

DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE NIGERIAN FOURTH REPUBLIC; THE WAY OUT.

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Abstract

This study examines security challenges in Nigeria and its growing effects in the nascent democracy. The cardinal objective of this study is to establish the interconnectivity between Democracy and National security in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. Utilizing secondary sources of data and content analysis and the adoption of liberal democratic theory as the theoretical underpinning. The study found out that the non-adherence to the basic democratic tenets constitutes the major problem that breed insecurity and threatening the survival of the Nigerian nascent democracy. The study concludes thus, that the government most ensures the proper utilization of the resources of the state in a judicious manner to provide greater happiness to greater number of the Nigerian populace. The study recommends among others that, unless and until the basic democratic tenets are strongly adhere to, true democratic practice and a secured National Security will remain a mirage in the Nigerian body polity.

Keyword: Democracy, National Security, Constitutionalism, Nigerian State.

Introduction

In this democratic dispensation, the issue of security has remained topical and indeed constituted a serious cause for concern not only to the private but also to public individuals in the country. Succinctly put, the security question has, in recent times, emerged as a key concept in Nigeria's struggle for good governance, sustainable democracy and development (Nkwede, 2011). As noted by Agbaje, Diamond and Onwudiwe (2004) its appeal cuts across the nooks and crannies of the society. Despite successive attempts by Nigerian government to address the canker worm through public policy alternatives such as regional and state mechanisms, federal character principle, inter alia, the security problem still remains a thorny issue in the country and has taken a staggering dimension.

Onyeoziri (2002) aptly accounted for the centrality of the character of the Nigerian state to the abysmal failure of the management strategies of the security question in the country. Borrowing from Ake (2000), he identified four characters of the Nigerian state that have disabled it from effective response to the security issues. These are the coercive nature of the state because it has been an exploitative state. Secondly, the Nigerian state is quite indifferent to social welfare, thirdly, the state has an image of a hostile coercive force, as a result of its colonial origin as exacerbated by its post-colonial abuses; and fourthly, its lack of autonomy. Consequently upon the above, the state was not seen as a

protector of public interest and as such deserves no respect and loyalty.

Apart from the above reasons, it can safely be argued that the efforts to build a virile democracy in a heterogeneous culture with fear of political domination and perceived insecurity, social injustice and absolute neglect to the principles of rule of law have resulted to several unrests, frustrations, deep seated hatred, insinuations and killings which indeed culminated to the current security challenges. As Okpata and Nwali (2013:173) puts it;

Political struggles among the political class, politics of rancour and bitterness, ethnic based politics and intimidation of opposition groups, the use of state apparatus to undermine others are the major source of insecurity in Nigerian state.

The above has led to various insecurity problem in the country as witnessed in many parts of Nigeria via; Niger Delta militias, Boko Haram insurgencies in the North, kidnapping sagasm in the South-East, spate of bombing and killing of innocent souls with reckless abandon and without recourse to the protection of human life which was the foremost reason for the social contract (Hobbes, 1957).

It is against the background of the foregoing that this study is undertaken to establish the nexus between democracy and national

security in the Nigeria's fourth republic with the intent to proffer solution to the peril in the country.

Theoretical Framework

This study adapted the liberal theory of democracy. In the view and position held by the Liberal theorists, the state exists to promote the welfare of its citizens and to protect their lives and properties. It is only by doing these that it earns the loyalty of its citizens and extracts compliance without recourse to force (Mbachu, 2009). The role of the state therefore, in democracy, is either as a direct agent or mediator, and how this is associated with success or failure is a matter of concern. Public policy emanates solely, from the responsibilities of the state to nurture and protect the aspirations and needs of her citizens.

The administrative and political challenges facing Nigeria is to simultaneously improve the delivery of public goods and services. It also faces the problem of downsizing the public goods and services and substantially downsizing the public sectors. This is done primarily through increased devolution and delegation. But rising to these challenges will be difficult for Nigeria because of weak institutions, limited committed personnel and misdirected financial resources. The task is further compounded by ethnic and religious unrest, and regional demands for greater local resource control. Meeting these challenges will necessarily require new analytical frameworks. This can assist

government decision makers and professionals in designing and implementing innovative administrative reforms and interventions. Pursuant to these, we can quickly isolate three objectives of administrative design in Liberal Democratic Theory (Mbachu, 2009). This includes accountability of performance, efficiency of management and effectiveness in mobilizing and using resources.

This is further to point out that the accountability is the most objective and that efficient management and effective resource mobilization stem from accountability. Thus, the challenge that confronts Nigerian State is good governance. Good governance is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The end is well functioning state that encompasses the following characteristic: Well-being of the greatest number of citizenry, maintain peace, law and order, protect life and property. Others are to defend and enhance individual liberties, maintain governmental checks and balances, sustain economic growth, development and prosperity. There could be the capacity of public organization to provide goods and services to its citizens. It can be in effective, efficient, transparent and accountable manner under the rule of law and individual liberty (Olukoshi, 2009).

Egwu (2003), based his own perception of contribution of democracy to national security on three major factors. The first is what he called the multipolar tendency in

politics leading to multiparty system. The second is the political realignment in elections and the third is, the lack of political culture. Commenting further on political culture, he notes that most developing nations lack civic culture of participation and abiding by the rules of democracy, this often results to electoral violence and threat to national security.

Sodangi (2002), observed that democracy is a critical factor in ensuring proper national security. According to him, democracy implies the interplay of various interests and shades of opinions in the mode of political parties and pressure groups. He further stated that this interplay must be open, free and fair atmosphere, with adherence to such fundamental principles. They are tolerance, freedom of existence and choice. He posited further that, the desperate, intolerant and ruthless contests among political parties, political leaders and their followers. These have often resulted in violence, security breaches, killings and destruction which threaten national security. According to him, it was these actions that set off the post electoral violence in some parts of Northern Nigeria in 2011.

Whereas, Banwo (2004), looked at contribution of democracy to national security within the context of electoral violence. He asserted that electoral violence in a democracy is a consequence of the underdeveloped nature of the economies of

developing or third world nations. According to him, democracy has made control of power a pre-condition for access to the wealth and privileges of state. Therefore it becomes necessary for members of a political class to continually struggle to attain and sustain power. He contends further that this inordinate ambition has often led to party factionalization or breakaways.

Egwu(2003), In his perception of contribution of democracy to national security, fails to explain the yardstick of measuring political culture and why there is low level of political culture among the developing nations. In the case of Sodangi (2002), he looked at the contribution of democracy to national security within the context of political parties and the pressure groups. He did not take cognizance of the ordinary citizens that are not members of any political party or pressure group that participate in the democratic process. He could not clearly bring out the relationship between democracy and national security. On the other hand, Banwo (2004), conceptualized the contribution of democracy to national security within the context of electoral violence. He focuses more on the activities of the political class and the political elites. He could not clearly establish what constitute the challenges facing democracy and national security.

Nexus between Democracy and National Security in the Nigerian Fourth Republic

There is a very strong and incontrovertible links between democracy and national security. A democratic state feels more secured than non-democratic state. A democratic state has an inbuilt mechanism for resolving and checkmating security threats than non-democratic state.

In the late 1960s, the Social Science Research Council identified four challenges of political development in which nations tend to experience. These are the challenge of authority or state building, in which the political centre tries to penetrate or control the gubernatorial units.

The second is the challenge of nation building or the creation of unity among heterogeneous members of the polity. The challenge of participation which refers to the extent to which people influence decisions that impact their lives is the third. And lastly is the challenge of distribution, that is how scarce but allocable resources are shared relatively, equitably among members of the political community (Ndulo, 2008). This refers to the extent to which citizens enjoy freedom, political liberty, protection and guarantee of the safety of life, property, wealth of the citizenry and measures to guard against threats to national sovereignty.

Many Nigerians are of the view that contributions of democracy to national

security are diametrically opposed (Mbachu, 2009). The truth is that contributions of democracy to national security are mutually reinforcing and complimentary. Without one, the other cannot be possibly guaranteed. Also, socio-economic and political conditions do affect the attainment of both. Yet in the contemporary world, a democratic setting offers a far better environment for the pursuit of the goal of national security and human rights, on long term basis., As McNamar, (1996) would like us to believe that, security and development are so closely related that they can be seen as different sides of the same coin. According to him, development is directly proportional to security. When people lean to compromise peacefully among competing demands in the large national interest then their resistance to disorder and violence will enormously increase. There is no doubt that when a government is able to develop and satisfy the welfare needs of its citizens, the government will get more legitimacy. The administration will as a result get more loyalty, patriotism and obedience from the citizenry and thus would be secured.

The Impacts of Civil Rules on Nigeria Democracy and Security

On 1 October 1979 civilians took over the reins of power. The new constitution replaced Nigeria's cabinet-style of government with a US-style presidential system in an effort to enhance the federal government's ability to deal with national

problems and thereby hold the country together. There was a separation of powers between the three branches of government, an independent judiciary, and complete freedom for the people to choose all their representatives on the basis of universal suffrage with secret ballots. This constitution also sought to reduce ethnic tensions by affirming the differences among Nigeria's ethnic groups under a robust federal structure and through such concepts as federal character (i.e., affirmative action) and the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. Pursuant to local government reforms of 1976, the Constitution established local governments (of which there are now 774) as the third order of government. The 1979 Constitution provided a good framework for solving the nation's social, economic, and political problems. Yet it lasted only until December 1983 in part because it was frequently abused and violated by politicians. Also, in the early 1980s some state governments, particularly in the Southwest and East, refused to comply with federal-government decisions and used their state-controlled media to attack the federal government. Many states created barriers to appointment to state public services, to admission to state schools, and to intra-state trading for non residents in violation of the universality of Nigerian citizenship and the freedoms of movement and residence guaranteed by the Constitution. In many states, those in power excluded opposition parties from policy

making, monopolized the bureaucracy, and implemented government programs in a partisan fashion. The situation was aggravated by weak and incompetent national leadership and gross mismanagement of the economy. Corruption assumed alarming proportions, and there was no serious effort to fight poverty. Hence many losers in this corrupt system welcomed military intervention.

The current constitution went into effect on 29 May 1999 and was the outcome of a transition process led by the military government of General Abdusalami Abubakar after more than 15 years of failed attempts to restore civilian rule. Two major constitution-making efforts had failed during these years: the short-lived 1989 Constitution that was never implemented fully and a 1995 draft constitution that was abandoned in 1998 after the sudden death of General Sani Abacha, its chief sponsor (Elaigwu and Galadima, 1994). As part of the transition, General Abubakar appointed a Constitution Debate Coordinating Committee headed by Justice Niki charging it to organise nationwide consultations on a new constitution and to make a report and recommendations. One idea debated was to base the new constitution on the 1995 Abacha draft, which never came into force, but "Nigerians raised compelling reservations" about the 1995 draft, the most serious of which were that it was "a product of disputed legitimacy" and suffered from a "crisis of authenticity in the public consciousness" (Report of the Constitution Debate Coordinating Committee, 1999). Similar

considerations applied to the 1989 Babangida Constitution. The Tobi Committee found, rather, that Nigerians "were near unanimous that the 1979 Constitution had been tried and tested and, therefore, provides a better point of departure in the quest for constitutionalism in Nigeria (Report of the Constitution Debate Coordinating Committee, 1999). Making only minor adjustments to the 1979 document, the Tobi Committee recommended adopting the adjusted document as the new constitution. General Abdulsalami promulgated the Constitution, with a few amendments, in early May 1999 and handed power to the newly elected civilian regime of President Obasanjo on 29 May.

Thus, the Constitution retains presidential government and a federal system with three orders of government, and it addresses various political issues that have divided ethnic and cultural groups. The issue of sharing political power among ethnic groups is addressed by the principle of rotation in executive office. The marginalization of disadvantaged minorities has been ameliorated by the establishment of the Federal Character Commission to enforce equity (i.e., affirmative action or positive discrimination) in public-service appointments. The distribution of wealth has been improved by entrenchment of a new revenue sharing formula. Surpassing all its postcolonial predecessors, the 1999 Constitution has been enforced for more than sixteen years and survived its first major test: countrywide general elections

conducted in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 which marked first in history, the peaceful transition from the party PDP to the opposition party APC.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

It is critical clear that insecurity does not just occur in the country but caused by some factors. Apparently, there are many factors causing insecurity in the country and these include inter alia; incessant ethno-religious and communal conflicts, political instability, bad governance, decomposition and attendant lack of efficacy of state institutions, economic stagnation/decline, intense poverty, high rate of unemployment, income disparities, social dislocation caused by massive rural-urban migration, breakdown of societal values leading to fraud and community unrest etc (Nwachukwu 2011).

Similarly Kupolati (1990:321) "submitted that Political instability arising from the absence of an enviable political culture, religious intolerance and fanaticism, ethnic rivalry, uneven distribution of development projects and amenities, and concentration of wealth in the hands of a disproportionate, lazy few are some of the internal threats facing this country".

Other scholars like Ajakaiye (2002), and Jega (2007) are all in agreement that poverty appears to be the major greatest underlying

threats to security in Nigeria. They further opined that a combination of widening gap in income inequality, worsening unemployment situation and perceptions of group discrimination and marginalization based on ethnic, religious, and communal differences, create rigid identity divides based on WE versus THEM syndrome, buff the ashes of group hatred and ignite tensions and even violent conflicts. Idowu (1999) quoted in Nwachukwu (2011:76) aptly highlighted a multiplicity of factors that threaten security in Nigeria thus;

- a Bad and weak government;
- b Human rights violation;
- c Unjust and inequitable distribution of National resources including political posts, industries, investments, funds etc;
- d Disunited and un-integrated ethnic groups;
- e Ethnic and religious antagonisms and cleavages;
- f Weak and poor economy marked by corruption and weak currency etc;
- g Social-economic hardship, unemployment hunger, starvation, cashlessness etc.
- h Weak military might;
- I Coups and military rule
- J Communal clashes;
- K Unhealthy competition among the ethnic groups for national resources
- l Political domination

- m Misappropriation of national revenue; and
- n uninformed and visionless leadership and followership

Conclusion

security is a dynamic phenomenon and a persistent societal problem ravaging the country. It is tied to the stability, survival, growth and development of any country. A real and potential threat to democratic rule makes it an issue of constant review and discussion, aimed at devising appropriate mechanism for its extinction in the country. Without viable alternative options for checkmating the menace of insecurity in the country, it is unlikely that democracy cannot thrive well and human rights cannot be guaranteed. This is because a democratic state feel more secured than a non-democratic one because of the prevalence of effective mechanism that ensures greater common goods.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations appeared prime as to ensuring a conducive atmosphere for democracy to triumph and a secured national security in Nigeria.

- That for a well flourished and secured Nigerian State, there should be a national philosophy that would serve as a national impulse, and guide individuals' action. This philosophy should be one of purposeful leadership, predicated on probity, transparency, and accountability.

- Government must always strive through good policies and programmes to impact positively on the life of the people. This to a large extent will reduce anger and frustration on the part of the people, often vented in the form of violent demonstration against government and its agencies, and sabotage of public assets and facilities.
- Other stakeholders in the internal security arrangements should be fully engaged. The military, customs, immigration, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food, Drug, Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and other agencies must continue to discharge their respective responsibilities efficaciously since internal security is a collective effort and not the monopoly of the police. This can best be assured when every agency plays its own role without fear or favour.
- Finally, the study also recommends the need for a harmonious working relation between the National Assembly and the Executive Arms of the government so as to enact laws that will make Nigeria a corrupt free state as this will no doubt restore public confidence on governance or government. This can only be achieved where people of like minds that there

interest and priority is on the promotion of social goods and not those of principalities in inclination.

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