

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: IMPERATIVES FOR ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the nexus between good governance as imperative for attainment of sustainable development goal one in Nigeria. The study employed the pluralist theoretical perspectives to elucidate the constraints of governance in Nigeria's socio-political milieu. The paper highlighted dilemma of a political leader in a democratic setting in Nigeria. The findings revealed that complexity and multiplicity of ethno-religious issues are major constraints to enduring democracy and good governance in Nigeria. These phenomena are also found to be the bane of Nigeria's public policy implementation as the process results most often, in poor, callous and haphazard implementation and abandonment due to disagreement, policy, inconsistency, corruption, indiscipline, contractual failures and over lapping jurisdiction. We adopted the descriptive research method in which we used materials from magazines, newspapers, journals, text books and internet sources to explain these constraints in the attainment of sustainable goals in Nigeria. The paper recommended among other things, that democratic principles in Nigeria should be rooted in the norms and values of the constituent peoples of Nigeria. And that as a culture, it has to be imbibed from infancy, hence the need to make it part of our educational curriculum, separate and distinct as a course of study which should be measured in terms of popular participation, transparency, adherence to regulations rather than control of governance, tolerance and acceptance of diverse perspectives.

Keywords: democracy, good governance, pluralism, tolerance, sustainable development.

Introduction

In today's globalized world, the dominant values being propagated by civilized liberal democracies of western Europe and the Americans are democracy, good governance, human rights, accountability, orderliness, transparency in governance and other such values that contribute in raising the standard of living of people, and at best, make for sustainable development (Nwogwugwu, 2005). Even among world institutions such as the United Nations, IMF and World Bank, evidence of democratic principles and good governance standards are preconditions for international aid assistance to needy country (World Bank, 1999).

Countries that are resistant to the democratic ethos are seen as anti-democratic states, the experience political violence, economic retrogression and

palpable lack of development when considered against the apparent indicators for assessing rate of development for any country. Dudley Seer (1900-1983), once gave three indicators for assessing rate development for any country. According to him, high rate of poverty, unemployment and inflation are three indicators by which any country's development initiative can be measured. According to him, if two of the above indicators are on increase, then there is no development. Regrettably, the three indicators are on the increase in most third world countries. In Nigeria for instance, there is galloping inflation as cost of food items today have gone up beyond the reach of an average Nigerian. There is high rate of unemployment and grinding poverty (World Bank, 2010) all because of unstable democratic practices, negligence to expert opinions of technocrats and abuse of power resulting in corruption and insurgence ravaging the country today (Liolio, 2013).

It is against this backdrop, that the study examines the role of good governance in attainment of sustainable development goal one in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Generally, there exist a conceptual dilemma in the explanation of social science terms including good governance and democracy (Essien, 2010). Therefore, the above terms shall be explained to conform to the interest and scope of this paper. Despite the different shades of views on these concepts, there exists a conceptual consensus amongst scholars on the meaning of the concepts. We shall look at them one after the other.

Decision-making is the central element of democracy and is the key to a taxonomical evaluation of political system. As the engine of all political life, it is the classificatory principles of all political systems (Ejiofor, 1981). Regimes can be classified into authoritarian, liberal or democratic according to number of those involved in the key decision-making processes and manner in which they are again, open or restricted. This is also related to the degree of readiness with which they admit those in whose interest the decisions are made (Ejiofor, 1981).

The basic questions to ask when considering a democratic system are how many are involved in its authoritative decision-making processes? In what manner are they involved? How do they play their roles? Can people share power and context power freely? As a functional category, what structures take control of decision-making? The above questions are pertinent in view of the prevailing circumstances in Nigeria's elective and appointive positions in government. It is more so, as policy decisions are chiefly made within the conversion mechanism of the system and its dynamic portray the true type of political system. It is not enough therefore, to define democracy, straight away as "government of the people, by the people and for the people" according to Abraham Lincoln, or as "an ideology", a "concept" or a "theory" by Abdellaf as noted by Essien (2010) without vigorously asking oneself the above questions. This is because even the then Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler claimed to be democratic when all authoritarian decisions were made through and by him alone. Any good definition of democracy, must therefore, underlie the sovereign will of the peoples.

Good governance describes how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realization of human right (World Bank 2010). Good governance expresses the process by which decisions are made and implemented. It is concerned for the most parts, by the implementation of policies. The concept often emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies and political bodies with viable economies and political bodies (UNESCAP, 2009). Good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy-making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; a strong civil society participating in public affairs, and all behaving under the rule of laws (World Bank 1994). In practice, good governance involves promoting the rule of laws, tolerance of minority and opposition groups, transparent political processes, an independent judiciary, an impartial police force, a military that is strictly subjects of civilian control, a free press and vibrant civil society institutions, as well as meaningful elections. Good governance means respect for human rights (Koffi Annan). As can be seen by the definition given by the then international revered United Nations scribe, there exists a very strong tie or relationship between good governance and democracy to the extent that each guarantees and reinforces the other. The link is inseparable, as good governance defines democracy in action and vice versa. They complement each other and are mutually reinforcing.

In summary, therefore, the nexus between democracy and good governance is that, whereas good governance is the independent variable (the effect variable). Good governance determines and colours the nature of any democratic rule. Although common logic will place democracy” as the independent variable or determinant of good governance, it is not so, because when looked at critically, one will, but accept the fact that good governance which entails reduction of poverty, provision, and access to good drinking water, provision and access to education (free education) and creation of employment opportunities including provision of medicare, especially for HIV/AIDS scourge, malaria and tuberculosis etc are indices of good governance which in the long run will ensure happiness for greater number of persons and mass participation in government policies and programmes, and widening of political space for decision-making, in a word, democracy (Chukwurah, 2004). Democracy therefore, is measured by the extent to which the citizenry can take part in decision making, enjoy freedom from threat, preserve his human security, and “take part in the creation of public goods from which all can benefit and none can be excluded (Nye, 2013, p. 70).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is officially known as transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development is a set of 17 “Global Goals”with 169 targets between them. Spearheaded by the United Nations through deliberative process involving its 193 members, as well as global civil society, the goals are contained in paragraph 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015(United Nations Official Document, 2015). The resolution is a broader intergovernmental agreement that acts as the post 2015 Development agenda (Successor to the Millennium Development Goals). The SDGs

build on the principles agreed upon under Resolution A/RES/66/288, popularly known as the future we want. It is a non binding document released as a result of Rio+20 conference held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil (United Nations Official Document, 2015).

The adopted 17 SDGs are enumerated as follows: Goal 1: No poverty- End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal 2: Zero Hunger- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Goal 3: Good Health and well being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all ages. Goal 4: Quality Education- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 5: Gender Equality- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 6: Clean Water and sanitation- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (United Nation Development Programme, 2015). Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities- Reduce income, inequality within and among countries. Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Goal 12: Responsible consumption and Production- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Goal 13: Climate Action- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy. Goal 14: Life Below Water- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Goal 15: Life on Land- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity. Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions- Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nation Development Programme, 2015).

Theoretical framework: Pluralist Theory.

The pluralist theoretical perspective is considered quite appropriate in the discussion of democracy and good governance as they affect Nigeria, and of how a favourable environment created in the process, can not only be germane for sustainability of government policies and programmes but will conduce in the overall achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

The theory of pluralism espouses diversity in a society containing many interest groups and in a government containing competing units of power. This is exemplified in the statement made by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton in their

federalist commentaries on the 15th paper on the American constitution. Thus, the opined:

In a large and varied nation, no single interest group could control the government. Even if there were majority interest, it would be unlikely to capture all the national agencies of government, the house of representatives, the senate, presidency, and federal judiciary; each of which was chosen in a different way by a different constituency for a different term of office.

In the word of Arthur Bentley (1948), politics is a high level activity carried on largely by groups that somewhat reflect or represent the underlying forces in the society. There is no idea which is not a reflection of social activity.

Bentley observed that if a group is defined in terms of activity rather than a collection of individuals, then there is something which gives direction to this activity, something the members share in common, feel strongly about and seek to protect. This according to him is interest, and for Bentley, it is central to the understanding of politics. Pluralism presupposes that governmental policy is a compromise between the various interest groups involved, and that policy is an outcome of the pressures and shifts in the balance of social and political influence (Schattsneider, 1990, cited in Ikpe 2010). It follows therefore that no one group is sufficiently powerful to control the output of government in the face of competition from other interest groups. In the context of Nigerian society grappling with the pressures of monumental diversity, cultural factors, religious sentiments, poverty and corruption are the major obstacles towards achievement of sustainable development goals. This is so because the complexity and multiplicity of ethnic groups is compounded by an equal multiplicity and complexity of religious beliefs of the peoples of Nigeria (Ogunna, 1999).

Proposition: Democracy in Nigeria is antithetical to good governance. It is incontrovertible that good governance and transparency in good governance are the keys to the sustainability of democracy. Democracy manifest when a political leader who himself is blameless and transparent musters strong political will to carry out decisive action against the offender of the law. Corruption has been identified as a canker worm in Nigerian society. The ability of any such leader to fight decisively this social malaise that has soiled the name of Nigeria will result in democracy. This will lead to good governance, and in turn, good governance when sustained under a democratic setting is capable of impacting positively in the lives of the citizenry. Essien (2010), noted that democracy though coveted system of government, can be a hindrance instead of a springboard for the achievement of good governance in political system especially, in a pluralist system such as Nigeria. It has been shown that though democracy is the most coveted system of government and also a universal aspiration, it is not a sine qua non for good governance (Essien 2010). This is because one factor which has continually hampered good governance in Nigeria is the process through which managers of public affairs has been elected into governance. Our

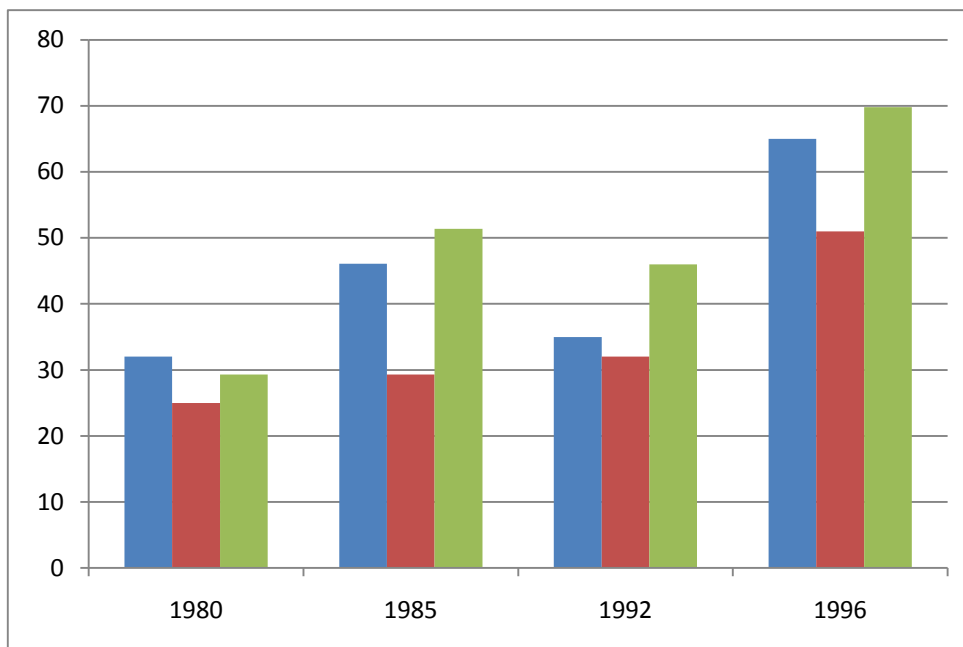
electoral process have consistently been hamstrung by rigging, electoral fraud, lack of internal democracy among political parties (where by corrupt and derelict politicians), and malpractice of all descriptions. Ultimately, this will lead to putting the wrong persons into the management of public affairs (Essien, 2010). There is no gainsaying the fact that when the wrong persons are in government, development will be suppressed for selfish interest and there would be abuse of public trust, thus leading to underdevelopment. It is evident as noted earlier that among the evils standing in the way of realizing and consolidating the gains of the millennium development goal in Nigeria is corruption. We have heard and seen all manners of probes, from the privatization probe to the power probe and more recently, the fuel subsidy probe but none of the culprits (embezzlers and fraudsters) have been successfully prosecuted (Ajakemo, 2009). The answer is not far-fetched. The problem hinges on the prebendal politics of Nigeria which is traceable to the pluralism of Nigerian society. No sooner are these culprits charged to court than they are granted bail and thereafter, long adjournments are given which will stifle the indictments in the process (Egwim, 2011). It is heartening however, hearing from Mr. President Muhammadu Buhari that fighting corruption is one of the cardinal objectives of his government. Everyone is expectant that this government will just do that. It is hoped that this policy statement will not go the way of others expressed in the manner in view of the peculiar nature of Nigeria. At the same time, we hoped that such move will not be used to hound perceived enemies or used as a vendetta against political opponents.

Gains of the Millennium Development Goals and need for sustainability of these goals.

Nigeria made giant strides in her effort to realise the eight-point agenda of the MDGs between 2000 and 2015. Such gains are in the areas of primary and secondary education where the hitherto male child drop out syndrome were tackled through the states and federal governments' Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy, improvement on child and maternal care and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), poverty reduction programmes such as the SUREP, Youth Must Work, NAPEP etc, achievement of global partnership, and gender balance. These efforts are lofty but much is still desired at least in the area of industrialization, unemployment and poverty scourge. For example, the United Nations Human Development Report of 2007, 70.2% of Nigerians live on less than 1 dollar per day. Roughly over 20 million Nigerians have no access to 20 litres of safe water, and most unfortunately, it is estimated that rural households spend up to 1 hour 30 minutes a day to collect water firewood.

Poverty Trends in Nigeria

Figure 1: Poverty trends National, Rural and Urban (1980 to 1996)



Source: poverty profile for Nigeria, 1980-1996 Federal office of statistics (FOS).

Focusing on the above figure, it is evident that poverty is more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas. We can also see that rural poverty which increased by 22% in the period 1980-1992 but skyrocketed in the following four year period-1992-1996. We can also see that in 1980, the proportion of poor people in rural areas was 29.3%, it rose to 51.4% in 1985 and subsequently, falls to 46.1% in 1992. According to the source and deducing from the graph, we can see that by 1996, the rural population in poverty has increased to 69.8%.

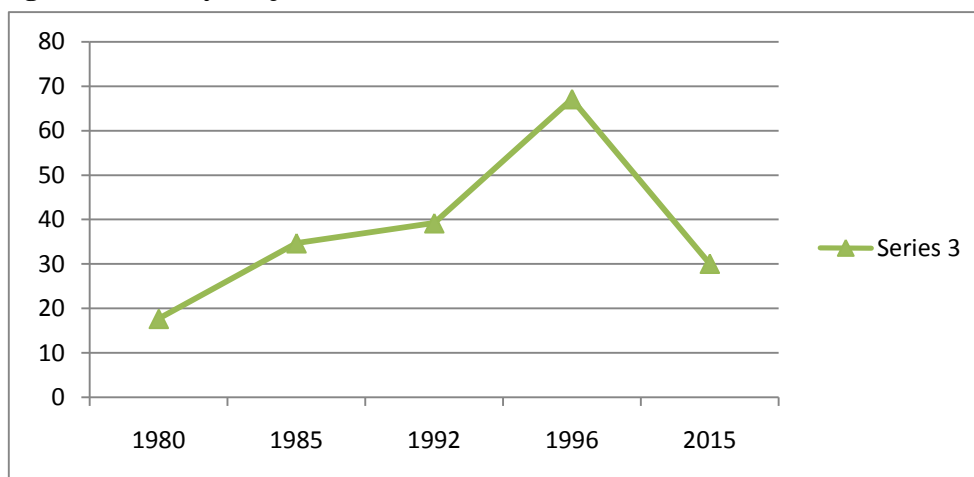
The above figures indicate that the gains of the economic measures (SAP) of 1986 to 1992 during General Ibrahim Babangida regime went more to the rural people than to the urban populace. A survey carried out by the Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) confirms that rural area gained more during the early period of the Structural Adjustment programme. Summarily, between 1980 and 1996, rural poverty was higher than urban poverty. Let us consider figure 2 on poverty projection in 2015.

Table 1: National Millennium Development Goals Report 2004.

year	Poverty level (%)					Estimated Total population (million)	Population in poverty
	National	Urban	Rural	Male headed	Female headed		
1980	28.1	17.2	28.3	29.2	27.0	65.0	17.7
1985	46.3	37.8	51.4	47.3	38.1	75.0	34.7
1992	42.7	37.5	46.0	43.1	39.9	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	58.2	69.8	66.5	58.5	102.3	67.1
2015 (low population growth)	21.4					140.9	30.1
2015 (median population growth)	21.4					178.5	30.1
2015 (high population growth)	21.4					189.2	40.4

Source: Poverty profile for Nigeria 1980-1998. Federal Office of Statistics (FOS). Based on a projected population figure of 178.5 million by 2015, going by the 1992 estimate, the proportion of people living in poverty is expected to decline to 21.4% by 2015. Therefore, in view of the above data and based also on the projected population figures of both low and high variants, and a poverty incidence of 21.4% the population in poverty would range from 30.1 million to 40.4 million. This can also be expressed graphically thus:

Figure 2: Poverty Projection in millions



Source: Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) publications.

Challenges to Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

The challenges on the poverty reduction in Nigeria are many in view of the “multi-dimensional causes of poverty-which range from social, economic, political, and cultural to environmental factors. These challenges include:

- i. Poor access to employment opportunities;
- ii. Inadequate physical assets such as land and capital and minimum access by the poor especially women to credit even on a small scale;
- iii. Poor access to the means of supporting rural development;
- iv. Poor access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services;
- v. Low endowment of human capital;
- vi. Destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity;
- vii. Poor access to assistance for those living at their margin and those victimized by disasters; and
- viii. Lack of participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of development programmes.

On the Universal Basic Education policy, regrettably, about 51% of adult Nigerians are uneducated (UNDR, 2007). Incidence of child mortality is still very high in Nigeria. ” It is believed that for every 1000 births in Nigeria, 201 die almost immediately” (UNDR, 2007). On malaria and tuberculosis, available statistics states that malaria is still one of the leading causes of death in Nigeria. This has not even been mediated by the roll-back malaria policy of the Federal Government. Children under 5 years and women are the most vulnerable. Despite the introduction insecticides-treated mosquito nets, and new formulations on malaria drugs, the scourge is still prevalent as 70% of Nigerian do not have access to it due to high cost. It is hoped that with sustained effort, (at least in the area of fighting corruption) the shortfalls in the 2000-2015 MDGs will adequately be tackled in the preceding years for sustainable human and National development.

Summary

We have used pluralist theory to analyse the constraints of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The theory brought to the force, the helplessness of our political leaders under democratic dispensation where interest organized around religion and ethnicity most often find expression. It is under a democratic government in Nigeria that a variety of interests ignored or repressed over a long period (especially during military regimes) because of lack of institutional channels through which they could be expressed rear their ugly heads (Dowse and Huges, 1972, cited in Ikpe, 2010). These interests are usually disruptive. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is a classical example. After all, evils that were tolerated when the situation was inevitable become intolerable once an escape is suggested.

Conclusion

The paper strongly believes that democracy remains a coveted and universal aspiration through which good governance and sustainable development goal (s) can be attained if the rules are observed. On the other hand, it is the position of this paper that bad governance is also possible under a formal democratic structure such as the one witnessed during the regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2004), Essien, 2004).

Recommendations

1. Promotion of rural development should be given utmost priority with emphasis on agriculture and agro industrial development.
2. On education, there should be increased resources allocation to education and social services.
3. Fight against corruption in Nigeria should be intensified in order to consolidate the gains of the MDGs necessary for attainment of sustainable development goal one among others (SDGs).
4. Democracy in Nigeria should be rooted in the norms and values of the people. As a culture, it has to be imbibed from infancy, hence the need to make it part of our educational curriculum, separate and distinct as a course of study.
5. It is the view of this paper that in addition to global partnership, an active strategic collaboration with a strong foreign power (proposed Nigeria-America bi-National collaboration) capable of rising above ethno-religious sentiments be entered into will bring about enduring democracy, good governance and sustainability of these value in Nigeria. Such collaboration could be medium term, say, ten years to test-run it or as may be deemed fit by the authorities. It can be abrogated as in the 1962 Anglo-Nigeria defence pact) if found counterproductive in the long run.

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