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ASSIGNMENT

Constitution is important for the consolidation. However, the makings of Nigeria constitutions have been under two political dispensations 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 constitutions over the years that have affected democracy in Nigeria.

ANSWER

There is an assumption that despite multiple deprivations, Nigerians can’t take solace in the knowledge that has democracy. On October 1st Nigeria added to its list of vital statistics a new status as the world’s fourth largest democracy. The list was already impressive. One African in four is a Nigerian; with a population of 80 million or more, Nigeria is larger than any country in Europe. It is also the world’s 8th largest producer of crude oil and has been the United States second largest supplier for six years, neither joining in the Arab boycott of 1973-1974, nor cutting exports for policy reasons subsequently.

Any voluntary handover of government from military to civilian rulers is unusual. Nigeria’s was, arguably, unique. Meticulously planned, and including civilians at all stages of the four-year process, it culminated in a change of government as smooth as in a western democracy. Further, Nigerians set a precedent in breaking from their colonial constitutional heritage.

The country’s economy has seen a boom since the return of civilian rule. Nigeria’s GDP has grown six-fold since 1999, according to World Bank data. In 19991, despite its vast oil wealth, Nigeria’s GDP was a mere 59bn dollar. That figure skyrocketed to 375bndollars by end of 2017. Nigeria, the continent’s most populous country, is still heavily reliant on oil. Petroleum represents more than 80 percent of total export revenue, according to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

When the global oil price crashed in 2016, Nigeria’s economy was not spared. The country went into a recession, its first in 25 years. The economy, the biggest on the continent ahead of South Africa, has not fully recovered. Unemployment stands at 23 percent and inflation at 11 percent according to official figures.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics figures, 43 percent of the country’s 190 million population is either unemployed or underemployed. Despite the recent economic boom, extreme poverty is common. Some 87 million Nigerians live in dire poverty, according to Washington-based Brookings Institution. Nigeria overtook India, a country that is home to the most extremely impoverished people in the world, it said.

Nigeria still remains one the most corrupt nations on the planet. Transparency International ranked the country 144 out 180 in its 2018 corruption perceptions index. If corruption is not dealt with immediately it could cost Nigeria up to 37 percent of its GDP by 2030, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a global auditing firm. This cost equates to nearly 2,000dollars per Nigerian resident by 2030, PwC said.

Under the military, press freedom was severely restricted. Whistleblowers faced detention and possibly torture in custody. Twenty years later, Nigeria has a vibrant media with the country also hosting bureaus for some of the world’s major media groups.

There are roadblocks to a strong democracy in Nigeria at all levels of government. Conflict-triggered by political competition and communal, ethnic, religious, or resource allocation rivalries-poses a major threat to democracy. Corruption pervades the daily lives of Nigerians.