Democracy and its Impacts on Indigenous Political System in Nigeria: Consequences on Community and Rural Transformation

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Abstract
This paper examine the impacts of democracy on Nigeria's indigenous political system and its consequences on community and rural transformation. It has highlighted critical issues addressed by indigenous political institutions since pre-colonial time and examines the factors responsible for the changing role of these institutions in the post-colonial period of Nigerian history especially after the 1976 local government fiscal reforms. It specifically examines the factors responsible for the failure of the current democratic system in addressing the crises in rural and community transformation since returns to civil rule 1999.

Keywords - *Democracy, Indigenous Political System, Consequences, Community and Rural Transformation*

Introduction

After close to twenty years of return to democracy in Nigeria, rural and community transformation is virtually considered to be a difficult task to achieve hence the political system has been short-changed by the current democratic development which is characterized by leadership crises including corruption, mismanagement of public funds, political, ethno-religious and communal conflict as well desire for accumulation of illegitimate wealth by those in the position of leadership.

From education to provision of portable drinking water, improvement of primary health care system, security and provision of road network, rural communities in Nigeria have been denied the needed attention by the political class. This informed the decision why the discussion around the potentials of rural and community development only emerged to the remembrance of the Nigerian politicians when they launched their political campaign rallies after every four years interval (Bello, 2018).

It is not as if the democratic governments in Nigeria are not aware of the infrastructural deficit suffered by communities and rural areas in Nigeria but there is alleged deliberate attempt to deny these rural communities their right to essential development so that politicians can have stocks of promises to make during their campaign rallies. This is because the presentation of their campaign manifestations always captures community to community needs and the question to be investigated by this research is why is transformation of these rural areas and local communities not achieved in Nigeria within the limited time frame?.

Many researchers who have investigated issues around community and rural development in Nigeria tried to connect this emerging development to the total disconnection between government policy plans as it relates to the rural and community development and traditional political institutions. Though the local government reforms of 1976 in Nigeria has refused to provide for these traditional political institutions the powers to participate in law and decision making processes as it affects the lives of the people of Nigerian that leaves under the territorial custody of these local emirs, kings and native chiefs (Saifullahi, 2018).

The current situation in Nigeria today had it that, communities and rural areas remain under-developed because government has succeeded in concentrating all aspect of its development plans in the bigger cities and local government headquarters. This partly leaves majority of the local population living in the rural areas to undermine the powers of the democratic governments as against the usual tradition before the independence.

The objective of this position paper among other things is to assess the extent of the connection between democracy and indigenous political system in Nigeria with special references to community and rural transformation. It also aimed at assessing reasons why democratic governments in Nigeria have not made the needed effort in addressing the challenges of rural and community transformation over time. The paper adopted the use of mixed method of literature review and use of structured oral interviews in accessing data for discussion and analysis.

Indigenous Political System in Nigeria an Overview

Indigenous political system according to (Anka, 2017), is a political structure that is established to guide social contracts between people and their legitimate institutions of authority. The system presumably survived since the beginning of state creation. It is a political structure that shaped human existence and define the social contract between man and his immediate state of legitimate authority (Funke, 2013).

In Nigeria, traditional political institutions include states and societies that existed in various geo-political locations which made up what is today independent states of Nigeria. As argued by (Anka, 2017), they include the Emirates, Chiefdoms, the palaces of the Obas and kings across the South and Northern parts of the country. They represent such political institutions that are govern by either people of traditional or spiritual status and they possesses such sound and active political structures that are tight together to constitute an absolute authority which decide the Socio-political and economic transformation of the people.

The emirates and palaces of the Emirs in Northern Nigeria for instance, are very good example of these traditional political institutions. An assessment of the emergence of big political cities like Kano, Katsina, Daura, Zazzau, Zamfara in North- western Nigeria, Kanem Borno, Katagun, Bidda, Nupe land in the North East and Central Nigeria one must believed in the powers of these institutions in terms of regulating human interaction. The political history of these cities is shaped by the records of political stability, economic development and social transformation which were provided to the people by these traditional political structures.

Though many people have argued on the legitimacy of these political structures especially looking at the manners at which the system was made to be hereditary, it is an open fact that, despite its dictatorial nature, the system facially allow for all inclusive participation of the citizens on matters of economic and social development (Jamil 2019). This is evident from the semi-political structures that are created under the emirate system for instance which provides support to these political institutions at the centre in terms of decision making.

On the agriculture in hausaland for instance, the kings take the lead in ensuring that citizens have fully participated in the all year round farming. It is part of the primary responsibilities of every king to motivate his subjects to embark on farming activities and also secure his people from hunger. (Jamilu, 2018) argued, in those days every family member took to farming as a thing of necessity. Family members in small communities own an extended family farm popularly known as "Gandu" in hausa language and the family farm serve as the main source of food to the entire family. Though not all members of the family embarks on commercial farming due to limitation in terms of resources, majority depend on the proceeds of what was harvested to arrange for other seasonal social activities such as wedding and naming ceremonies among other things.

This traditional political system equally allow for the development of an enhance security network among states hence, the primary responsibility of the king is to secure states and provide peaceful atmosphere for people to leave. As argued by (Jamilu 2018), one of the significance of the traditional political system in the pre-colonial Nigeria is adequacy of its security architecture. All states in the pre-colonial Nigeria for instance have their own internal security arrangement and that because the king and members of his palace are very well familiar with their political environment they track down every aspects of internal security challenges such as stealing, banditry, robbery and other immoral behavious that are considered threat to the security and safety of the people. On the other dimension, (Aliyu 2018) argued, states in Nigeria before the advent of the modern system passes through series of transformation because of the vibrant nature of their security network, there are people assigned to take charge of the security of the political environment and the community police which involved the use of local vigilante groups effectively take charge of the internal security of their locality and report to the palace on the daily security occurrences for action.

Traditional political system in Nigeria also promote trade and commerce and because of the love for economic self-reliance, local people get themselves involved in to small and medium trading activities and go to the extent of extending their business network to other neighboring communities. (Adamu, 2018) argued, in the early days of the economic history of the Hausa state, it was evident that, Hausa people went as per as Ilorin and parts of the South Western Nigeria to embark on trading activities with their Yoruba counterparts. The Gwanja and popular cola nut trade between the states in the North and Southern Nigeria is one of the critical economic activity that strengthen inter-group relations among several independent states of the pre-colonial Nigeria. Community development is also another area that made the Nigeria's indigenous political systems very relevant among people. Though the king led the initiative in every aspect of community development he coordinated the provision of rural road network and funds it through tax collection, donation, charity, endowment and citizen participation. Parts of the aspect of community development also, the king ensure that measures are taken in preventing the outbreak of major diseases by encouraging environmental sanitation, agricultural and cultural shows as well as traditional and cultural display including local boxing, dancing and music.

In general sense, traditional political systems in Nigeria are clear reflections of the acceptability of the

political system by the people. Though as mentioned earlier, the system is grown alongside state creation, people accepted it in totality because it represents their clear manifest of community and rural transformation.

Democracy and Nigerian Experience

Democracy is a western oriented political system championed through globalization and indeed imposed often states to tight them in to the global political movement. Its application among third world states has been considered unsuccessful because of the influence of the traditional political systems which has been connected to the people for long (Babagana, 2012). The experience of democracy and its practice in Nigeria has remain a topic of debate among academics especially with the bitter experiences of leadership failure, unending corruption, militarization of the political system, electoral violence, social insecurity and terrorism, poverty unemployment as well as ethnic and religious violence. The Nigerian experience of democracy since 1999 has been a very sad story to tell hence, Nigeria is still battling with numerous crises of getting the political system work in the best interest of the people.

The central point of discussion is to assess the bottom line of the failure of democratic system in Nigeria in what many people termed as the question of leadership choice and service delivery. As argued by (Funke, 2013), Nigerians have lost confidence in their democratic system because; its choice of leadership is characterized by incompetency, political imposition, and corruption. Majority of those elected in the leadership position in Nigeria are not destined naturally to be leaders and because of their lack of experience, they succeeded in running a system that is weak and in-effective in catering for the socio-economic and political need of the people. In one of the version of the debate, (Laraba, 2015) argued, the predicament with the Nigerian state especially the insecurity, corruption, political and religious violence as well as ethnic jingoism were deliberately created as a result of the failure of leadership institutions to reposition things and make them work facially like during our pre-colonial days.

Nigeria remains in social and economic quagmire because corruption has eaten deep in to the fabric of the mindset of its people. Many corruption cases that are considered tragic to the development of the country are either abandoned mid-way in to their investigation and trial or rather terminated as a result of influence by some political power brokers within the government or particularly changes in the regime. The most popular and celebrated cases of corruption that are not yet determined in Nigeria include, N16b power scandal involving the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, the arm scandals involving former Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki and many other powerful politicians in Nigeria, the case of

Halliburton, the Scandal involving the former Minister of Petroleum Dezieni Alinson Madikwe, another scandal involving former GMD of NNPC Andrew Yakubu, among many other cases. The weaknesses of our laws and investigative agencies to ensure speedy trial and determination of these corruption cases remain a source of concern to many Nigerians.

Frequent military intervention in to the Nigerian politics is also considered as another factor militating against the successes of democracy and democratic rule in Nigeria. As argued by (Laraba, 2015), because of the frequent military intervention in to the Nigerian politics, our experience of development is usually hampered by inconsistent change of governments and unnecessary review of government policies and programmes. Every government come with its own perception and imagery of the way things should be done in the country and this attitude usually promote an act of creating projects that are not useful to the people as well as abandoning of critical projects started without completion by another government.

Electoral Violence is also another challenge facing Nigeria under the current democratic dispensation. Though democracy allow for conduct of election, the process is always marred by violence especially during campaigns and elections. Since 1999 when Nigeria returns to Civil rule again, hundreds of lives of innocent people have been lost to several cases of electoral violence which are either triggered by the politicians themselves or their agent. As argued by (Laraba, 2015), even though our electoral laws in Nigeria are weak, the manners at which we go about conducting elections leaves a lot that need to be desired. We losses hundreds of lives to electioneering campaigns, people have been made to be the target of electoral violence including abduction and kidnapping and after result are declared those who feel dissatisfied always decided to go violent.

Social and religious crises are also among the most serious challenges that characterized our Nigerian democratic experience. Because some sections of the political divide feels they are marginalized of their political and economic opportunities, they always try to create state of uncertainty that lead to the outbreak of social conflicts. In the view of (Murja, 2017), Nigeria from the return of the civil rule in 1999 to date had experienced over fifty various cases of religious and social conflict. These conflicts in her views are avoidable only if the political system can provide an avenue for justice, fairness and all-inclusiveness. These social and religious conflicts always come with abundance of social and economic consequences. (Murja, 2017) argued, an estimate of over N55 billion naira is lost to the social and religious conflict in Maiduguri North Eastern parts of Nigeria since the beginning of the Boko Haram conflict in 2009 in spites of other unaccounted losses of houses, shelters and places of business.

Our democratic experience as a nation also indicated that, democracy lead to the increase in our poverty strength as well multiplication of hungry people in the country. Estimate made by (Murja, 2017) has shown that, eight out of every ten person in Nigeria are either poor or extremely poor people with uncertainty of having access to three square meals of nutritional food a day. This according to her, added in to the increasing chances of social crimes and unending class conflict among people in Nigeria. Ranking often ranking, Nigeria in spites of its abundance of wealth is ranked as one of the poorest nation in Africa and among the five poorest in the world.

Challenges of Community and Rural Transformation

Community and rural transformation is seen as almost one of the most invisible thing to happen under the Nigeria's democratic experience. This is evident because, researches have shown that, successive democratic governments are unable to bring the required socio- economic and infrastructural transformation that are capable of changing the lives of the people in the rural communities. (Gide, 2018) argued, unlike before when rural communities in Nigeria are the target of democratic and military governments, the present situation has succeeded in completely ignoring rural transformation in their political agenda.

Today in Nigeria there are many rural communities that do not have access to portable drinking water, and their people evidently goes to the stream or unprotected local wells to scout for drinking water. States and local governments in Nigeria sometimes do not allocate the much that are needed in terms of provision of portable drinking water to its populace and even where international charity groups come to the rescue of local people to support them, corruption of the political class always make the intervention impossible hence money meant for these types of works are stolen by the government agents. As captured by (Aliyu, 2018), the only functional International project that aimed at providing portable drinking water to the people of the rural areas is in Nigeria (RUWASSAN) it's a World Bank Assisted project targeting rural accesse to portable drinking water by the rural communities in Nigeria. But corruption in Nigeria had almost make it impossible for the project to deliver to the satisfaction of the people. Contracts for the sinking of boreholes are awarded to family and friends who in turned whisked away the money and abandoned the projects. And even where the projects are executed, the facilities installed or provided hardly last for longer due to their sub-standard nature and poor management and execution of the project.

Take example of rural road projects again, it is evidently clear that, access to road network is parts of the rural transformation every typical Nigerian want to enjoy. Before now people in the rural areas does not necessarily required asphalt or stone base feeder roads, what they needed in some places are roads that provides access to network of other rural communities with relative ease. As captured my (Murja. 2017) there is no politician in Nigeria who has not made promise for provision of access road to people of his communities during campaign tours. In her further argument she captured that, promises for access road usually covered up to 60% of campaign promises made by politicians in Nigeria since return to democracy in 1999. On the availability of these rural road (Murja, 2017) argued, an estimate of 66,7% of communities within remote locations in Nigeria are not accessible by good road network.

Access to health care facilities is also another challenge of rural transformation in Nigeria, This is an issue because, going by the data of maternal mortality and child morbidity, it was clear that, majority of the cases recorded are solidly from the rural areas. According to the world Health Organization report on Nigeria, hundred death are recorded in every one thousand birth 100/1000 ratio and that, 95.6% of the cases are recorded in remote rural communities where there are either no availability of primary health facilities, or human resources for health. Nigerian governments at all levels in the views of(Gide, 2018) have failed to give adequate attention to the provision of primary health care facilities at the rural communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this position paper has been able to establish the simple fact that, democracy as an existing political system has failed to provide answers to the challenges of rural transformation in Nigeria in spite of the wide gap and unending demand from the rural community people. It is also clear from the argument in the paper that, transformation of Nigeria in such a negative dimension contributed to the leadership questions Nigerians ask especially the unending cases of corruption, political, ethnic and religious violence. It has also established how the disconnection between the traditional political institutions and democracy influenced the reversal of the earlier effort made to sustain community and rural reforms in Nigeria.

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