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**Question**:constitution is important for the consolidation of democracy.However, the making of Nigeria’s constitution have been under two political dispensation that have anti-democracy tendencies,and this has been a great impediment to democratic governance in Nigeria. Examine some of the loopholes in Nigeria’s constitution over the years that have affected democracy in Nigeria.

I have sensed a disturbing complacency in our politicians and intellectuals as they try to enunciate democracy for the rest of us. They assume erroneously that democracy is its own justification – that simply being baptized with the moniker of democracy is sufficient. And that Nigerians, dispossessed they may be, will be satisfied with a political concept that, as currently practiced in Nigeria, stands empty of its substantive content.

This tragic misunderstanding troubles me personally because the assumption is that even as Nigerians groan under the weight of multiple deprivations, we can take solace in the knowledge that we have democracy and that democracy will soothe our pain. How wrong! The proper retort should be a classic Nigerian putdown: Na democracy we go chop? But let’s not trivialise an important issue.

DEMOCRATIC DISAPPOINTMENT

With such a low dividend on democracy, and with ‘democracy’ being so costly and toxic to the body politic, it is no surprise that many Nigerians have begun to question their loyalty to the received wisdom that democracy is superior to its alternatives.

For many Nigerians and Africans democracy has failed. It has failed to live up to its publicised benefits – tangible and intangible. So glaring is this failure and so painful are the betrayals of Africa’s ‘democrats’ that ten thousand Nigeriens recently poured into the streets of Niamey to rally in support of the new military regime there. Westerners may be scrambling to comprehend this dramatic reversal of public opinion from a craving for a democratic overthrow of a military dictatorship eleven years ago to an enthusiastic embrace of a military overthrow of a ‘democratic’ regime today. But this is something that people in neighbouring Nigeria can explain and understand. The exuberant Nigeriens at the rally were not expressing a preference for military autocracy. They were voicing their disillusionment with a failed democracy.

Nigeria’s democratic setbacks may not yet entitle us to reject democracy altogether or to be receptive to military rule. But we are at a crossroads, and if we continue with this charade, a Niger-like scenario of democratic disillusionment may be in the horizon. We cannot continue along this path: Abusing democracy, invoking it to legitimise all that is abhorrent but neglecting to fulfil its utilitarian promises to Nigerians.

America and the rest of the West have the luxury of evaluating democracy from a purely idealistic standpoint. They can afford the long wait necessary for democracy to register – the gestation period needed for democracy’s more visible benefits to trickle down and permeate society. They can comfortably absorb the overhead cost of democracy and the financial and political burdens of partisan gridlock. Their economy is big enough to soak up the imperfections and dysfunctions of democracy – which are many. Their political system is decentralised enough to withstand partisan and procedural impasse at the centre. Not Nigeria and Nigerians.

Our perception of democracy is a purely utilitarian one. Americans obsess intellectually about what democracy means; Nigerians ask what it can deliver to them. Nigerians evaluate democratic practice not in abstract or futuristic terms but in terms of its immediate benefits to their lives. Democracy will only be as popular as the results it delivers for Nigerians. Nigerians want democracy to deliver quantifiable gratifications, and they cannot wait too long for these. Eleven years is long enough.

It is not the fault of Nigerians either. The rhetoric of democratic advocacy in the military era made glib, enticing connections between Nigerians’ economic plight and the lack of democracy in their country. The suggestion was clear: Democracy brings development and improved living. Nigerians’ expectation of democracy rests on this promise. It is time they began to see some of the promised returns. If they don’t, they have a right to question the assumed connection between democracy and development and to become disillusioned.

It is unrealistic to expect that in a developmentally-challenged country where poverty is an inescapable companion, citizens would perceive democratic governance from a non-materialist perspective. Their needs are starkly material, so are their expectations from democracy. Nigerians should not be expected to muster the idealism and patience required for a long-drawn process of democratic maturity when their bellies are empty.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There is no innate or sacred loyalty to democracy in Nigerians – or, for that matter, in any other people. The degree of Nigerians’ attachment to the concept corresponds to the benefits that they see it delivering or the damage it is doing to their lives. This is why democracy is suffering setbacks across Africa.

So what’s the alternative to a broken, dangerous democracy? It’s not so simple. Dambisa Moyo, the Oxford-educated Zambian author of Dead Aid, offers one of the most eloquent critiques of democratic practice in Africa. Democracy –multiparty democracy – prevents timely action that may be the difference between a life-saving economic initiative and life-taking inaction, gridlock, or disaster. Democracy fosters costly ethno-partisan impasses that stifle development and productive economic change. She climaxes her critique by prescribing ‘benevolent dictatorships’ as the practical model for Africa. At least dictatorships get things done – if they want to, and are capable of pushing needed reforms through without the costly and time-consuming observance of democratic rules and processes. The procedural red tape of democracy is an enemy of development, she argues.

It’s hard to disagree with Moyo’s critique of democracy in Africa. But it’s hard to sympathise with her prescription because benevolence and dictatorships rarely co-exist in Africa, or anywhere, and it takes a naive mind to assume that they could. Nonetheless, she deserves commendation for going against the grain of universal democratic orthodoxy – the unquestioned dogma that democracy can simply be transplanted to Africa in its Western form with its stifling multiparty squabbles, expensive electoral rituals, and costly, divisive deliberative quagmires.

Here is the bottom line: This democracy is fatally broken. We are headed for an implosion if we fail to do something. Ikheloa may be hyperbolic in his characterisation, but the disenchantment with democracy and its many failures is real. We ignore this reality at our collective peril.

Events in the last few weeks have underlined the anxieties that underpin this reflection on democracy. Yar’Adua’s sneaky re-entry into the country and the gale of confusion and scramble that it unleashed exposed the fragility and shallowness of our democracy.

The debate over the succession crisis devolved quickly and predictably into familiar North-South brickbats. The nation truly screeched to a frightening halt; a tepid shove would have taken us over the cliff.

So, again, much as we are inclined to defer the discussion and to toe the politically correct line of advancing democracy as its own cure, we are frequently being confronted with political crises that threaten the very foundation of the union. The question is: What is democracy worth if the way we practice it imperils our country and its people and widens the crevices that divide us? Would we rather preserve a pretentious democracy .

Nigeria Road to Democratization

The modern day Nigeria is a culmination of numerous kingdoms and tribal nations or societies over the millennia. The

contemporary Nigeria is an outcome of the British colonial rule that started officially in the 19th centuries and enhanced by the merging of the Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914. The colonial masters established administrative and legal institutions which facilitated the practice of indirect rule through the local and traditional chiefdoms. However the country becomes officially independent federation in 1960. But due to distrust among the political class, the country was plunged into a prolonged political pandemonium that culminates to a fierce civil war from 1967 to 1970. Nevertheless, since 1970 the country has been swinging from democratically elected civilian

government to military dictatorship until 1999 when it appears to have achieved a stable democracy from the third wave of democratization as has argued by Huntington (1984). Nigeria has been running a presidential democracy since 1999 uninterrupted. And also have been able to record four successful general elections since then. The democratization processes that heralded in the dawning of forth republic can be argued to have effectively begun with the establishment of political bureau in 1986 by the government (military) of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida IBB, though others will argue otherwise and suggest that it started with the constituent assembly which was elected in 1977 to draft a new constitution for Nigeria as a means of transformation to civil or democratic system. Democracy is development induced. The more democratic ethics in a society, the higher the dividends of democracy the better the level of sustainable development... development can hardly be felt or achieved when democratic ethics are not imbibed and adhered to by the leaders and administrators. This is because the accommodation of the ethics of democracy enhances performance and facilitates development

 In addition, they contend that democracy and national development are intertwined and inseparable, since the major components of development such as; honesty, transparency, commitment, accountability, discipline, peaceful co-existence, integrity, etc. are reinforced in democratic environment. The point being made here is that the success of democracy would definitely lead to national development and vice versa. Although democratization and national development has some unique characteristics; e.g. capacity expansion, popular participation as well as freedom (Mazrui, 2002), Democratization has the position of independent variable, and on that bases determine the degree and level of development in any nation or society. Osaghae (1995) on the other hand is arguing that, it is essential to highlight the point that while democratization may generate national development, much of it would depend to a certain extent on the context under which the analysis is based. Beside the impact of democratization on national development may be a reflection of its time-spell as well as the degree of the democratization process. Osaghae, by the above analysis is not as specific as we would have wanted him to be, but he has made his point. The idea of popular participation as already highlighted is important to both democratization and development.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections, using the time series approach we have seen that in virtually all the development indicators employed in this study to examine the development trends in pre and post- democratized Nigeria, and which was derived from the 2015 United Nations/Word bank development indicators, but with a particular attention on economy, such as GDP real growth rate, unemployment rate and poverty level. Nigeria was never in a standstill at any point in the period covered, she continued to climb both in the negative and positive directions. But the study objective is to ascertain whether the democratization of Nigeria enhanced their national development. In order words it seeks to understand if the attacks on the validity of democratic hypotheses have any substance, or if it’s just a scholarly exercise