

**THE CONDITIONS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE
DECLARATION OF JUNE 12 DEMOCRACY DAY IN NIGERIA:
CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE**

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the rationale behind the declaration of June 12 as democracy day in Nigeria. It is on record that the regimented and autocratic governance process handed over to Nigeria by the colonial lords has not been broken even at independence. This oppressive colonial template was utilized adequately by the Nigeria military institution. This is what account significantly for their dominance in the Political history of Nigeria which subsequently weakened state institutions and other necessary conditions for democratization. Eventually with the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, those entrusted with public fund abused the trust which largely affected democratic consolidation. It is in this regard that this paper raised some fundamental questions as whether Nigeria has met the conditions for democratization leading to the declaration of June 12 democracy day. Using secondary sources, the findings revealed weak state institutions, massive official corruption, and inefficiency in governance, budget padding and uncommitted elites to democratic principles. The paper therefore suggested among others that democracy day be expunged from the internal affairs of Nigeria. The mantle of leadership at all levels of governance should be exchanged unceremoniously within the office accommodation designated for the responsibility for which the mantle is been exchanged.

Introduction

Prior to the introduction of western democracy into the body polity of Nigeria, there were some forms of democratic principles indigenous to the traditional political system of the various ethnic groups that constituted what later became Nigeria after 1914 amalgamation. People who were heir apparent to the traditional throne assume the mantle of leadership based on the social acceptance and customs of the people. This was the practice when colonialism came and subsumed the entire fabric of the cultural society of Nigeria.

Eventually with cultural secularism, the western model of democracy was sold to the world by the western powers. Nigeria was not in isolation from this perceived modern way of governance by the people. This is what informed the conceptualization of democracy as the government of the masses. This concept emanates from Greek word called "Demos -Kratos " Meaning rule by the people and not just people, but the poor people or the majority. It is a system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged. This

system of government creates equal opportunity and placed high premium on individual's merit. It is against this backdrop, that democracy became the most accepted and widely practiced system of governance all over the world. It is not only confined to the formal constituted government of nation states, but even tribal unions, market women, social clubs, faith based and community based organizations finds it expedient to elect their leaders through democratic principles. It is in this regard that, this paper raised some fundamental questions such as, has Nigeria met the conditions for democratization since the collapse of military dictatorship. Are political parties formed based on the similitude of political ideology, Are the Nigerian political elites committed to democracy. In what perspective does Nigerians understand the concept of democracy?. If some or all of these questions are answered in the affirmative, then the declaration of June 12 as democracy day in Nigeria is apt and if otherwise, June 12 is just a mere eulogy for MKO Abiola by the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) to sustain their support and sympathy from the vocal Southwest Region of Nigeria midwife by one political lord, Jagaban Borgu, Ahmed Bola Tinubu.

Conceptualization of Democracy in Perspectives

Democracy like other social science concepts has been defined in different perspectives by authors, scholars and analysts. It is instructive to note that each of the conceptualizations attempts to guarantee freedom of speech, press, religion, equality before the law and the freedom to elect leaders of one's choice. It is against this backdrop, that Appadorai (2000) defines democracy as the system of government under which people exercise power directly or indirectly through their representatives that are elected periodically. In this instance, a democratic state creates an enabling environment for the citizens to express their popular will on basic questions of social, political and economic policies of the government which they voted into power.

In different perspective, Cricks (1993) sees democracy as meaning nothing at all because people define it differently. He further attached the following meanings to democracy:

- A system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged
- A form of government in which people rule themselves directly and continuously
- A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy or privilege
- A system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities
- A system of decision making based on majority rule.

It is the susceptible nature of democracy to different definition that informed the thoughts of Abraham Lincoln in 1864 at the height of American civil war, when he defines democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

In contradistinction to Abraham's view, Appadorai stressed further that democracy is the rule of ignorance. It pays attention to quantity rather than quality. Votes are not weighed, but only counted. A large proportion of citizens particularly in Africa still regard the running of government as something that does not concerns them. They go about doing their daily life activities, play, practice their professions and arts, plough, sow, harvest and sell, forgetting that they are part of the governing process.

The danger inherent in democracy as expressed by Appadorai is, the citizens may not be sufficiently educated to understand the critical promises made by politicians during electioneering campaigns. Within the context of Africa and Nigeria in particular, the electorates are always misled by primordial sentiment of ethnic, religious and regional background. Apadorai cited Sir Henry Maine saying that democracy can never represent the rule by the many because as a rule the mass of the followers merely accept blindly the opinions of their leaders.

It should be noted that modern democracy is capitalism in practice as expressed by Cole cited in Appadorai (2000). The political state represents nothing but the rule of a propertied oligarchy. The principles and practice of representation are themselves faulty. No man can represent another; at best one can represent only a function. Alonge (2005) also conceived democracy as the supreme authority of the electorate to exercise power directly or indirectly through their representatives.

On the other hand, Hacker (1973) viewed democracy as mob rule. He said when the poor win, the result is democracy. He cited Plato saying that "They will kill some of the opposite party, banish others and grant the rest an equal share in civil rights and government". This Plato's theory defines democracy as mob rule. Every society has more poor people than rich people. If political powers are distributed equally throughout the population, then quantity will win over quality. If the society is to be led by people uneducated, who are always in the majority, then the poor and uneducated will overwhelm the well -to-do minorities that previously held high status in the society.

Plato in Hacker (1973) further expressed that, a Mob in actual fact is poorly equipped for conducting the business of government. It should be noted that whether members of the mob are roaming the streets, gathered in the motor parks or market place or sitting in their homes, they cannot make policy or carry out government programs. It is only one man or small groups of men that are chosen to positions of leadership. In democracy, the majority are always willing to pick the best minds and talent in the society as leaders even if these leaders are from different religion, ethnic or regional backgrounds

Heywood (2002) outlined two types of democracy, direct democracy and representative democracy. He said direct democracy is based on the direct, unmediated and continuous participation of citizen in the tasks of government. This type of democracy creates continuous interface between the people and the government. It was first practiced in the ancient city of Athens through mass town hall meetings. This kind of democracy give room for citizens to control their destinies because is the only pure form of democracy.

On the other hand, representative democracy is a limited and indirect form of democracy. This kind of democracy does not allow frequent popular participation of citizens in government. It is indirect because the citizens or the public do not exercise power themselves. They merely select those who will rule on their behalf. This form of rule becomes democratic only when the representatives establishes a reliable and effective link between the government and the govern (Janda, Berry and Goldman, 2000). However, this system relieves ordinary citizens of the burden of decision making giving room for division of labour in politics

Models of Democracy

There are different theories or models that see democracy in different versions against the views of western world that sees democracy as a regular and competitive election based on universal franchise. The following models of democracy highlights various forms of democracy

- Plebiscitary Democracy: This is a form of democratic rule that operate through an unmediated link between the rulers and the ruled established by plebiscites or referendums. This availed the public the opportunity to express their views on political issues directly.
- Radical Democracy: This is a form of democracy that favours decentralization and participation. This opens political participation to wider majority of the people.
- Classical Democracy: This type of democracy is based on the polis or city state of Ancient Greece. It is the system of rule that developed in Athens, the largest and most powerful Greek city state. It as a direct form of democracy that operated in Athens during the Fourth and Fifth centuries BCE which was considered as the only pure and ideal system of popular participation.
- Protective Democracy: Protective democracy aims to give citizens the widest possible scope to live their lives as they choose. In this type of democracy the electorates express their consent through voting in regular and competitive elections thereby ensuring those voted into power accounts for their stewardship. This form of democracy ensures separation of power and enjoyment of fundamental human rights.
- Developmental Democracy: This is type of democracy is concern with the development of individuals and the society at large. Any democratic regime that concentrated on the development of man and the society, makes it difficult for individual citizen to be rich enough to buy another man and no man shall be so poor as to be forced to sell himself.

· People's Democracy: This model of democracy emerged from the orthodox communist regimes that sprang up from the soviet model after the Second World War. People's democracy is concern with social equality brought about through the common ownership of the wealth of the nation.

The Conditions for Democratization and June 12 Democracy Day in Nigeria : Convergence and Divergence

The political experience of Nigeria resulting from colonial subjugation accounts greatly for the relegation of democracy to the background in post -colonial Nigeria. The restriction of franchise to Lagos and Calabar by the Richard constitution of 1947 was the starting point of truncating democracy in Nigeria. It was therefore not an illusion when at independence, the military Junta whose constitutional role is to safeguard the territorial integrity of the nation truncated democratic governance intermittently with a total grip on Nigeria government and politics sincere 1966 to 1999.

It is instructive to note that, since the incursion of the military into the body politics of Nigeria in 1966, they dominated the politics of Nigeria and dictatorially created political structure that did not only negates the necessary conditions for democratization, but also affected the socio-economic and political status of Nigerians thereby creating deep rooted class division in the society. By extension, this act has limited the democratic participation of Nigerians. If these negation of democratic principles is truism about Nigeria, where then is the importance of June 12 democracy day to Nigerians.

Sodaro, Brown, Collinwood, Dickson, Klesner and Sisk (2001) are of the view that democratization is the process of building democracy following the collapse of non democratic regimes. It is the transition from an autocratic regime to more liberal democratic regime. Continents of the world are experiencing democratization process from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Russia and East Central Europe. In Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, South Africa, Egypt e.t.c can be mentioned as undergoing democratization. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, in Latin America. While Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan in Asia. In East Central Europe, Countries like Romania, Poland, e.t.c can be mentioned. These countries are trying to establish and consolidate democracy based on the ten (10) conditions outlined by Sodaro, etal (2001), but not without challenges. The conditions are State Institutions, Elites Commitment to Democracy, National Wealth, Private Enterprise, Middle Class, Support of the Disadvantage for Democracy, Active Civil Society, Democratic Political Culture, Freedom of Information, Homogeneous Society, a Favourable International Community.

The fundamental question raised in this paper is, has Nigeria met these conditions of democracy since 1999 to 2019 to justify the declaration of June 12 as democracy day. An analysis of these conditions in Nigeria will leave a lot of things to be desired for these conditions to be satisfied. This is the thrust of this paper as discussed below:

State Institution: A successful democracy requires a functioning state with sovereignty over a defined territory and enjoys legitimacy from its population. A Country where the citizens do not accept the legitimacy of the existing government that country cannot be said to be democratizing. A functional democracy needs government institutions that would ensure basic civil rights and liberties. The state must be organized on the basis of rule of law. The process of ascending to political leadership should be free and competitive. Those who govern should be accountable to the people.

Since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, every cycle of election that produces leaders of government is surrounded with legitimacy crisis. It should be noted the Nigerian political class jettison this condition of democracy starting from the corrupt and unconstitutional practices that bedevils the entire electoral process (Niworu, 2009). It is in consonance with this Jega (2009) opined that

Several things can be ticked off as having gone wrong in our transition to democracy. First are elections which are the Corner stone of liberal democratic practice and which we purport to practice, have continued to be poorly organized, conflict ridden, restricted or obstructed participation and very unfair outcomes. It does not appear as if good lesson have been learnt and put to use to rectify the past mistakes. Conduct of election has moved from bad to worse .Hopes of since focused and cogent reforms

are been dashed by the poor handling of the electoral reform committee's report to the government. The NEC has recently been aptly defined as the toughest, roughest, and meanest election management body in Africa, if not the entire world.

Elites Commitment to Democracy: Democracy is often defined as government by the people. In the real sense of it, democracy is government by the elites who should be accountable to the people. This may sound new, but in reality, all governments including democratic governments are run on day to day basis by elites. Therefore, the existence and success of any democracy depends largely on the attitudes and behaviors of the society's elites cutting across politics, economy and social life.

It is of paramount importance for those who take politics as a profession to lead by example in fostering democratic principles. The majority of the Nigerian political elites lack this commitment to democracy. They have the tendency to scuttle democratic principles and thereby imbibe the sit tight syndrome. It is on record in 2015 when a minister of Federal Republic of Nigeria Elder Orubebe attempted to disrupt the announcement of 2015 presidential election result by Professor Attahiru Jega. The senate president of the Eight Senate, Senator Bukola Saraki held Nigeria to stand still during his four years tenure. President Olusegun Obasanjo attempted to elongate his tenure by corruptly bribing the National Assembly members to alter the constitution in favour of his third term bid. Honorable Bugaje was quoted in the Daily Trust Newspaper of Monday 27 February 2006 saying that
The people who are canvassing for Obasanjo's third term bid in the National Assembly are making promises. One of them is a return ticket. It doesn't matter the party. They will make sure you return to the National Assembly. They will Make sure that you have a choice plot of land in Abuja with N 100 million that you will now build a villa of your choice.

This attempt by Obasanjo to elongate his tenure was an outright dis regard to democratic principles.

National Wealth

This is another important condition for democratization. The more the wealth of a nation, the more the prospect for development and adherence to democracy. There is therefore the need to develop and protect the wealth of the nation for the prosperity of all citizens. Contrary to this view, Nigeria political elites in collaboration with their accomplices in other sectors of the Nigeria political economy rather divert public wealth to private estate (Otinche, 2016). Public corporations have been auctioned and bought by the politicians who are holding power in trust for the people.

In the second year of president Muhammadu Buhari civil regime, his minister of information said in the Daily Trust Newspaper of 19th January 2016 that, Fifty Five (55) public officials of government stole 1.3 Trillion in Seven years. This period covered the end of Obasanjo's second tenure to late Umaru Musa Yaradua tenure and Good luck Jonathan's tenure respectively.

According to the minister using World Bank rate and cost, one third of the stolen fund would have provided 635. 18 kilometers of roads, built 36 ultra-modern hospitals in each state of the federation, built 183 schools, educate 3, 974 children from primary to tertiary level at 25.24 million per child and built 20.062 units of 2 bed room houses.

Private Enterprise

Private enterprise and democracy are connected because economic freedom promotes democratic freedom. People who are not employees of government, but rather own their private business or work in private companies will have the confidence to ask questions on how the government treats them and how the budget is expended. Having a say in what the government does and holding it accountable is what democracy or popular sovereignty is all about. When the government controls the economy, it reduces the opportunity for the citizens to organize themselves and take care of their economic needs independent of the state. When the state controls the economy, it influences the direction of the citizen's political participation. It should be noted that the development of democracy in the western

world cannot be unconnected with the early development of capitalism that encourages private ownership.

In Nigeria, the reverse is the case, where the wealth of the nation is in government treasury. It gets to individuals who are in government or their relatives and friends who are close to the corridors of power. The larger proportions of the Nigeria Population are employed by the government. Therefore, they are not enterprising because they lack the basic entrepreneurial skills. Consequent upon this, each government in power or political party in control of the government determines the political direction of majority of Nigerians. The question is your means livelihood is tied to the government treasury, you either follow blindly or you lose your job.

Middle Class

Middle class is very important determinant of democracy because they stabilize the democratic process. A country whose class division is between the rich and the poor cannot establish and sustain democracy successfully. The reason is not farfetched because the rich will use their control of the economy to dominate the poor politically. Where the middle class exist, their members would seek to establish their own economic security on the basis of private enterprise, the rule of law and accountable government . Sodaro et'al (2001) are of the view that the importance of the middle class in sustaining democracy is as old as Aristotle and as timely as the new millennium. The Nigerian political scene has annihilated the middle class and created few rich people leaving the mass of the electorates in abject poverty.

Conclusion

Going by the above analysis of the conditions needed for democratization, a lot is still left to be desired for consolidating democracy in Nigeria. Therefore, the declaration of June 12 as democracy day is a mere subterfuge on the part of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) to sustain their political grip of the South Western Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria with vocal and versatile Yoruba speaking nation.

The state institutions that are necessary for establishing democracy are very weak in Nigeria and in most cases compromise the rules of engagement. The only institution that waxes strong in Nigeria is the military institution. That is why they dominated the political scene and corrupted all sectors of the Nigeria political economy. As a result, there was inefficiency and ineffectiveness at all levels of governance. There was and still massive official corruption in Nigeria even at the time of writing of this paper in 2019.

Destruction of lives and properties as a result of failure of state institutions is on the increase in Nigeria. The legislators that belong to the most important institution of the state appeared to be more corrupt padding public budget with impunity.

Recommendations

As contribution to knowledge and existing literature, this paper recommends that:

- June 12 democracy day and other unnecessary public holidays should be expunged from internal affairs of Nigeria to allow productive engagement of public servants whose wage comes from public fund.
- State institutions should be strengthened by giving them autonomy to operate within the limit of the law. People with proven integrity should be appointed to man these state institutions.
- Nigeria should think out of the box, particularly the young men and begin to establish small business enterprises to enable them develop the middle class and be able to hold the government accountable for any act of omission or commission.
- The elites across all sectors of the political economy should be committed to the development of democracy and not to use their privilege position to primitively accumulate public wealth.
- Nigeria political parties should be reduced to five (5) formidable parties with national outlook.
- Ceremonies that ushers new government, whether at Federal, State or Local Government levels should be done in the office accommodation designed for the purpose of the handing over. i

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