

## **PREFACE**

This term paper takes a critical look at the notion in which different programmes, policies and projects being undertaken by government for the welfare of the citizens are being presented under the guise of dividends of democracy. The paper notes that what should actually constitute the basis for determining democracy dividends must be based on the extent to which power is being exercised by the people, through their ability to elect those that will govern them, and their ability to affect the different programmes and policies of government through their active involvement in binding decision making. It argues that democracy and political participation must extend beyond voting rights alone to include other things such as the peoples control of their leaders, their actions and the ability to contribute in the process of governance. The paper concludes that the citizens cannot truly enjoy any meaningful dividends of democracy except through popular participation and the consent of the people.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Democracy and Nigeria are like Siamese twins; though conjoined, they are uncomfortable and under intense pressure that could result in all forms of hurt, even death. Although, democracy may not be strange to an overwhelming percentage of Nigerians; what may be strange to them is the brand of democracy that invests, first and foremost, in human and material resources for the purposes of political stability, economic viability, scientific advancement, technological breakthrough, educational development and life-enhancing social services. Given the general optimism that Nigeria was going to be the bastion of democracy in Africa following her independence from Britain in 1960, one should normally expect that by now democracy should be deeply rooted and institutionalised in the country. Ironically and unfortunately, Nigeria, as far as the practise and delivery of dividends of liberal democracy is concerned, is yet a cripple that can barely stand let alone walk or run.

It is no longer news that Nigeria is one of the developing countries in the world owing to her diverse human and material resources. Yet, it is faced with so many social ills due to leadership problems such as: bad governance, lack of inclusion of masses in the decision making processes, economic imbalance, power tussle, control and domination by those in power and their cronies among others which have over the years been the bane of her development.

Nigerian democracy is a brand of democracy that spends so much to accomplish so little (where and when it achieves anything at all). Second, it invests in the comfort of officials rather than in human and material resources. In fact, the welfare of the common man occupies the bottom rung on the ladder of the priorities of the anchors of Nigerian democracy (Root, 2005). Nigeria has experienced an unbroken democratic rule from 1999 to 2019, a period of twenty years and the highest stretch of period that the state has been ruled by non-uniform men

since the country gained political independence in 1960. Within these years' leaders in government talk about democracy dividends and the people yearn and cry for the translation of democracy to development, why have Nigeria's 20 years uninterrupted democracy not translated to development? According to Sharma (2007), one of the most robust findings of some two decades of research on democratisation is that durable democracy is strongly correlated with economic development. The conventional wisdom is that democracies have embedded institutional advantages that support economic development.

Nigeria is the fourth world largest democracy with a population of over 160 million and world sixth largest oil supplier and blessed with economic potentials (Abdullateef, 2010, Ibrahim, 2013) but majority of its population are poor (Ibrahim, 2013). Democracy does not provide a people with the most skilful governments, but it does that which the most skilful governments often cannot do. It spreads throughout the social body, a restless activity, super abundant force, and energy never found elsewhere, which, however little favoured by circumstances can do wonders. Those are its true advantages, Alexis de Tocqueville as cited by *Nigeria Tribune* (29/5/2001).

Democracy is at the crossroads in Nigeria. National Development also has altogether, only materialized in the inscrutable imaginations of Nigeria's national development planners. Contrary to popular participation, democracy in the Nigerian context means the ability of few people to effectively take control of powers and authorities of governance with or without the choice of those they represent. In order for democracy to be meaningful, it must be characterized or underlined by the principles of openness, representation, accountability, transparency and the defence, protection and preservation of individual and group rights (Vanhanem, 1990).

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

The word Democracy is coined from two Greek words: Demos (the people) and Kratos (rule) which simply means people's rule. In its Greek perception, it means rights of the citizens of the Greek city states to participate directly in an act of governance. Ardo (2000) added that, there is no universally acceptable definition of the word democracy. In the same vein, Chambers Encyclopedia (1970) cited in Jamo (2013) says that, there are different conceptions of democracy and no agreement as to its true nature. Dahl (1956) in the same vein maintains that, there is nothing like democracy but there are democracies. Nwokeji (2003) went further to conclude that not just is there no universal definition of democracy, but none may emerge. However, Jega (2002) observes that, if there is any consensus about what democracy means, it is perhaps in relation to the understanding that it is not personal rule, and that it is different from authoritarian/dictatorial rule. It can also be said that democracy is based on some forms of perception and or representation.

According to American political scientist Larry Diamond, democracy consists of four key elements: a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair election; the active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; protection of the human rights of all citizens; a rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens. Todd Landman, nevertheless, draws our attention to the fact that democracy and human rights are two different concepts and that "there must be greater specificity in the conceptualisation and operationalization of democracy and human rights" (Landman, 2018).

## **2.2 HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA**

After gaining independence in 1960 from Great Britain, Nigeria fell prey to the first of so many military coups in 1966, and then, a civil war. Democracy was briefly restored from 1979 to 1983 to the country, but for most of its independent history, Nigeria was ruled by a series of military juntas. The emergence of democracy in Nigeria on May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo inherited a country suffering economic stagnation and the deterioration of most democratic institutions. Obasanjo, a former general, was admired for his stand against the Abacha dictatorship, his record of returning the federal government to civilian rule in 1979, and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion.

The new President took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks. The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers holding political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, released scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded numerous questionable licenses and contracts left by the previous regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted to overseas accounts.

Communal violence plagued the Obasanjo government since its inception. In May 1999 violence erupted in Kaduna State over the succession of an Emir resulting in more than 100 deaths. In November 1999, the army destroyed the town of Odi, Bayelsa State and killed scores of civilians in retaliation for the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang. In Kaduna in February–May 2000 over 1,000 people died in rioting over the introduction of criminal Shar'ia in the State. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in south-eastern Nigeria. In September 2001, over 2,000 people were killed in inter-religious rioting in Jos. In October 2001, hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in communal violence that spread across

the states of Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. On 1 October 2001 Obasanjo announced the formation of a National Security Commission to address the issue of communal violence. Obasanjo was re-elected in 2003. The new president faces the daunting task of rebuilding a petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement. Additionally, the Obasanjo administration must defuse longstanding ethnic and religious tensions if it hopes to build a foundation for economic growth and political stability. Currently, there is conflict in the Niger Delta over the environmental destruction caused by oil drilling and the ongoing poverty in the oil-rich region.

### **2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF DEMOCRACY**

No consensus exists on how to define democracy, but legal equality, political freedom and rule of law have been identified as important characteristics (O'Donnel, 12005). These principles are reflected in all eligible citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to legislative processes. For example, in a representative democracy, every vote has equal weight, no unreasonable restrictions can apply to anyone seeking to become a representative, and the freedom of its eligible citizens is secured by legitimised rights and liberties which are typically protected by a constitution (Henaff and Tracy, 2001). Other uses of "democracy" include that of direct democracy.

One theory holds that democracy requires three fundamental principles: upward control (sovereignty residing at the lowest levels of authority), political equality, and social norms by which individuals and institutions only consider acceptable acts that reflect the first two principles of upward control and political equality (Kimber, 1989).

## **2.4 NIGERIA AND THE DEMOCRACY INDEX**

In 2010, the Democracy Index score for Nigeria was 3.47, out of the possible 10.0. This shows deterioration in the democracy index over 2008 during which period the country scored 3.53. This is a further deterioration in the index over the 2006 index where Nigeria scored 3.52. In 2006 Nigeria ranked 124 out of 167 countries surveyed. Nigeria maintained the same rank in 2008 but moved up marginally to 123 in 2003. More so, in the area of electoral process and participation, Nigeria scored 2.92 out of 10.0 in 2008 which represented deterioration from 2006 index but increased not much significantly in 2010 with a score of 3.83. In the area of functioning of government, Nigeria consistently maintained 3.21 index in 2010 and 2008 respectively. However, this showed an improvement over 2006 with 1.86.

## **2.5 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

Democratic governance is a machinery of government that allows the voice of the minority to be heard while majority have their way in deciding and addressing various issues that confront them as a people/entity for the good and fairness of all. In the pursuit of this, institutions and stakeholders such as the legislature, judiciary, executive, political parties, private sector, civil society and individuals are expected to play various roles. In this sense, democratic governance brings to the front burner the question of how a society organizes itself to ensure development and progress for all citizens. According to Bello-Imam and Obadan (2004), democratic governance represents the utilization of the power of State based on the consent of the people either directly or indirectly through representation. And that there is room for State institutions to express the will of the State which is generally accepted on all basic issues of socio-economic and policy direction as it relates to the people. Thus, the basic institutional expressions of democratic governance in recent times are; rights to vote and be

voted for, regular election, press and association freedom, rule of law and independence of the Judiciary.

The fundamental features of democratic governance in the recent past in Nigeria has been undermined considering the myriad of contemporary socio-economic and political issues faced by Nigerians. This is at variance with Roberts and Edwards (1991) when they aptly elucidated the features of democratic governance in contemporary times as popular participation, independence of Judiciary, freedoms of press and association, regular elections, separation of powers, checks and balances and obedience to the relevant constitutional provision.

## **2.6 DIVIDEND OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Democracy has become the most fashionable form of governance in the world. In all societies of the world today, the issue is not which political system is appropriate but rather when will society become democratised or fully democratic. The democratisation project is therefore, regarded as the age of civilization that every society should strive to attain rather than a political option among many others (Owolabi, 2001). Democracy has thus been recognized as the only moral and legitimate way through which a society can be administered.

The dividend of democracy are simply the benefits enjoyed by the masses who voted for the government in power. A representative democracy is a structure of government where officials are elected to represent groups of people. These officials then vote on policies, laws, and other items of government business on behalf of the people so that the general population doesn't need to vote on every separate issue as they would in a direct democracy.

Democratic politics and good governance did not fare better in the Second Republic as well as the Third Republic. But since 29 May, 1999, when the Fourth Republic was ushered in, politicians in government have continued to use the phrase "dividends of democracy" which refer to the provisions of material welfare to the people, such as roads, rural electrification,

potable water, improved educational and health facilities, housing, amongst others. However, it is pertinent to note that democracy and good governance in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world cannot be achieved through the mere provisions of material welfare such as roads, jobs, food, electricity, education, health care services and others since they are even easier to provide under authoritarian rule. As Elaigwu (2011) observed:

## **2.7 PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

Over the years, the Nigerian government has failed to harness the vast human and material resources at its disposal to break the cycle of poverty and autocracy that has characterized it since independence in 1960. Thus, the Nigerian state has been constantly struggling between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism, and characterized by ‘the push for development and the pull for underdevelopment, the burden of public corruption and the pressure of accountability’ (Kesselman et al. 1996). And, it has ‘deviated from the known curve of consolidation to de-consolidation’ (Odion-Akhaine et al. 2007). This is traceable to the fact that Nigeria is one of the colonial legacies in the African continent. As an offshoot of the colonial praetors, the Nigerian state retains parts of the authoritarian ethos. Rather than being at the service of the people, it is in the service of the ruling oligarchy (Fagba-debo, 2009).

On October 1, 2011 the Nigerian state celebrated 51 years of independence and specifically, on the 29th of May, 2012 celebrated thirteen years of democracy. For many, it is a fresh period of sober reflection and stock-taking. But the question likely agitating the minds of majority of Nigerians is: After over a decade of democracy, does the nation have any cause to celebrate? Expectedly, the answer is neither here nor there as it depends on which side of the divide one belongs. For optimists, the process could be deemed to be on course and there is every reason to pop champagne. Those in this school of thought believe that having come this far without interruption from the military the fledgling democracy could be safely said to

be gradually and steadily taking roots in the nation. To such people, it does not matter the challenges the process has had to contend with all these years. Arguably, majority of those who would share this view are government functionaries or those who may have held one position or the other since 1999 when democracy was re-introduced in Nigeria. But for the pessimists, rather than celebrate, the situation calls for worry. The nation, in their estimation, has nothing to show for practicing democracy this long. For them, from one sector to the other, Nigeria has arguably fared even better under the protracted military administration. The thinking of those in this group is that the standard of living has worsened under the democratic dispensation. However, in appraising the journey so far, there are several parameters to put in perspective (Jega, 2001).

## **2.8 TOWARDS ENSURING GOOD AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

The symptoms and consequences of bad governance are corruption, injustices, inequity, integration crisis, ethnoreligious feuds and a host of others. Among these, however, in the matter of governance the most critical issues of morality are the issues of corruption. Corruption has generated unimaginable level of poverty. This has further destroyed good governance. Poverty of the vast majority of the populace makes it nearly impossible for them to see their problems clearly, let alone think of their solution. It makes them vulnerable and easy to manipulate. Due to the fact that poverty is also a weapon in the hands of the political elite for further manipulation and exploitation, it is further perpetuated to maintain the grips of the political elites on the society. Therefore, to promote good governance sound anti-corruption policies devoid of rhetoric must be put in place. In addition, the legislature and the judicial arm must be functional and alive to their responsibilities, since a healthy and sound judiciary and legislature are sine qua non for good and democratic governance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 DIVIDEND OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: A MIRAGE OR REALITY

Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian state through its elected or imposed government has not been responsive to the yearnings of its citizens. Rather than being at the service of the people, it has been more of a greedy service of the ruling few (Fagbadebo, 2009). Thus, the sustenance of almost two decades of uninterrupted democratic governance (which is a system of governance globally acclaimed to be the best) in Nigeria calls for concern. However, some people opine that the situation could have been worse if not for the enthronement of democratic government while others feel otherwise. Although many analysts and development partners also assert that the worst form of democratic government is better than the best form of a de facto government, the concern here is how this system has been beneficial to the poor majority in Nigeria.

Democracy thrives where there are free, fair and credible periodic elections with the various actors playing according to the rules. This makes it possible for the governed to effect a change in any government with an unpopular policy and then put in place government that will be responsive and responsible to the plight of the people. This therefore ensures the formulation and implementation of programmes that positively affect the generality of the people including the poor in the society. However, in the Nigerian. This places the poor and vulnerable majority in situation of no option rather than to dance to the tune of the few powerful political leaders for survival.

The quest for democracy and good governance has been a major pre-occupation of the Nigerian state since her independence in 1960. This aspiration has remained elusive due to many challenges, which have continued to undermine the democratization process in the country. These challenges include failure of leadership, corruption, insurgency, etc.

### 3.2 WHY DEMOCRACY IS A MIRAGE IN NIGERIA

- **Failure of Leadership:** Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the country has not had the opportunity of being governed by a willing and ready leader but those that can at best be described as "accidental leaders. These are leaders whom the mantle of leadership fell on them by default not minding their capacity, experience and in most cases, they were neither prepared nor expectant of such huge responsibility. This has been one of the reasons for the country's failures resulting from visionless policies.
- **Impunity:** This is a threat to democracy, which is not measured by the existence of democratic structures but by the promotion of rule of law. Thus, in Nigeria's quest for democracy and good governance, the impunity clause must be expunged from the constitution, in order to domesticate the equality of every Nigerian before the law. These challenges are antithetical to the achievement of democratic culture and good governance. They are no doubt, immense and daunting but not insurmountable, once there is the political will to resolve and overcome them for the enthronement of democracy and good governance in the country.

### 3.2 RECOMMENDATION

In spite of the efforts made since 1960, Nigeria as a nation state has not been able to attend to the socio-economic aspirations and improved welfare of its citizenry. Thus, the elimination of the scourge of poverty has remained a mirage in Nigeria (Obadan, 1997). The enthronement of democracy and good governance in Nigeria are necessary for the socioeconomic and political transformation of the country in the 21st century. Indeed, Nigerians demand good governance, justice, equity, fairness and real development and progress of the country in order to encourage confidence and trust in the polity. To this end, the following measures are suggested to fast-track the process of deepening democracy and the enthronement of good governance in the country:

- There should be deliberate government policies to strengthen democratic institutions like political parties, the National Assembly; the Judiciary; the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); Civil Society; anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); amongst others. These institutions must be allowed to operate freely and effectively to ensure the growth and sustenance of democracy and good governance.
- The fight against corruption must be carried out with total commitment from the political leadership backed by strong political will devoid of lip-service and rhetoric's. Also, there should be a serious drive towards poverty reduction and inequality through people-oriented policies and programmes, which would address the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, health-care services, safe drinking water, electricity, education, employment, amongst others.
- The political leadership in Nigeria must imbibe the culture of leadership by example anchored on selfless service to the people with total commitment and sacrifice. They should not see political office as a means of self-enrichment and personal aggrandizement; There is need for attitudinal change through a rebranding of the country's value system to promote hard work, integrity, honesty, transparency and accountability at all levels of governance. In addition, people should be enlightened and empowered to demand from their elected representatives report of their stewardship;
- Political offices should be made less attractive not to entice money conscious politicians and allow those who are genuinely concerned about rendering service into seeking offices;
- Election is one of the foundation principles of democracy. Elections should thus, be conducted in a free, fair and most transparent manner such that peoples' votes count in the choice of who become their leader.

## **CONCLUSION**

Democracy is among the most popular system of government globally because of the expectation that it facilitates development due to the possession of instruments that support development. However, reality in Nigeria using different indicators revealed that, democracy in the short run. Findings of this study truly indicate that democracy in Nigeria is a mirage and not a reality. The paper has examined the synchrony between democracy and good governance in Nigeria, the challenges and prospects. The analysis suggests that while the country is not oblivious of the crucial importance of democracy and good governance in fast-tracking its development and progress, there are challenges, which tend to undermine their actualization. The paper has therefore, recommended measures to address these challenges in order to enhance the prospects of deepening democracy and good governance in the country; stressing that the time to act is now.

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