

Research Article

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

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Received: Mar 12, 2019

Accepted: Mar 19, 2019

Published: Mar 23, 2019

Abstract: Over the years there has been this popular argument that, democracy has done bad than good to the people of rural community especially with the level of decay in the infrastructural development and loss of prestigious socio-political and economic values set up by the local political systems in Nigeria centuries before now. Many Nigerians especially in the rural communities are of the popular views that, instead of democracy to enhance community and rural transformation among people in the rural communities it has succeeded in increasing their sufferings in almost virtually all aspects of social, economic and political development (Bello, 2018).

Keywords: Rural community, economic values, democracy.

Introduction

Today with close to twenty years of return to democracy in Nigeria, rural and community transformation is almost virtually a difficult thing to achieve hence the political system has been bastardized by corrupt practices, looting of public funds, political, ethno-religious and communal conflicts as well love for materialism (Balarabe, 2018). 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 almost lacked the attention of the political class in this regard. As argued by Bello (2018), the potentials of rural and community development is always remembered by Nigerian politicians when they started their political campaign tours. After elections such critical needs of the people are no longer remembered. This negative development is believed to be caused by lack of absolute consideration of the positive impacts traditional political institutions in decision making, priority need assessment as well as project implementation. People in rural communities of Nigeria still believed in this notion or idea that, traditional political institutions are more concern in community and rural development because they are the most reliable political institutions that are closer to the community and indeed the grass root. History has shown that community development are initiated and sustained by the traditional political institutions because of their domiciliary nature in the grass root and their objective of being more of citizens driven. Saifullahi (2018) argued, no doubt democracy has not done much to change ugly situation of people at the local communities in Nigeria through successful rural transformation because, of bad leadership and also absence of a sustainable blue print that targets transformation in the these rural communities.

The objective of this position paper among other thing, is to assess the extent of the connection between democracy and indigenous political systems in Nigeria with special references to community and rural transformation in Nigeria. It also aimed at assessing the

major reasons why democratic governments in Nigeria failed to sustain the idea of community and rural transformation in spite of availability of funds from the government. The paper adopted a mixed methodology of literature review and field interview to enable the researchers assess the extent of the disconnection between democracy and rural communities in Nigeria.

Indigenous Political System in Nigeria an Over-view

Indigenous political system according to Anka (2017), is a political structure that was established to guide social contracts among men and they survived since the beginning of state creation. They are political structures 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 exist among various geo-political locations that made up what is today independent state 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 governed by either people of traditional or spiritual status and they possess such sound and active political structures that are tight together to constitute an absolute authority that decide for the Socio-political and economic transformation of the people.

The emirate and palaces of the Emirs in Northern Nigeria for instance, are very good example of these traditional political institutions especially with the historical antecedent 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. The political history of these cities is shaped by the records of political stability, economic stability and social transformation of their immediate constituencies. Because of the manners the political structure of the state allow for all inclusive participation development were very visible among people hence all sectors of human development including agriculture, trade and commerce, security, health care management as well community development are virtually transformed.

On the agriculture for instance, traditional institutions and indeed kings take the lead in ensuring that citizens have fully participated in all year round farming. It is part of the primary responsibility 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 farms stand as the main source of lively food to the entire family. Though not all members of the family embark on commercial farming due to limitation in terms of resources, majority depend on the proceeds of what is harvested to arrange for other seasonal activities such as wedding and naming ceremonies among other things.

The system equally allow for enhanced security network among states hence, the primary responsibility of the king and indeed the palace is to secure states and provide peaceful atmosphere for people to live. As argued by Jamilu (2018), one of the beauties 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 the political environment they, track down every aspects of internal security challenges such

as stealing, banditry, robbery and other immoral behaviours 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 undergoes 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 who are the local vigilante are effectively taking charge of the internal security of their locality.

Traditional political system in Nigeria also promote trade and commerce and because of the love for economic self-reliance, local people are involved in to small and medium trading activities and go to an 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 South Nigeria is one of the critical economic activity that strengthen inter-group relations that even culminated in to marriage and other social and cultural associations.

Community development is also another area that made the Nigeria's indigenous political systems very relevant among people. Though the king initiate and lead in every idea of community development, championed the course of the provision of rural road network and fund it through 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, environmental sanitation, agricultural and cultural shows as well as traditional and cultural play including local boxing, dancing and music.

In general sense, traditional political systems in Nigeria are clear reflections of the acceptability of the system by the people. Though as mentioned earlier, the system is matured 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 by globalization and indeed imposed often states to tight them in to the global political movement. Its application among third world states has been seen very unsuccessful because of the influence of the traditional political systems which are seen as the basis of the people's political maturity 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 of numerous crises of getting Nigeria to work in the right track. The central of the failure of democratic system in Nigeria is the question of leadership choice and service delivery. As argued by Funke (2013), Nigerians have lost confidence in its democratic regimes 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 in-experiences, they succeeded in running a system that is weak and in-effective in catering for the socio-economic and political needs of the people. On the other version of the argument 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 it work facially like during our pre-colonial history.

Because of the failure of leadership institutions, Nigeria is rated one of the most corrupt nation in the globe with various corruption indexes demonstrating the weaknesses of our leaders to minimize corruption and other corrupt practices. Jide (2011) argued, Corruption Index.....

Nigeria remains in social and economic quagmire because corruption has eaten deep in to the fabric of the mindset of our people. Many corruption cases that considered tragic to the development of the country are either abandoned mid-way in to the investigation and trial or influence by some political power brokers within the government or particularly change of regime. The most popular and celebrated cases of corruption that are not yet determined 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, the other scandal involving former GMD of NNPC Andrew Yakubu, among many other cases. The weaknesses of our laws and investigative agencies to ensure speedy investigation 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 factors 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 programme. Every government come with its own perception of the political imagination of the country and how the nation shall be manage to suit the interest of the political need of the time. Cases of corruption, human right abuse remain some of the critical issues that denied Nigeria the wisdom of immediate transformation Laraba (2015).

Electoral Violence is also another challenge facing Nigeria under democratic dispensation. Though democracy allow for conduct of election, the process of 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 left 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 feels dissatisfied always decided to go violent and this resulted to the loss of lives of properties.

Social and religious crises are also among the most serious challenge 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 tries to create state of uncertainty that leads to the outbreak of social conflicts. In the view 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 avenue for justice, fairness and all-inclusiveness. These social and religious conflicts always come with abundance social and economic losses hence structures

and good billion naira value are destroyed by overzealous politicians. 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 in spite of other unaccounted losses of houses, shelters and places of businesses.

Our democratic experience as a nation also indicated that, democracy has led to the increase on our poverty strength as well multiplication of hungry people in the country. Estimate 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 poor nutritional value 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 spite of its abundance of wealth is ranked as one of the poorest nation in Africa and among the five poorest in the world'

.....Poverty Ranking

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 requisite socio-economic and infrastructural transformation that is aimed at changing the lives of the people. Gide (2018) argued, unlike before when communities in Nigeria are the target of democratic and military governments, the present situation has been able to completely ignore rural transformation in their agenda. He added " it is the usual story all over communities in Nigeria are either crying for lack access to western education, portable drinking water, access road, health care facilities including drugs and medicaments as well as security in generic terms.

Today in Nigeria there are many rural communities that does not have portable drinking water, and their people goes to the stream and unprotected local wells to scamper for drinking water. States and local governments in Nigeria does not allocate the much that are needed in terms of provision if portable drinking water to its populace and even where international charity groups come to the rescue of local people to support them have access to portable drinking water, corruption of the political class almost kills the whole idea. As captured by Aliyu (2018), the only functional International project that aimed at providing portable drinking water to the people is RUWASSAN it's a World Bank Assisted project but corruption in Nigeria had almost make it impossible to function. 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 they projects are executed, they facilities hardly lasted for longer due to poor execution of the project.

As argued by Murja (2017) Nigerians are ranked among the ten world categories that have difficulty in accessing portable drinking water. 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 roads, what they needed in some places are roads that provides access to network of other rural communities with relative ease. While 90% of the rural communities in Nigeria cried for lack of access road and because of the sensitive nature of these community roads to the people, during campaign rallies political office holders and indeed at every opportunity, communities makes demand for provision of access roads their priority appeals. 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 community during campaign tours. In her further argument she captured that, promises for access road has covered up to 60% of campaign promises 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 and this constitute a big problem to the possible transformation of Nigeria.

Access to health care facilities is also another challenge of rural transformation in Nigeria, This is an issue because, going by the simple 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. Government in the views of Gide (2018) has 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 various negative factors including leadership questions, corruption, political, ethnic and religious violence which characterized the democratic system in Nigeria has lead to the present political development of slow face of rural transformation in Nigeria.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Citation: Abdullahi Nuhu Liman, Bello Baban Umma and Anas Sani Anka. 2019. Democracy and its Impacts on Indigenous Political System in Nigeria: Implication on Community and Rural Transformation. International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research, 3(3): 210-216.

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