

LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT, ELECTIONS, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: EXPLORING THE NEXUS

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Abstract

The paper explores the nexus that exists among the key concepts that relate to the democratization process and its consolidation in Nigeria. It also raises issues with governance in the country. The submission of the paper is that the process of leadership recruitment is flawed and this has impacted on the country's efforts at good governance as elections are taking place without the votes determining their outcomes. The chief culprit in this development is the concept of alien political parties that are not being derived from the people. The incidence of money politics is also a notable factor that has not made democracy to be playing its mobilizing role in transforming Nigeria. Based on its submissions, the paper recommends that the level of participation by the citizens in democracy should be increased and the political parties should be re-positioned to contribute more meaningfully to the democratic consolidation in Nigeria. These, among others, are capable of making democratic dividends to be more visible for all to see

Keywords: Leadership Recruitment, Election, Good governance, Dividends of Democracy, Democratization, Nigeria

Introduction

I am delighted to give the keynote address at this historic conference bordering on Nigeria's democracy. The theme chosen for the conference is very apt and speaks to issues that are being discussed on the country's democracy in the context of the approaching 2019 general elections where our politicians are again active; promising a lot but very short on implementation strategies on how to better the lot of the people. Before I go deeper into my address, it is important to appreciate the support of the management of the Crawford University, Igbesa to the conference that has brought all of us here today. Through the conference, the University is making a statement about its continued readiness to create the platform in a sustainable manner for dialogue and/or conversations on topical issues that affect the Nigerian nation.

In the same manner, I commend the foresight of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Crawford University, for its interest in deepening dialogue on issues around Nigeria with a view to finding solutions to the myriad of problems that trouble our dear country despite the efforts made in the past to change the course of events in the country.

Although more problems are troubling our nation, the academics should not despair and be discouraged as the more the conversations, the more the likelihood of finding workable solutions to our nation's problems. In this connection, I once again salute the courage of the Department in organizing this conference that is coming up about three months away from the next round of elections to usher in leaderships at the national and subnational levels. One only hopes that the various political actors who are busied with their campaigns will find the outcomes of the conference useful in fine-tuning their strategies and delivery modes that are capable of advancing democracy in the nation.

Leadership Recruitment

This is a major variable that is involved in framing the theme for this conference. Whereas national and local popular elections usher in political leaders, there are other modes of selection that slightly differ from the popular mode of elections. It is expected that before candidates are chosen among the list of aspirants, party primaries are conducted. In Nigeria, we have political parties that have settled for the consensus approach in choosing their candidates for elections.

The mode of indirect primaries is also provided for. It entails delegates after being chosen by their political parties discharge this responsibility on behalf of their members by picking

candidates for their parties to square up with candidates of other parties. Not to be forgotten is that a few of the other parties have provided for the direct mode of primaries which are elections for all registered members to pick their flag bearers. But judging by what is happening on the political scene of Nigeria, most of our politicians prefer the indirect mode for its amenability for fraudulent acts that include inducements to buy over the delegates and influence the party lists through the high number of statutory delegates that can be dictated to.

Normally, no good election can take place in the absence of good primaries to select candidates for elections. Paramount on this issue of primaries is the concept of internal democracy. Nigeria's political landscape is littered with complaints arising from the conduct of party's primaries because internal democracy as a valued concept is observed more in the breach as injustice and unfairness are dished out to many of the aspirants and their supporters by the party helmsmen who are expected to be fair to all their members. In a study conducted in 2013, Nigerian political parties were said to be the most corrupt public institution in the country. I doubt if anything has changed in people's perception of the political parties as bribes in dollars and naira have trailed the 2018 primaries of the dominant political parties in Nigeria.

With all kinds of distortions built into the primaries, leadership recruitment process has been compromised as moneybags end up having their wishes served, not minding the immorality involved. Leadership recruitment though largely liberalized, there are still many encumbrances that tend to limit participation in the electoral process. For instance, women are being culturally conspired against in addition to the humongous nomination fees coupled with other financial commitments that are involved in Nigeria's politics scare away many of our women from aspiring to be candidates for elective positions.

Another group that has been somewhat shut out though not through many legal provisions, are the youths who, in the last couple of years, have been quite active on the political scene of the country. Given the heavy monetization of politics, many of our youths have been disenfranchised as majority of them do not always have the huge financial resources that are required to be active players on Nigeria's political scene. However, with the assent given to the Not-Too-Young-To-Run bill by President Buhari, I maintain that lack of money and inadequate mobilisation are two major factors that are standing between many young Nigerians and the realization of their political aspirations.

Worthy of note is the fact that leadership recruitment can only come about through the political parties. No one can get to any elective post without having to belong to a political party. There are merits in this and the court pronouncements are available to back up the centrality of political parties to political leadership recruitment in Nigeria. Not surprisingly, there are keen observers that have bemoaned the exclusivity that has been provided for political parties as the only legal vehicles for standing for elections. Beyond the charge of corruption which the parties in the country would have difficulty in exonerating themselves from, the too many afflictions of the parties, mostly self-inflicted, are making observers to wonder if the whole political environment would not be better for it if other platforms are recognized in the leadership recruitment process.

Mention has been made of independent candidature which has been canvassed as a panacea to too many cases of impunity symbolized by imposition of candidates. Several other issues can be raised on this aspect of the theme of the conference. These include; the interference of religion, ethnicity, unhealthy electoral process, as well as the laws guiding it and the place of the courts in interpreting the laws on leadership recruitment.

Elections

Elections have assumed a greater level of significance across the world as they have become universally accepted as the best modes for leadership recruitment that confer legitimacy. Borne out of its relationship to the eventual governance that prevails in a country, nations of the world are not in the mould of treating them as less important. This plays out even in countries that have scarcity of resources as no effort is spared at conducting acceptable electoral processes. The cost of organizing contemporary elections is no doubt staggering, yet no nation has found the courage not to pass through the electoral process in one form or the other.

Three important functions of elections in modern times need to be appreciated at this point. One, elections have become major international events that nation-states watch and observe with keen interest. Our experience suggests that elections especially credible ones have become the keys that open crucial doors in the world and that instantly make countries that have regular electoral systems to join the league of democratic countries with all the benefits that membership confers by avoiding the odium that trails undemocratic attitude or conduct.

As the world is rapidly going democratic, hardly can any nation realize its full potentials while manifesting reluctance in passing through the electoral process. Elections especially their

quality have become the useful barometers for measuring the political health or otherwise of a country. Two, elections have become events that put countries that are undergoing them on the spotlight. Everything about a country that is going through elections is up for intense focus. With the experience of President Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire that led to an international onslaught against his country, every other country in Africa has been doing all what it can to have elections that meet international standards. Third, no other form of leadership recruitment is as popular across the world as the electoral process. It brings about sanity and orderliness in choosing leaders at all levels of public governance. The provision for appeals that often opens the gate to the courts is another beauty why there are fewer incidences of post-election conflicts being witnessed these days in countries where democracy has taken a firm root.

The electoral systems vary from one country to another but one common denominator of them all is that all countries are now striving to attain the best standards in electoral integrity to gain some mileage in the international system. Just as elections have the capacity to generate consensus, they also have the potential to widening the divisions within a country. Being a partisan issue that entails choice-making, sentiments often over-run reasoning more so in an environment of heavy reluctance on the part of sitting presidents to vacate office after losing elections or when politicians have dug into ethnicity or religious differences in canvassing for votes. Either of these weakens the social fabric and promotes rising tempers that fuel violence and conflicts around elections. Thus, we do have some special missions created for post-election conflict management as we currently have in the Gambia by ECOWAS through the support of other members of the global system.

Notwithstanding the imperfections of the electoral systems, the world seems to be in harmony on their indispensability as the legal, democratic and viable routes for installing or removing leaders. This has led to the formation of a network of election management bodies across the world that promotes the sharing of best practices on elections on the one hand and the establishment of elections monitoring and observers' teams across the world on the other. Noted, however, is a tendency to misinterpret the *raison d'être* for establishing observers and monitors' teams as the controversial reports they often submit have raised the stakes on the conduct of elections in some countries including Nigeria. Some of our critical friends have blamed the meddlesomeness of the international elections' observers that make them to widen the circumferences of disputations on elections on the imperialist impulses of those financing them at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Equally disturbing is the fact that elections these days have become wars in which all arsenals are welcome. No doubt, countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, The Gambia, South Africa, Togo and even Nigeria, have all witnessed the scars of post-elections' conflicts in varying degrees. Yet, elections are still important which may come in either direct or indirect forms. Whatever is the form, it remains the most viable and acceptable routes through the establishment and consolidation of democracy anywhere in the world. Little surprise, elections have become a veritable platform for promoting international co-operation as assistance is usually rendered to countries that are undergoing electoral processes by other countries or international organizations that can come in a variety of forms and magnitude. In the process, interferences of varied dimensions cannot be totally ruled out that may on their own generate concerns among the parties and candidates that are not favoured by the observers and monitors.

Good Governance

A rich collection of resource materials exists on the concept of good governance which the World Bank has helped to popularize arising from the failure of the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s to bring about the desired changes in the level of economic performances of Third World nations, including Nigeria. Ever since, the term has not failed to feature in all major meetings that are devoted to issues of economic development. Several perspectives have been shared by policy-makers, academics and the donor community on the concept. While some have seen good governance from the point of view of structural approach or institutions established to bring it about, others have focused on the extent of people's participation in the governing process. There are others who have also pitched their tents with the extent of regime of rule of law that obtains in a country as the main element in good governance.

Some crucial properties have been developed to differentiate a good governance environment from the one that does not possess all its properties. Notable ones include; efficient rendering of social services, accountability, respect for minority rights, gender balance openness, tolerance for opposition, rule of law and due process. Of all the properties of good governance, this author recognizes the principle of accountability as a cutting edge issue. It ordinarily has to do with finances but it goes beyond it. It simply means rendering an account of one's stewardship which also entails political actions and economic choices made during one's tenure. There is no way due regard will be paid to accountability without getting more people

involved in the governance process as the necessary feedback process will be greatly promoted when account rendering is appreciated by the people in governing positions.

Of course, one must admit that there are some of our friends who are not comfortable with the much noise that is being made about good governance. Their main grouse is ideological that is informed by the structural afflictions brought about by imperialism that are now being sustained by neocolonialism. Notwithstanding, good governance stands a better chance of being made a reality under a democratic dispensation. Experience has equally shown that a non-democratic government can also promote a good governance environment.

I hasten to say that while this is true, if a critical view is however made of the properties of good governance, one would realize that the environment that is best for their entrenchment is democratic governance. For instance, the requirement of accountability may be difficult to achieve fully under a non-democratic government as the renewal elections that come up at regular intervals, encourage the democratic leaders to form the habit of remaining connected to the electorate even during off-electoral-season to have what to showcase at the next round of elections.

In the radical literature, the whole issue of good governance has been perceived as a game being played by the imperialist states to hoodwink unsuspecting Third World leaders. Instead of them to admit their failure in lifting Third World nations out of poverty through their imperialistic manipulations of the economies in the past, they are now preaching good governance as a new gospel for further penetration of the economies of these countries to leave more miseries behind for them. As long as the dragnet of neocolonialism is hung on the neck of these Third World countries, no amount of good governance can transform them from being economic outposts of the advanced capitalist states for the benefit of the latter. The real issue retarding development in Southern Hemisphere as argued by the Marxists, is their uncritical integration into the economy of the North as an unequal partner that exists to serve the interests of the metropolitan states.

Dividends of Democracy

In the 1990s when the third wave of democracy was in the air, the assumption of Africans who were fighting undemocratic forces was that with the enthronement of democracy, all national disabilities would be reversed and better life would be heralded for the people. This

background had promoted the feeling that there are many goodies in the proverbial democratic bag that would be made available to the citizens. Concerns such as poverty reduction, functional education, employment opportunities, infrastructural development, among others, were eagerly awaited by Africans who so much believed in the efficacy of democracy to change the unpleasant climate of wants and under-development for the better to justify the hard options being taken including making the supreme sacrifice to herald democracy. One strongly believes that this expectation was not misplaced as the dummy of “fix it all” was ascribed to democracy in its advocacy to the African continent.

Over three decades after, Africans are groaning under the weight of unfulfilled dreams as concepts such as “democratic regression,” “democratic deficit,” and others are now being promoted to depict the low arching capacity of democracy to change the prevailing climate of under-development in the continent. To be more specific, the experience of Nigeria is pathetic and unfortunate; as the country is growing in democracy, so also is the poverty outstripping the state’s efforts at reducing it. In the country’s 19 years under the Fourth Republic, it has generated more poor people and unemployment for the country. This translates to not much impact of democracy on the economic standing of Nigerians as they are poorer today than they were twenty years ago when the country was under military dictatorship. A peep across some other African countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and others, give almost the same picture with Botswana and to some extent, Ghana transmitting a slightly different glittering picture.

The issue of dividends of democracy is germane and it strikes at the sustaining interest of Nigerians and indeed, Africans in democracy. It encapsulates the beneficial aspects of democracy to Africans. Quite regrettably, the people are not getting much of the goodies that they had bargained for when they were fighting tooth and nail to return democracy to their respective countries.

Exploring the Nexus

From the submissions in the preceding parts of this paper, it is clear that the four concepts that serve as the key issues in this year’s conference theme are inter-related one way or the other. For our proper understanding, I want to proceed to explaining the connection that exists among elections, leadership recruitment, good governance and dividends of democracy. The starting point is to recognize that elections are a mode of leadership recruitment that are distinctively

different from the traditional mode of ascension to power or military coup. The substance therefore, is leadership recruitment, while elections are the avenues to bringing it about especially in a democratic environment. Electoral contests which depict choice-making are being influenced by a number of factors. These include; integrity, past records, party platform, religious and ethnic considerations, the influence of money politics, manifestoes, etc. The first battle is for one to be sponsored by a political party. After which, another contest will be with candidates of other parties where you have the multiparty system and independent candidates where you also have provision for independent candidature. The primaries are almost the internal affairs of political parties, while general elections envisage participation by the generality of the citizens including those who are not card-carrying members of political parties.

After winning the elections, the leaders so chosen from the parties are expected to form governments at national and/or sub-national levels. The expectation is that after the constitution of government, leaders will be at home with the gospel of good governance anchored on rule of law and due process in administering their political units. It entails maintaining the social contract so established with the citizens during the period of electioneering campaigns. They are expected to be servants of the people all through their tenures. Being the servants of the people means rules must be kept and dividends of democracy must be delivered to the people who have endured all the hazards of partisanship to stay on the democratic course. Their expectation is that the government they have formed or the leaders they have elected will be diligent and responsible/responsive in serving them. With particular reference to Africa, the real motivation they had in fighting for democracy was the prospect that it was going to better their material lot. One argues that they were clear from the word go that while all the freedoms in democratic bag were desired by them, they would much more appreciate the material deliverables of democracy in lifting them up on the living standards' ladder.

I have observed some crucial factors that are not making the nexus among them to play out seamlessly in the real world. One, the platform of political parties especially in Nigeria is still problematic: it is either they are confused about their roles in democracy or certain environmental factors are constraining them in doing what political parties do in other parts of the world; they are only vehicles for assuming political power, not part of the socialization process. Not properly derived from the society has its own implications for the nation. One of

these is that the parties are perceived to be “aliens” to the country as their orientation and strategies are not deeply rooted in the society. Little wonder, they are only active during electioneering campaigns and have been resorting to inducements to make citizens attend their political activities. One would be correct to assert that they are political parties without members beyond those jostling for positions and their foot soldiers.

Two, Nigerian politicians are not respecters of laws; they are breakers of law. I have always argued that democracy envisages a rule-based environment that cannot be played without the laws made for it being respected. As long as this is so, democracy cannot operate optimally for the benefit of all. Three, Nigerian politicians are the laws unto themselves. Also, they are the sovereignty, not the people. This kind of mentality obstructs the smooth running of democracy and that makes the goal of good governance unrealizable. The leaders erroneously believe that they are the most important persons in the country’s democracy. Whatever they decide should be liked by the people. Unfortunately, this is not the way anticipated by democracy.

Four, Nigeria’s democracy caters more for its actors, not the people. With obscene salaries paid to elected and appointed officials coupled with a high level of corruption, only little is left in terms of the dividends of democracy for the people. Thus, Lokoja-Abuja expressway can be under construction for almost two decades. The same goes for Oyo-Ogbomosho expressway that has also outlived about four presidential terms in office.

Five, citizens are not doing enough to move from being voters to electorates who monitor what their leaders do on a continuous basis. Politicians everywhere are self-centered and myopic. Only active citizens can nudge them into doing what is good for their nation at all times. Six, a number of distortions have come into the electoral process that makes electoral outcomes not to translate into good governance. The phenomena of vote-buying, electoral violence, padding of election results, misuse of security agencies, intimidation and unprofessional conduct of the election management body, etc., are not only distorting the electoral process, but they also give some electoral victories to people who are not deserving of them and thereby blocking the chances of having good governance being entrenched in a nation.

Seven, another factor that is retarding the development of an environment conducive for good governance is the excessive use of money in the electoral process. Huge money is usually deployed by political parties and their candidates in clear violation of laws forbidden monetization of the political process. This has come about because of the perception that

politics is a war in which all strategies are welcome as whoever captures political power controls everything especially state's resources which he or she can deploy as it pleases him or her. As a lucrative business that must bring in returns, our politicians think less about the end result of politics which is development. Rather, the scope of returns on their investment is the major consideration and the reason why most of them mobilise resources including raising loans from banks for participation in the electoral process.

Eight, ethnicity and religious considerations fueled by the pervasive poverty which, in turn, exacerbate the illiteracy level have been issues that are denying our nation the desirable gains of democracy. A significant number of the voters vote for people of their faith and those that share ethnic affinity with them. This inevitably leads to wrong choices being made by the voters with the consequence that the beneficiaries of the electoral process do not think highly of the generality of the citizens after assuming political office. Nepotism informed by the country's fault lines often become the convenient lens through which they pilot the public affairs, not the overall interest of the nation.

Nine, the likelihood of delivering the dividends of democracy especially in Nigeria is being frustrated by the leadership that has consistently been imposed on the country by a clique that has arrogated to themselves the power to choose leaders for the nation. Most times, the leaders are ill-prepared and lack the kind of vision desired by the citizens in rapidly transforming the nation. Resulting from this, there is a high disconnection level between the leaders and the led that results in the country digging below her weight in all major indices of development. It is scarcely necessary to remark that Nigeria's democracy is not delivering public goods in the fashion expected when the struggle for its return peaked in the 1990s.

Ten, I cannot forget the fact that the global moral crusaders for democracy have not been sincere with the kinds of advice they give to African nations on their political economy. One notes their strong commitment to liberal democracy which they preach ceaselessly to these nations but their economic prescriptions coupled with the irresponsibility of African leaders have been eliminating the chances of these countries ever getting it right with their elections, leadership recruitment, good governance environment and satisfactory delivery of dividends of democracy to the people.

Concluding Remarks

In this keynote address, the focus was on the variables contained in the theme for this year's conference. It also devoted itself to a discussion on the nexus that exists among them. The highlights of the points made in the presentation are that elections are the universally accepted routes for assuming political offices in contemporary world. Any country found not to be showing deference to elections cannot productively engage with the international system. Elected leaders should be aware of the investment that the people have made in bringing them to power by dedicating themselves to the goal of good governance which in Africa entails bettering the lot of the people. That also entails the observance of rule of law and rendering of efficient services to the generality of their people. In this connection, the concept of dividends of democracy represents the best approach for achieving good governance for the nation. For now, citizens are disappointed that the current democratic dispensation only caters for the active politicians, not the generality of the people who still groan under the weight of wants and underdevelopment despite the growth witnessed in terms of the years spent under the democratic order.