

THE DIVIDEND OF DEMOCRACY IN A DEVELOPING NATION: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the relevance and importance of dividend of democracy in our democratic system. The paper was of the view that because of the way and manner the leaders and politicians handle leadership position and government in Nigeria, the real meaning of the term dividend of democracy is not only lost but also thrown away. The term dividend of democracy is now understood and seen by most Nigerians and common man as the benefits of those in government, the politicians and those who are close to them and members of their family. It is no Longer for the benefits of masses. No wonder there is now big doubt whether dividend of democracy is really possible in our Nigerian democratic dispensation. The paper was of the view that instead of dividend of democracy what we see now is democratic failures and dividend. The paper concludes by saying that most of the conflicts and electoral violence we see in Nigeria today is as a result of our neglect and betrayal of the dividend of democracy. Elections in Nigeria have become “do or die” affairs. It finally, recommended a way forward which includes a fight against corruption, and removal of this special class called the godfathers who make sure their godsons win elections by all means so that they will be there to service them. Finally, the pattern of appointing people to the position of authority ministers and commissioners should stop.

Keywords: Failure of Dividend of Democracy, Corruption, Electoral Violence, Poverty and Lack of Development.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the term dividend of democracy has become a regular political term among the Nigerian political elite. It has become so common among the politicians that it has lost its real meaning, proper usage and application. It is seen today by the ordinary Nigerian to mean benefits for the upper class of the political elite who used it quite often, while the ordinary Nigerian is yet to realize and benefit from it. In fact we can trace the origin of modern democracy to Greek City States of Athens where democracy is coined from two Greek words demos (people) and krakem (rule by), (Ikelegbe, 2005). Ordinarily it means the rule by the people and for the people.

Most people who use the term dividend of democracy today do not even understand what they say and the meaning of the word; hence its proper application is not only thrown away but also lost. No wonder they see and refers to it as the benefit of the upper class of the politicians in our Nigerian society. According to (Ikelegbe, 2005) the fundamental elements of democracy should be part and parcel of other early civilization. A democratic state is one in which the community as an entity possesses supreme authority and maintains ultimate control over the affairs of the state. This means in communities by act of voting the power to rule or decision making belong to the majority as no other method will determine the will of the people.

In its Greek understanding, it means the right of the people to participate directly in the act of election and governance (Ardo, 2000). From all these, it means that dividend of democracy supposed to mean the gains or Profits realized from democracy. (Jamo, 2013) stated that democracy all over the world is fast spreading due to its ability to provide basic requirements for good governance and development, this development has brought an end to the struggle for supremacy as to which system of government is best due to hegemonic emergence of liberal democracy as the final human government. Nigeria is not an exception; the process of democratic change that occurred through the Nigerian state was largely the product of internal and external pressures exerted on the Nation state of Nigeria. This occurred because, it is believed that democracy should encourage and stimulate development.

So when we mention dividend of democracy, it is supposed to mean a situation where the masses are getting some benefits as a result of the system. This benefit which occurs or brings development happen in the area of good roads, electricity, provision of housing, good portable water, free education etc. But in Nigeria, when you mention dividend of democracy, everybody will quickly understand it to be for those who are connected to those in power, the accumulation of wealth by certain group of people in the society. It is against this background that many people celebrated the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 after a long period of military rule. The reason why people celebrated the return to civilian rule was in anticipation that this will usher in the dividend of democracy which they have been denied of all these period of military dictatorship with the transfer of power from the civilian to civilian will usher in good governance and democratic dividend (Jamo, 2009). However, uptill now, the expectation of the majority of Nigerians have failed, this development is nowhere to be experienced. This has brought a situation where many people still doubt whether development is achievable or not under democratic dispensation. The doubts have grown very high because of the present insecurity, poverty, corruption, ethnic disturbances, Boko haram insurgences and underdevelopment.

They have come to realize that the issue or the word dividend of democracy is a term borrowed to complete the missing word in the dictionary. It is a jargon used by the politicians to deceive the masses or the electorate who have lost hope of benefiting anything from the present administrations or rulers of the people.

Nigerians now cannot differentiate the difference between the military regime of Sani Abacha, A period that witnessed high level of insecurity with the activities of the so called NADECO in 1993 with what is happening now Abacha wanted to transfer power to himself. He decided to put the whole of the country to tension. This happened because, the process of democratization in Nigeria failed during the period of Ibrahim Babangida the IBB political bureau in 1986 (Omolola, 2007). This was a failure because of the announcement of the June 12, 1993 presidential election which was considered by many observers as the fairest election in the political history of Nigerian (Izan, 2003) Babangida was not strong enough to withstand and

resist the demonstrations, and peoples agitation for democratic governance, He decided to hand over to chief Ernest Shonekon (Ojo, 1998) however Abacha did not allow that Administration last with the coming of democratic system in Nigeria after words, everybody thought that this was going to usher in development and dividend of democracy but this have not taken place, we are now in another level of military in civilian clothe the same conditions we experienced during the military era of Babangida and others are still very much with us now, even worse.

The Nigerians now instead of dividend of democracy, what we are witness is severe recession and high level of corruption. Most Nigerians are suffering because of lack of food stuck in the market; the very few ones are very costly to lay hands on. (Smith, 2007) the cost of transportation is very unbearable, high level of unemployment; most big companies have left Nigeria to have their base in the Neighboring countries kidnapping is now on the increasing. The dividend of democracy that Nigerians are witnessing now is high cost of living, while the politicians continue to parade themselves around in very flashing cars and flamboyant living in fact the process of carrying electioneering campaign in Nigeria becomes very costly and very alarming.

The Statement of the Problem

All over the world dividend of democracy represents better life for the rural people, providing welfare packages for the generality of the masses, and basic amenities including social and welfare packages for the people. According to the (UNDP, 2007) what democratic governance represents includes participation of the people, adherent to the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation equity effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision. In all these, there is none that is applicable and working in Nigeria. Democracy, which is supposed to be for the people is now for the rich politicians in the country (Ademoyi Olawole, 2009).

Some believe that democracy that supposed to be for the development of the citizens rather than the restraint, curtailment, suppression and oppression, authoritarian governments and regimes witnessed in the Nigerian society. (Igba 2012). The worse is the activities of the Boko Haram set, that have destroyed so main people in the Northern part of Nigeria (Anarfi, 2004). The set has heightened fears among the populace and the international community, their activities have eaten deep into our economy and as a matter of fact the hostility has gone beyond religions and political coronation.

Instead of the dividend of democracy what we can interpret the situation in Nigeria today is democratic failures, poor standard of living, infrastructural decay and fallen standard of education (Omotola, 2007) most big politicians in Nigeria now take their children abroad to Neighbouring African and European countries for better standard of Education.

The economic recession in Nigeria has grown worse and this has affected seriously the average Nigeria person. The recent reports shows that Nigeria that used to lead other African countries has gone very much badly, Nigeria is now considered one of the 20th poorest countries in the world with over 70% of its population classified as poor with 35% living in absolute poverty (UNDP 2006). Also report indicates that 59% of women die during or soon after childbirth every year, the second highest in the world after India (Chay, 2008). This is as a result of poverty and non-provision of essential medical care. Meanwhile majority of the Nigerian politicians and parliamentarians live in effluence and immense wealth through corruption. No wonder Soyinka described this arm of government as the Apex of corruption in Nigeria. In

Tribune Wednesday, 20th October 2010, he used the term hydra and Octopus as images to define the kind of graft confronting the country. (Mojeed, 2010), speaking at the Lagos Town hall meeting organized by the save Nigeria Group and its allies with the “theme Endemic corruption; The Bane of good Governance (2012) According to him the Nigerian legislative system is hydro-pus. This is the administration that supposed to provide succor and good governance to the people, they have failed, the hope of dividend of democracy for the people have chattered, to majority of Nigerians dividend of democracy is nothing but a course to them.

Therefore, the intension and focus of this paper is to find out what dividend of democracy was supposed to mean and what factors that militate against the provision of dividend of democracy to the generality of the people. Finally, to find out whether there is a relationship between democracy and National development Corruption and lack of accountability have hindered the provision of dividend of democracy in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

As stated earlier, a dividend of democracy is coined from two different English or dictionary words dividend meaning profit, that is profit people get from what they invested in any business, Oxford English dictionary Second Edition Wikipedia (1926) by Anthony Burgess. Which means the benefit or profits which the citizens of the country ought to receive from being members of a particular government of the day? While democracy means a system of government in which all the people of a country can vote to elect their representative Oxford Dictionary. Second Edition Wikipedia (1926) by Anthony Burgess.

This means in a democracy all the citizens of the state have the right and obligation to vote and elect the right people to represent them. Since all the people jointly voted and elected those who represent and govern them, then it is believed that the power belong to the people who voted them there, which (also) means that they will be there for the benefit of the people or masses and not for themselves and their family members alone as it is done in Nigeria (UNDP, 2007). A situation of patrimonial system, in which a ruler who is jointly elected and after and when he sets in there, he sees the position and benefits for himself and members of his family and friends alone. He sees the position as good opportunity for him to make his own money, grab his own and become rich at the expense of the masses who voted him in.

This is the reason why the term dividend of democracy has lost both its meaning and taste in Nigeria. It has become one of the archival words or languages used during political term. A term that has lost its meaning and purpose, most times it is used by those in authority to express and drive home their political language and intensions which has nothing to do with benefits of the masses. It has become a political language that has no real meaning to convey to the expectations of the people. The masses themselves do not even believe and have regard for the term. It is part of the deceiving statements used by the deceiving political elite. The masses in reel term understand and see it as political jargon that is used by corrupt politicians to drive home their evil intensions. It is most times used by the so called Nigerian godfathers in politics to support their godsons to perpetrate corruption.

The level of corruption in Nigeria has made the leaders to forget to know that there is something like constitution. (Akinde, 2005) sees the level of corruption in Nigeria which has destroyed the nature of dividend of democracy as an intolerable phenomenon that in many ways spawn destructive consequences on the various strata and sectors of any polity. It is a contagious

disease that may permeate and cripple any policy. It affects the delivery of quality goods and infrastructure required for common good (Windsor & Getz 2000).

The level of dividend of democracy is what you used in assessing good government. Good governance is among other things, participatory, transparent, accountable, effective and equitable. It promotes the rule of law and justice, equitable distribution of economic and social amenities become the order of the day. A typical example of what lead to the dead of dividend of democracy is the unfortunate statement credited to Senator Nuhu Aliyu, a former Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) and chairman of the senate committee. National Security and Intelligence in the Senate, summoned courage to state as back as in 2008 that both chambers of the national assembly were populated by murders, crooks and criminals masquerading as law makers, not a few legislators asked for his lead. Faced with the risk of expulsion from the senate if he did not identify physically the evil men in the chambers, he was forced to withdraw the statement and how ever to err is human and to forgive is divine. The whole corruption allegations and probes can definitely prove the man right. (The Guardian Sunday July 29, 2012: 53 – 56).

The reason for the above is because our people have lost both the meaning and understanding of the concept of democracy. This is the reason when anyone of the politicians wins an election or is appointed into an exalted political position they jump into celebration and their people will use all the National newspapers and televisions to congratulate them, they now see it as an opportunity and chance to loath and steel. (Jemo, 2013) stated that the world over democracy is fast spreading due to its ability to provide basic amenities to the people. But in the case of Nigeria, the opposite is the case.

Democracy as it is used now is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly to elect their representatives from among themselves ,persons that will represent them in the National parliament. Too many, democracy is the rule of the majority, in Nigeria this is not the case, many now see democracy as the rule by the few rich politicians and godfathers who now appoint those who are referred to as their godsons who make returns to them regularly to the position of governance and authority to the detriment of the masses. This is the major factor that has hindered development and reduced the provision of dividend of democracy. For as long as this godfathers and godsons continued to exist, the level of corruption will continue to increase while the level of development will be slow or none at all. (Fadia & Fadia, 2007), stated that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. In fact, corruption has defined the image of politicians in the eyes of many Nigerians, from the case of outright bribery to other crimes like inflation of contract (Sam Iroanusi, 2006). Femi (2013) described democracy as the ability of the electorate to choose freely on a regular basis between competing groups of potential leaders who want to conduct the affairs of the state. In orders words, in democratic systems citizen always enjoy freedom of speech, press and assembly. For government to be really, democratic such government or state must be legitimate, free and fair and must maintain and retain the fundamental human right. Democracy therefore, involves popular participation in the process of governance the election must be free and fair there should be better life for the people. Those who are to represent the people must be elected and not the type of Nigerian system whereby democracy is for the godfathers, and rich politicians who select people who are their godsons that make returns to them on a regular basis at the detriment of the peoples dividend of democracy. The Nigerian situation is the case where dividend of democracy is the personal rule with an authoritarian and autocratic system.

The leaders dictate what happens and carry it out, without minding the consequences of their actions (Jega, 2007). In his own, (Momoh, 2007) as cited in (Mallam, 2009) was of the view that democratic governance rests on a desire to represent the interest of the people or the citizens with total transparency, accountability and fair play.

Therefore dividend of democracy rest on popular support, benefits to the people and the ability of the people to see them as part and parcel of the democratic governance. This is not the situation whereby those who enjoys the dividend of democracy in the Nigerian state are those who are connected to those rich politicians and political godfathers in Nigeria. These corrupt set of people have hijacked the leadership position and all the benefit that accompanies it.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Neo-Patrimonial Theory

This explains a situation where a political leader uses his or her position to enrich himself and his relations not minding what the law says. They see public office as opportunity to enrich them. Patrimonialism is a government based on personal rule, the absence of separation between the public and private realms of the state officials. Political offices are perceived as fiefdoms and patronage by officials, the system operates basically through (Numerous patron client networks. This theory was propounded by Max Weber; he went further to say that the theory involves an arrangement where the ruler dispenses public offices and benefits to subordinate in return for allegiance and substance (Smith, 2003) Patri monialism has been perceived by (Adamolekun, 2006) as the appropriation of public offices and other utilities by the state officials for the personal benefits and those of their clients. The Nigerian government has been politicized which has manifested in the way and manner political office holders come to power. Instead of making things easy for the majority of people, the political leaders have diverted the state goods and services to their own personal use, hence instead of dividend of democracy what we have is diversion of democracy. What makes for dividend of democracy or the result of dividend of democracy is the presence of good roads, water, electricity and free education at all levels of the society. Dividend of democracy means that the rulers have decided to make things cheaper for the people. Life becomes easy for the general public. Among all these, the resultant effects of dividend of democracy we know in Nigeria is the separation of the poor from the rich. A situation where the rich have everything to their advantage while the poor continue to suffer deprivation. The rich and the politicians continue to celebrate their ill-gotten wealth.

Neo-parimonialism are particularly obvious according to (Clapham, 1985:45) the speed with which the following claimants gather around a successful politicians and the readiness with which the abuse of office is accepted as normal behaviour condemned only in so far as it benefits someone else rather than oneself. He uses his office as family affairs (Hansen, 2003).

The Clientelism Theory

This explains the situation in Nigeria where the leaders abandons the issue of dividend of democracy, to specific services and resources for political support often in the form of votes. It is a relationship between unequal, in which the major benefit accrue to the patron redistributive effects are considered to be very limited clientelism rests on the notion that the expectations and behaviour of public officials are ordered in the redistribution of resources from the patron to the

clients to always rally support and solidarity, the clients expect the big patron to settle them (Omotola, 2007).

It is an aspect of Neo-patrimonialism used interchangeably with patronage. It is important to note that both do not mean the same. Both concepts are distinct in terms of their beneficiaries.

Another theoretical framework used to analyse the issue of dividend of democracy is the state fragility theory, according to (Hansen, 2003) tries to explain the failure of state to perform the functions necessary to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations. The citizens or a section of them would not be happy because their needs and expectations which is part and parcel of the dividend of democracy denied of them. The reason for the various conflicts by different ethnic groups in Nigeria is because of lack dividend of democracy, simply because they were denied of major resources like employment and basic amenities Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in may 29, 1999, so many groups in Nigeria have been involved in different types of conflicts as a way to express their disapproval of the existing state of affairs. This has led to the demand for resource controlled by some states in the Niger Delta Region such as Delta, Bayelsa, River and Imo states. The Fragility theory according to (Olsen, 2000), therefore are usually described as incapable of security, maintenance of law and order. When the legitimacy of a state is in question, based on the fact that the citizens are not carried along and the policies of the state are quite out of congruence with the expectations of the population, such a state of affairs will bring in disharmony and satisfaction and quarrel in the polity, also such a situation is referred to as fragile state. This could explain the situation in most third world countries where there are hunger and conflicts (Kew, 2006).

SUMMARY

It is very clear and understandable that many of the problems and conflicts we have in Nigeria's leadership and democratic system is because of the absence of enabling condition for democratic participation, this include the absence of basic needs and amenities that supposed to be part and parcel of the dividend of democracy. The prebendal compliance nature of our Nigerian politics has turned our process of election in to a competition and warfare. The political process becomes a "do" or "die" affairs, (Obasanjo, 2007), state has become a total and a means of livelihood or meal ticket in the hands of the political elite to achieve ethnic sectional goals. All manner of weapons are used by the politicians to win elections. The electoral officials are bribed and many of the leaders apply the Machiavellian theory as the last option (Ashiru, 2009). The process of free and fair elections is now thrown overboard. According to (Habu Agbu, 2000) stated that for the first time in Nigeria's electoral history, the electoral commission conducted election without proper voters register as stipulated in the electoral act secondly, the ballot papers used in the elections had no serial numbers, again as stipulated by law. In many and most cases, results were announced even before the polls had closed. Nigeria is the only place or country in recent times where candidates who are to stand for the elections are chosen by their political godfathers instead of by elections. It is only those that certified the desire and needs of the good fathers that were chosen to context the election. These political godfathers make sure that they win by all means either by hook or crock.

This is the reasons why they get there at the seat of power, they make sure they satisfy the needs of their godfathers who appointed them at the detriment of dividend of democracy which supposed to be their major purpose so that the majority of the citizens of the state will be happy. This was the major reason why most of the political leaders do not do well. There major

priority is to satisfy the desire and intension of the godfathers who appointed them, at the detriment of the people. As long as these godfathers are obeyed and their will satisfied. There godson will always continue to win all elections and continue to be at the corridors of powers.

Any attempt to change the political status quo has always resulted in party fractions, squabbles and inter and intra-party violence and this in many occasions resulted into violence, killing of party members and kidnapping of others. A typical occasion is the case of the Anambra State where the then governor tried to disobey his political godfathers so as to maintain sanity in the system, he was abducted by this erstwhile godfather. Governor Chris Ngige in 2005 was Abducted by his godfather Chris Uba. Also in Oyo State in 2005 saw crises that led to the impeachment of senator Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo State in 2005 which was believed to be master minded by his godfather chief Lamidi Adedibu, the assassination of Chief Harry Marshall while standing for the ANPP after decamping from the PDP. This could equally be attributed to the factors that led to the death of Bola Ige because he refused to bow low to the pressure from the ruling party PDP.

These factors, contributed to the reason while the issue of dividend of democracy is thrown overboard. These political leaders and godsons must obey and service their political godfathers if they must be in power. This means that the resources meant for the general public must be diverted to service them. This notwithstanding they must equally dictate those who are to be appointed ministers and commissioners in the state, whether qualified or not. This has led to the emergence of a special class of people called the money miss road” they are appointed to that office to compensate those that appointed them because of the role they played in bringing in the governor or president or the political leaders to the position. These sets of people referred to as ministers, commissioners or political advisers are there, and understand one thing, that is to make money and corruptly enriched themselves in place of dividend of democracy. This is the reason the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) has rated Nigeria as the 158th poorest countries in the world and the second corrupt nations in the world (UNDP 2007).

According to (Ojo, 2009) corruption under the new democratic dispensation has been pervasive open, and shameless, he stated that Nigeria been potentially Africa’s largest economy, the country produces over 200,200 graduates of Tertiary institution and has the 6th largest gas reserves in the world, the tenth largest producer of oil therefore Nigeria has no business being poor.

The Way forward

The level of dividend of democracy to the people will determine the extent and level of acceptability of that leadership and government Therefore, for Nigeria to practice dividend of democracy the following must be done or put in place. The issue of accountability must be taken seriously. EFCC and other bodies responsible for ensuring accountability must be seen to doing their job creditably.

The corruption is the bedrock, the highest disease and virious killing the political state of our economy. If this is reduced, then dividend of democracy will get to everybody. Another dangerous factor killing both the electoral system and the leadership position is the emergence of a special class of people called the godfathers, who rig elections to make sure people who are not qualified are brought to the corridors of powers for their own selfish purpose, if this sect are declared illegal in a state then the better for all Nigerians.

The pattern of appointing people to the position of authority as ministers, commissioners and political advisers, when cultist rubbers and wicked people found themselves into the position, they see it as a wonderful opportunity to grab their own. No wonder the people continue to congratulate the governor or the president for appointing their son or daughter into such a political position, hence their own time to embezzle and steel

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