic dispensation. This has resulted to instability and inequalities in the standard of living between the majority of people and those who control public institutions. Therefore the economic security has become a mirage and most of the urban areas are now facing high cost of living with lower standard of living. The rate of unemployment has been increased at astronomic rate, this has equally aggravated the increase rate of crimes and social vices in most of the urban areas while lives and properties of people are prone to danger.

Money politics is another factor that is also accountable for the inability of these democratic regimes to make much improvement beyond the military regimes in the urban areas. The role money plays in today's politics may also not allow for any rigid stance on ideology. The huge amount of money expended cannot allow politicians to profess any ideology(Sunday Tribune, 2015). When you get to power you're in a race against time you want to recoup your investment. No wonder why the Nigerian politician can go to the extent of borrowing billions of Naira from bank or other financial institution and spend it on political campaigns, rallies

and elections with the believe that when they get to power they will make up within the shortest time. This eventually makes them to lose the focus in fulfillment of their electioneering campaigns manifesto.

Another problem with these democratic rules is reckless spending on the part of the executives and the legislatures. Many foreign trips are being embarked upon by the president, governor of various state and even the local government chairmen as well as legislative bodies in all levels of government. Such trips will be accompanied with large entourages while huge amount of money goes into payment of travel allowances and accommodation. Many irrelevant political offices are created by the political leaders and such offices attract juicy benefits such as costly official cars and indecipherable allowances through which the government purse is being drained. Such spending has negative impacts on the developmental programme of the government. This often results to abandoning the provision of social amenities and infrastructural development which would have benefited the urban populace.

Today many roads in most of the urban cities are in deplorable condition, the issue of electricity has become worrisome. People are suffering for high rate of electricity tariff without deriving real benefit of what they paid for. Many small scale business had folded up which had equally caused many big and multinational companies to pack up, while some relocated to our neighboring countries such as Ghana and Benin Republic.

Conclusion

It could be inferred from the above discussion that neither the military nor the current democratic rule has made any reasonable transformation and development in the urban areas in Nigeria. In Nigeria, adherence to the democratic norms and practices is anathema. This had impaired the capacity of democracy to meet citizen's needs and demands (Garba & Abubakar, 2013:203).

The most serious problems confronting most of the urban cities and their inhabitants during the military regimes are still persisting in this democratic dispensation, these problems include the followings: Inadequate financial resources, lack of employment opportunities, spreading homelessness and expansion of squatter settlements otherwise known as slums, increased poverty and a widening gap between the rich and poor, growing insecurity and rising crime rates, inadequate and deteriorating building stock, services and infrastructure. Other problems include lack of health and educational facilities, improper land use, insecure land tenure, rising traffic congestion, increasing pollution, inadequate water supply and sanitation, an increasing vulnerability to disaster and diseases. All these have seriously challenged the capacity of government at all levels to realize socio- economic development and environmental protection, which are all components of urban development

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