

Democracy and Social Insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is a well-known fact beyond reasonable doubt that democracy is a political system which is cherished by numerous countries and societies in the world and Nigeria cannot be an exception. Democracy and Social Insecurity in Nigeria is a paper which makes it crystal clear that there is plethora of obstacles which are adversely hindering the democratic experimentation in the country and some of the challenges comprise poverty, corruption, religious/ethnic conflicts, Boko Haram insurgency and unemployment. It is seriously argued in the paper that the democratic development could never be attained in Nigeria if the challenges are not adequately rectified. However, the paper also suggests a possible scenario that could be effectively deployed to resolve the challenges. It is strongly recommended in the paper that the three tiers of government such as the federal, state and local government should work harmoniously towards intensifying the poverty Alleviation Programme so as to alleviate the sufferings of the masses; the Anti-Corruption Crusade organized by the government of President Muhammadu Buhari should be courageously supported by the Nigerian masses. The paper also recommends that the Federal Government of Nigeria should redouble its efforts in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency most especially in the north-eastern part of the country and an enabling environment should be created by the government to provide adequate job opportunities to the masses in Nigeria so that they could be self-reliant and self-sufficient in offering their contributions to the socio-economic and democratic development of the country.

Keywords: *Democracy, Social Insecurity, Challenges, Development*

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Background to the Study

Democracy is one of the contemporary political systems which are practiced by numerous countries of the world comprising the developed and developing ones which are all painstakingly striving to attain gargantuan sustainable development. The democratic system is greatly admired and wholeheartedly embraced by the countries of the world because the system is adequately capable of according liberties, freedom and rights which are monumentally consequential in aiding them to progress and vastly prosper. The United States of America (USA) can be noticeably considered as a striking example of a nation which is practically demonstrating the democratic values and is also, benefiting substantially from the dividends of democracy. These may comprise inter alia, the rights and accessibility to proper, sound and functional education, quality health care delivery, availability of food that can vigorously clear away the challenges of hunger and starvation, quality and conducive shelter, adequate social security and other dividends which impact positively and exponentially on the lives of the toiling masses. The American democracy, therefore, becomes an indispensable springboard for other nations of the world particularly Nigeria to cherish and practicalise in order to sufficiently open and boost up numerous opportunities for development.

As a developing country of the world, Nigeria is currently practicing a democratic system which is aptly known as a “presidential system” of government that the country imported from the United States of America and the system has also been adopted for long. The presidential system of government offers so many golden opportunities for Nigerians. The executive presidential system of government is one, which provides for the position of a simple executive of state who is the head of state as well as head of the government. The executive president is a powerful head of government who obtains his powers directly from the constitution and the exercise of his power does not depend on the pleasure of the legislature as does the prime minister in the parliamentary system. However, the constitution clearly specifies the powers, functions and composition of each arm of government, and does not allow undue interference by one arm in the work of another. At the same time, the constitution gives to each arm of government some powers to check the other two so that no arm of government will become excessive in exercising its powers.

Furthermore, the concept of separation of powers, the inbuilt checks and balances all make it necessary for the three arms of government namely the legislature, executive and judiciary to cooperate with each other. The presidential system is therefore fundamental. It should be understood that the structure of the presidential system also requires that the members of each arm of government especially the legislature and executive co-operate among themselves to protect each from the other and also, the principles of tolerance, cooperation and a spirit of give and take are fundamentally important in enabling the government to function smoothly in a presidential system (Eluwa, 2008, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009).

The issue of social security is something that is of paramount significance in our democratic system because the democratic system cannot augur well if it is not accompanied by effective social security. The American democracy, for example, has been tremendously successfully

because greater priority has been accorded to security whereby the socio-cultural, political and economic opportunities for development can be adequately explored. Since the return of Nigeria from the constitutional democracy in 1999, social insecurity has been a formidable threat to the attainment of socio-economic and political development of Nigeria as a nation. Nigeria is a country that is vast and it is also adequately blessed with immensely useful natural resources – human, agricultural, solid mineral, atmospheric and water resources but it is glaringly saddening to note that, the country is characterized by a plethora of perennial challenges which are adversely bedeviling the development of our nascent democracy. These challenges include, inter'alia, poverty, corruption, religious/ethnic conflicts, Boko Haram insurgency, unemployment and others (Boyi, 2014, Boyi 2015, Boyi 2017, Boyi, 2018). This paper therefore, discusses about Democracy and challenges of social insecurity in Nigeria and it attempts to adequately address the challenges of social security which are increasingly becoming stumbling blocks to the development and prosperity of Nigerian democracy.

Conceptual Discourses

Democracy

There are vast array of literatures which clearly indicated that there was a glaring absence of consensus by scholars on the definition of democracy and this is apparently in view of the fact that it is difficult to argue for a specific conceptualization of the term as the proper meaning (Olowu 1995, Olaitan 1992, Oluokun 2000).

The Dictionary of sociology by Scott and Marshal (2005) conceives democracy as the rule of citizens. It also makes it crystal clear that the system was designed to allow all citizens to have a voice in decisions that would affect all. Democracy can also be perceived as a system of government in which people of a country can vote to elect their representatives and it is something that can be firmly established where there is a good government. As far as the democracy is concerned, there are certain inalienable fundamental human rights which the citizens of a country are anticipated to adequately enjoy so that they can indefatigably offer their support to the government and also, contribute in no small measure to the huge success and quality development of the country. Some of these rights comprise freedom of movement, expression, fair hearing, religion, association, election, rights to education, health care delivery etc. Furthermore, Obadan (1998), averred that a good democratic government should always be attentive to listen to the civil society, work in partnership with it and effectively carry out some tasks – maintaining law and order; maintaining a non-distortionary policy environment, invest in social services and infrastructures, protect the vulnerable groups in the society and protect the environment.

Social Insecurity

The issue of social insecurity is critical in this paper. Security, normally, connotes all the activities involved in the protection of a country. There is also the national security which refers to the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its self determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing (Ojokwu, 2011). National security is further explained as the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity to maintain its relations with the rest of the world on

reasonable terms. On the other hand, the concept of insecurity within the context of this paper can be referred to as situation of lack of social peace and stability in the society or country as it occurs for example, in some parts of Nigeria where tremendously valuable lives and precious properties were lost. It is a well known fact that the nascent Nigerian democracy has been excruciatingly harmstrung by social insecurity. In the north-west, for example, there are the challenges of kidnapping and cattle rustling; in the north-central, there are the challenges of religious/ethnic conflict; in the north-east, there are the challenges of Boko Haram insurgency particularly in the areas of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. In the other geo-political zones of the country such as the south-west, south-south and south-east, election violence and inter-tribal communal clashes are the challenges that are very prevalent claiming lives and properties. It is therefore, pertinent to note that all the challenges highlighted have been occurring in the country as a result of social insecurity; a monster that is posing a threat to the development of Nigerian democracy.

Theoretical Perspective

The paper has been underpinned by a Social Control Theory derived from the functionalist theories of crimes and was developed by different proponents such as (Nye 1958, Matza 1957, Reiss, 1951, Toby 1957, Reiss 1961 cited in Hirschi (2002). In criminology, the social control fundamentally proposes that exploiting the process of socialization and social learning, builds self control and reduces the inclination to indulge in behavior recognized as anti-social control. According to Nye, there are basically four (4) types of control namely direct, internal, indirect and control through satisfaction. Under the direct, for example, the punishments threatened or applied for wrongful behavior and compliance is rewarded by parents, family and authority figures while in the internal, a youth refrains from delinquency through the conscience of super ego. Under the indirect type of control, there is the identification with those who influence the behavior because his or her delinquent act might cause pain and disappointment to parents and others with whom he or she has close relationship and lastly, there is also control through needs satisfaction that is to say if an individual needs are met, there is no point to criminal activity.

Furthermore, the social control theory is basically concerned with the people's relationships, commitment, values, norms and beliefs and how they encourage them not to break the law. This also entails that when the people internalize their moral codes and ensure that they are well tied, there is every tendency for them to voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts.

From the foregoing analysis of the social control theory, it can be asserted that the theory is relevant in this paper in the sense that the challenges of social insecurity which are adversely bedeviling the development of Nigerian democracy can be rectified or reduced to the barest minimum through the application of the theory. The challenges such as corruption, religious/ethnic conflicts, kidnapping and cattle rustling are all threats to the development of Nigerian democracy and can be effectively checked and controlled through compliance to our societal norms, values customs and traditions; they are also criminal offences and crimes against humanity which all need to be controlled in order to ensure social control and conformity in our Nigerian societies.

Democracy and Social Insecurity in Nigeria: The Challenges

There are myriad of challenges which adversely hamstringing the effective development of Nigerian democracy and that is as a result of social insecurity. Some of the challenges are as follows:

Poverty

It is apparently clear that there has been a shifting emphasis on how poverty is perceived and this is due to the fact that what is conceived as poverty in one society may not be a poverty in the other. The definition of absolute poverty as individual's consumption below one USD a day is no longer tenable although income is central, being poor is also a matter of number of social indicators (Tahir, 2011). Awale-Ale (2005) sees poverty as an economic condition in which people lack sufficient income to obtain certain minimal level of health services, food, housing, clothing and education which are necessary for adequate standard of living. This definition is further corroborated by the Central Bank of Nigeria. The Bank maintained that poverty is a state in which an individual is unable to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, potable water and sanitation and thus has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limits of his or her capabilities (Central Bank, 1998). However, Aluko (2011) perceives poverty as not having enough to eat, high rate of infant mortality, low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, inadequate health, poor drinking water and sanitation, unfit housing and lack of active participation in decision making process. Poverty has also been defined as the inability to achieve certain minimal standard of living which comprises for examples, food, shelter and clothing which are the basic necessities of life that an individual receives for survival in the society (Aigbokan, 2000).

From the foregoing, it can be clearly deduced that poverty is a serious social problem which hinders the socio-cultural and economic development of so many societies in the world Nigeria inclusive. Researches indicated that there were so many Nigerians who have been unable to actively participate in the democratic activities of the country due to endemic poverty and also ,many people engaged in criminal activities such as corruption, kidnapping, cattle rustling, Boko Haram insurgency, etc. as a result of abject poverty (Tikumah, 2016).

Corruption

Corruption is part of the challenges of social insecurity which are adversely affecting the development of Nigerian democracy and it is also a social problem which permeate almost all the sectors of the country's economy viz education, health, agriculture, industry, politics, law etc. The term corruption comes from the Latin word *corruptus* which literarily means to destroy and for that reason, corruption can be perceived as a practice or an action because of the destruction it causes to the moral, political or socio-economic being of society. According to Tikumah (2016) corruption may be broadly defined as any conduct or behavior that involves unlawful or taking of any kind of favour or reward or punishment in the exercise of one's official/public duty, including the misuse of material or information, abuse of power/authority and misappropriation or diversion of resources. The term corruption has also been defined as the abuse of public or entrusted power for the benefit of a group to which

one owes allegiance (Akanbi, 2005). For Werling 1992, corruption is the illegitimate use of power for private end and also for Girling 1997, corruption is the deviation from the normal duties of a public role for private pecuniary or status gain.

It is an undisputed fact that corruption is posing a threat to the development of Nigerian democracy and this is in view of the fact that the country's politicians adopts it as a tool for the attainment of success in the political offices. The Nigerian politicians are essentially characterized by the evil habit of spraying money to the poor and toiling masses in order to desperately gain their political support and in the process of doing that, precious lives and properties are greatly lost. To further corroborate this fact, Otite (2006) observed that there was a political corruption in Nigeria and it was more pronounced in matters relating to election in an attempt to retain power and continue with the intense exploitation of the masses. However, it was also noticed that the Anti-corruption Civil Society, the Transparency International and others have regularly related Nigeria among most corrupt nations in the whole world. According to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), 2005 as narrated by its former boss Malam Nuhu Ribadu, Nigeria lost as much as \$380 billion to corruption between 1960 and 1999 – the year of the country's return to civilian democratic rule.

Religious/Ethnic Conflicts

To gain a clearer understanding of the impacts of religious/ethnic conflicts on the Nigerian democracy, the conceptualization of religion, ethnicity and conflict is fundamentally important. According to Durkheim 1965, religion involves more sentiments than rationality in relation to some objects believed to have supernatural powers and influence. Religion can also be perceived as a mode of worship (Ezewu, 1983). However, the concept of ethnicity and ethnic group have been explained by Scott and Marshal 2005, as individuals who consider themselves or are considered by others to share common characters that differentiate them from other collectivities in a society and they develop their distinctive cultural behavior as an ethnic group. On the other hand, the concept of conflict according to Scott and Marshal, 2005 has always been central to sociological theory and analysis and the issues concerning conflict could be traced in the famous works of Marx under the conflict theory. In the context of this paper, the term conflict connotes social disagreement or misunderstanding which occurs among the distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria which may be as a result of ethnicity and religiosity and which also, results in the loss of lives and properties.

The issues of religious/ethnic conflicts have been the perennial challenges bedeviling the development of Nigerian democracy and have been occurring especially in the north. The cases of religious/ethnic conflicts have been for long in Nigeria and some of the cases comprise the 1980 Maitatsine Riot in Kano state which began with the reported cases of kidnapping, raping and murder in Yan Awaki Area of Kano state; there were the 1992 and 1984: Bulunkutu and Jimeta crises in Borno and Adamawa states which were similar with the crises of Kano and, were associated with the political influence. However, there were the 1987: Kafanchan Riot in Kaduna state and the year 2000 Kaduna State Inter-Religious Crises between the Muslims and Christians which many lives and properties were lost. Other cases were the recent Jos plateau religious/ethnic conflicts and the communal clashes between the Fulani and TV/Agatu people of Benue State which all occurred in the year 2018 where tremendous lives and properties were hugely lost.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the religious/ethnic conflicts mentioned are threats to the development of democracy in Nigeria and something needs to be done to arrest them. There are so many factors responsible for the religious/ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Some of the factors include for example, religious fanaticism, misrepresentation, restricted social relations, the dominance of majority ethnic group over the minority ones, politics etc. (Junaidu 2001, Okafor 2010, Osakwe 1995, Crawford & Broodline 1996).

Boko Haram Insurgency

This is one of the formidable challenges bedeviling the development of Nigerian democracy and it has been claiming precious lives and valuable properties. According to Shehu (2011), Boko Haram is a name given to a group of people called Jama'at Ahlis Sunnah Lid-Da'awat meaning that the group is committed to propagating the prophet's teaching and jihad. In Nigeria, for example, the Boko Haram is a combination of Hausa and Arabic languages that literally translates that Western Education is forbidden and the group started as an Islamic sect with a puritanical, conservative and literalist approach to Islamic ideology in 2002 in Maiduguri, the north-eastern part of Nigeria. As an organization, the Boko Haram came out in 2002, and its transformation into an armed group started around July, 2009 which 17 of its members were killed in cold blood by the Nigerian Security Personnel. According to Jean Heskovits (2002), the Boko Haram turned to violence after the killing of its leader Muhammad Yusuf in cold blood while in police custody and since then, more and more of its members have been engaging in many violent activities which claimed numerous lives.

Furthermore, John (2011) who was a student of Nigerian Politics associated the violence of Boko Haram to a long standing tradition of radical antagonism to injustice, deprivation and crass materialism deeply rooted in the Muslim north and which is epitomized by the level of corruption and moral decadence of the educated elites. Since 2009, the attacks made by the Boko Haram group had been very terrible because numerous lives had been lost as it was noticed in the case of Kano attacks of January, 2012 which remains to date, the most devastating of its kind with more than three hundred (300) casualties; the other attacks that followed in the years 2014 and 2015 by the Boko Haram group in the north were also tremendously devastating. However, it should be clearly understood that the issue of Boko Haram is really threatening the progress and development of democracy in Nigeria especially in the north-eastern part of the country as it hinders the masses from actively participating into the political activities that are meant for their development.

Unemployment

The unemployment is another social insecurity or challenge that is abysmally affecting the progress and development of democracy in Nigeria and the victims of unemployment in Nigeria are largely the youth who are very energetic and productive in offering their co-operation and services to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria as a nation that is nurturing the nascent democracy. In the context of this paper, unemployment refers to the state of having no jobs especially by the youth in country. However, researches indicated that there are several factors responsible for unemployment in Nigeria. Some of the factors comprise poor economic growth, poor enabling environment, socio-cultural factors, the

neglect of agriculture as well as the wrong impression about technical and vocational studies (CBN 2016, Boyi 2014 Alubo, 2016, Adeghite 2015, Ekong 2003, Sanni 2010, Akande 2011, Okocha 2012, Ojimba 2013). It is therefore, very disheartening to note that unemployment produces some unpleasant consequences such as unproductive labour, adverse psychological effects, political instability, violence and crimes etc. which are all obstacles to the smooth operationalization and successful attainment of a prudent democracy in Nigeria,

Concluding and Recommendations

From all the foregoing discussions in the paper, it is crystal clear that the paper explores that the democracy is a contemporary political system that is practiced by numerous countries of the world which comprise Nigeria and the system is capable of according so many rights and opportunities for development to the masses. However, the paper highlights on some challenges of social insecurity which are adversely bedeviling the development of Nigerian democracy. These comprised poverty, corruption, religious/ethnic conflicts, Boko Haram insurgency and unemployment which are all anticipated to be adequately addressed for the socio-economic and democratic progress and development of Nigeria as a nation

It is based on that the paper recommends some possible scenarios as follows:

- a. There is the need for the three tiers of government in Nigeria which comprise the Federal, State and Local Government to work harmoniously towards intensifying the Poverty Alleviation Programmes in order to alleviate the sufferings of the masses. With that, the Nigerian citizens would participate in the democratic process and offer their supports for development.
- b. Corruption has now become a cankerworm that has seriously eaten deep into the fabric of the nation. It therefore, becomes pertinent for the Nigerian masses to wholeheartedly support the lofty efforts of the government in the “Anti-Corruption Crusade” of president Muhammad Buhari so that prosperous socio-economic and political development can be attained in the country.
- c. The issue of religious/ethnic conflicts has been claiming the precious lives of many Nigerians domiciling in the country especially in the north and for that reason, it becomes the responsibility of the government, the religious and traditional leaders as well as the masses to all work assiduously towards addressing the challenge.
- d. There is the need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to intensify and redouble her efforts towards averting the menaces of Boko Haram insurgency which has been tremendously causing the loss of lives and properties especially in the north-eastern part of the country. With that, social control can be achieved and the Nigerian democracy can sustainably prosper.
- e. It is also strongly recommended that the Nigerian government at all levels should make gigantic moves in creating an enabling environment for job opportunities to the masses particularly the youth so that they can be sufficiently self-reliant and contribute tremendously to the development of the democratic process in the country. The provision of job opportunities can be in the area of agriculture, health, education, industry, judiciary, security, etc. And that responsibility should not be solely shouldered on the government alone; the other stakeholders in the country can also reinforce the government in providing job opportunities to the masses.

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