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NIGERIAN FORUM



NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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- (b) To provide and maintain means of information upon international questions and promote the study and investigation of international questions by means of conferences, lectures and discussions, and by the preparation and publication of books, reports, or otherwise as may seem desirable so as to develop a body of informed opinions on world affairs.
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- (b) provide facilities for the training of Nigerian diplomats and personnel and those of other countries whose vocations relate to international affairs;
- (c) promote and encourage the study of and research into all aspects of international affairs;
- (d) from time to time arrange international seminars and conferences on any matter relating to its objects.
- (e) promote and undertake such other things and to carry out such other activities as may in the opinion of the institute be deemed necessary for the attainment of the objects of the institute.

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is now obvious that although some strides have been achieved in democratic terms in Africa, a lot still needs to be done. It was also argued that of all the party systems being practised in the democratising African countries, the multi-party system has the greatest potential for national stability on the continent. This why this system is recommended to those African countries which are still on the route to democratisation. Improvements to the system are also recommended, which will ultimately enable those states which practice the system to reap the benefits of national stability.

Democracy Dividend and Nigeria's Fourth Republic

By

*Aremu Fatai Ayinde**

Introduction

Democracy has become a universal norm, so much so that nations hitherto thought of as impregnable especially in the cold war years are now adopting wholesale democratic ideals. In the case of Nigeria, it has experienced excruciatingly long periods of military authoritarianism which earned the country a bad image in the international community. This has had direct and indirect impact on the living standards of the average Nigerians. Poverty, inequality, unemployment, inflation and general decay of infrastructure have become more commonplace. The imperative of re-instituting democratic rule became more compelling not only to ensure relevance in the New World Order but more importantly, to reverse this ugly slide into misery.

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In May 1999, Nigeria was ushered unto another era of democracy. With this development came a sense of relief and high expectations of socio-economic renewal. Democratic dividend became the cliché, which encapsulated this expectation.

Can democracy and development be seen to be mutually reinforcing? Some studies have indicated that for democracy to thrive, a certain level of economic development is a pre-requisite. To this group of analysts, democracy may not survive in conditions of acute economic backwardness. Another line of thinking posits that development, as an objective becomes more easily attainable through democratic governance.

Following, Sen. A., "The Value of Democracy", *Southern African Political and Economic Monthly*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2000, this article argues that a state does not "have to be judged fit for democracy rather it has to become fit through democracy. The central thrust of this perspective is to posit that democracy becomes more meaningful and sustainable when it translates into tangible socio-economic benefits (a la democratic dividend) for the people. In this case, we see democracy as not just an end in itself, but a means to an end.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Democracy is one of the controversial concepts in political lexicon, which yearns for, but lacks universal explanation. However, from the Athenian to contemporary conception of democracy, the central theme has been popular participation in the decision making process. Core components of such explanation would include political pluralism, which allows for several political parties to contest in free, fair and periodic elections to enhance the

freedom of choice of leaders. Democracy is characterized by political practices that guarantee representation, accountability and participation under conditions of liberty provided by the rule of law. Scholars have extended this conception further, seeing democracy as the entrenchment of the principles of checks and balances between the various arms and tiers of government on the one hand, and in society between groups with specific attention to minority needs and rights. The necessity for effective and a virile civil society and free press has also been emphasized. Transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the populace have come to form part of an expanded notion of democracy.

On the basis of these explanations, some analysts have aptly drawn attention to the fact that there are certain basic misconceptions of democracy. First, that periodic elections though a necessity are not enough yardsticks to define democracy. This has led some to assert that civil rule, contrary to popular thinking, is not necessarily democratic rule. Others have even attempted to differentiate 'electoral democracy' from 'popular democracy'. Thus, in explaining democracy, apart from taking into consideration its various indices, the operational context should not be discountenanced. Democracy then becomes a normatively relative concept. In other words what constitutes democracy in one society may not be what it is in another society.

Second and following from above, is the critical distinction in the understanding of democracy from two-worlds. In advanced capitalist society, democracy is seen from the perspective of freedom and human rights but in developing countries, it is seen as the panacea to all societal ills. This misconception is relevant for an understanding of the expectation that democracy possesses or should provide solution to the socio-economic decay of yesteryears. And

that the efficacy of democracy in this regard should determine its very existence and not vice versa.

Development has been conceived as an "ongoing process of qualitatively ameliorated social, political and economic change". It implies or connotes a progressive transformation, which improves and sustains the general well being of the citizenry. It is also a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of absolute poverty. Central to the development question is the capacity of a nation to ensure self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on external forces. Environmental issues have formed an indispensable aspect in the development debate. The notion of sustainable development symbolizes the need to provide for today without having the requirements of future generation jeopardized.

Because of multitude of definitions of development, the debate seems unending. However, Hettne's identification of three main categories of development models is very useful. First, Orthodox development which is built around Westernization or Modernization doctrine. This perspective holds that development is automatic once the European experience is strictly followed. It assumes that development follows a definite path and that the socio-cultural context is irrelevant or unnecessary. Nevertheless, this view is widely shared and popular among donors and multilateral financial agencies. It relies mainly on GDP growth and per capita income increase over time. The basis for the adjustment policies and sale of neo-liberal politico-economic doctrines to developing countries is erected on this reductionist conception of development.

The second class of development theory are those espoused by a group that has been called structuralist thinkers. It traces the root of underdevelopment to

exploitative international capitalist structures. Radical political economists in Latin America and Africa form the bulk of this group. It emphasizes the need to either dismantle this network or adapt same to the needs of the development countries.

The last group of development thinkers advocate a holistic understanding of development. There is no one perspective that can adequately explain development, as it is a multifaceted and multi dimensional phenomenon. It includes the socio-political, economic and environmental components. Central to this understanding is the betterment of lives of individuals and groups, which constitute the political community. In explaining development therefore, it is pertinent to note the interaction between the various indices.

Democracy and Development, therefore, are concepts, which lack straightjacket definitions. But as noted earlier both are mutually complementary. Development nurtures and sustains democracy while democracy enhances development. With development, people tend to develop a sense of satisfaction and the need to ensure the survival of democracy, its institutions and ideas, which had bequeathed the good life. On the other hand, democracy enhances the responsiveness and accountability of the state. It also empowers the citizens to participate in and claim ownership of the state and the development agenda.

Death of Dividends? Assessing Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The past four years of democratic rule in Nigeria had witnessed an upsurge in ethno-religious violence and communal conflicts. This led to huge loss of lives and property. The palpable feeling of insecurity climaxed with the assassination of the Attorney-General of the federation,

that democracy needs to engender development and deliver good life to the people.

On the political front of the development question, we have identified policy stability, participation, consultation, transparency and accountability as forming the basis of our analysis. Others include the management of the principles of separation of powers, rule of law and constitutionalism. It is important to note that these indices are all closely intertwined.

In terms of policy stability, the regime exhibited some level of prevarication. The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) underwent series of remodeling until it was finally abandoned. Another major pillar of the administration was the anti-corruption crusade. The ICPC Act itself has been engulfed in controversy, casting doubts on the efficiency and seriousness of the anti graft policy as well as the regime's commitment to transparency and accountability. At the height of the conflict over the ICPC Act, the National Assembly and the Presidency were paged against each other and the policy became overcharged. The inconsistency in policy delivery was no doubt worsened by the rancorous executive - legislative relations.

In spite of the fact that the ruling PDP had overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, which could have ensured harmony, the first four years of the Fourth Republic was marked with instability occasioned by legislative - executive conflict. This prevented harmony of interests between the two arms of government. Within these turbulent years, the Appropriation Bill, which is the economic blueprint in a fiscal year was passed very late in the second or third quarter of the year. This had negative effects on the development objectives of the regime and therefore, on the national economy. On a general note there

is a gradual movement towards the entrenchment of the principles of rule of law and constitutionalism and most importantly, freedom of expression.

Perhaps, the most daunting challenge which faced democracy in the period under review had to do with the management of the economy, which demonstrated crises with high degree of intractability. In spite of the various economic recovery strategies, inflation did not abate, exchange rate worsened, and capacity utilization declined.

According to CBN Annual Reports, the GDP showed marginal increases in the period under review. But this rise in GDP was due largely to rises in world prices of oil and not an outcome of any deliberate economy policy. The cost of living index (inflation) increased sharply from 6.6% in 1999 to 18.8% in 2001. This was due to expansionary fiscal policy at various tiers of government, depreciation of the Naira, irregular power supply and rising interest rates. Overall, these negatively impacted on the general well being of average Nigerians.

Economic Indicators (1999 – 2003)*					
	1999	2000	2001	2002	
GDP Growth Rate		2.8%	3.8%	3.9%	4.0%
CPI (Inflation)		6.6%	6.9%	18.9%	17.5%
Deficit Financing (% of GDP)		8.4%	2.9%	4.0%	n.a
Exchange rate (to \$1:00)		n.a	102.10	111.96	n.a
Capacity Utilization (Industrial & Manufacturing)		35.9%	36.1%	39.6%	35%

Source: CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account for years 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002; Selected statistics on African countries, 2002, African Development Bank, Vol. XXI; World Development Indicators, 2001, World Bank.
* Figures for 2003 not yet officially released

There is also the need to increase its allocation to social sectors like health and education at least to meet the international benchmark, which other less endowed states had since met. If country like Ghana could allocate over 20 per cent of its total annual expenditure to education it is simply incomprehensible that Nigeria allocates a paltry 7.1 per cent of total annual expenditure to such a vital sector. Appropriation bill remains the blueprint for a particular fiscal year. This instrument is yet to be fully utilized. It may not be, unless there is a harmonious relationship between the executive and legislature. It requires prompt passage and assent as well as strict adherence to its provisions. But the country certainly needs more than an annual budget to redeem its lost glory. In order to re-awaken a nation that is to all intents and purposes, a 'sleeping giant', a long-term vision is required. And this is long overdue. There is a need to prepare for Nigeria, a long-term blueprint to be implemented in phases that say by 2050, this should be the target. Such a vision as it was with moribund vision 2010, should not be allowed to die in the wind. It should be given the force of law that no particular government could easily deviate from.

Concluding Comments

We have drawn attention to basic conceptions and misconceptions about democracy and development. It was stressed that though both concepts lack universally applicable explanations there are indices for determining their existence, weak existence or non-existence. It was also noted that both are mutually reinforcing. Attempt was also made to examine this hypothesis in the Nigerian context under the Fourth Republic. Based on available data, democracy is yet to provide appreciable dividend. Some

issues for the future were then highlighted. Indeed, like it was stated from the onset, a nation does not need to be judged fit for democracy, it has to be made fit through it. This is the challenge facing the Obasanjo administration in its second term in office and beyond.