

DEMOCRACY, CONFLICTS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This paper briefly explained and how political conflict has not allowed democracy to be entrenched in Nigeria and how this has not allowed development to be even within our society. This conflict has resulted in political crisis, religious intolerance, etc. The political conflict which erupted way back in 1966 was instrumental to the Nigerian civil war which was political. This happened barely six years after independence in 1960. This conflict did not allow the parliamentary system of government as well as democracy to be tested and take root in the country. The conflict also stood in the way of national development. It is not that national development is not taking place, but this is to highlight the point that because of conflict in Nigeria, democracy and national development have not taken proper shape. To achieve national development targets, Nigeria should encourage national integration and stand against anything that will disturb the peace of the country.

Keywords: Democracy, Conflict and National Development.

Nigeria is a picturesque country where the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. It has waters (seas, lakes, rivers) where ships, yachts and boats berth and set sail. It is a country of rocking hills and verdant vegetation. It is a country with forests where monkey, rabbits and other animals make their habitation. Nigeria is blessed with large arable land mass. Beneath our soil lie bauxite, tin-ore, line stone, gold and crude oil. One out of every five black person is a Nigerian. Million of skilled and highly educated Nigerians live abroad, where they are contributing their quota to the development of their host countries (Okoye, 2012).

Nigeria as she is called today came into existence in 1914 after the amalgamation of the north and south protectorates by Lords Frederick Luggard who also

Pristine

became the first Governor-general. That could also be said to be the genesis of the political problems of Nigeria bringing to light the issues of unity, peace, leadership and governance of the country. The amalgamation brought people of different tribes, ethnicities, nationalities and religions together. This in the process exposed the country to different languages, religions, styles of governance and attitudes towards western education.

The country got independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. These developments ushered in a liberal democracy. The political parties that came with the independence were parties based on tribal/ethnic lines. For example; the Northern peoples congress (NPC), Action Group and National Conference of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC). This brought about tribal politics leading to shameless election frauds, thugery, gangsterisms, absence of electoral officials, open election riggings booth capturing, breakdown of law and order with unprecedented violence, corruption, etc. In the process, it became manifest that to participate in national politics, politicians must master the art of manipulating the minority to intimidate the majority to submission. Democratic government could not be defined here as the government of the people for the people and by the people as given to us by Abraham Lincoln of the blessed memory. It came to be that each regional party ensured absolute control of their tribal groups in each of the regions without regard for any opposition.

So, the emergency of democracy in the early 1960s in Nigeria was a failure which ended in chaos. It gave the military the justifiable entry into the Nigerian political arena. Major Nzeogu and his colleagues brought to an end the first republic in 1966 by a coup. This brought into the country the institutionalisation of the military into the Nigeria body politic until 1999 when the Obasanjo administration came to power.

Origin and Definition of the Term-Democracy

Former American President, Abraham Lincoln, defined democracy as concernment of the people, by the people and for the people, but this is just the simple definition of democracy, a more concise and more detailed definition of democracy is that the government of a country is carried out by representatives of the people, elected by ballot on a practically universal suffrage. These representatives are in power only for a maximum period of four years, and should they fail to discharge their duties or separate the purpose for which they were elected, to the satisfaction of the electorate, they will be dismissed and replaced by others in a much less time than that. Hence, the government of any such country is not merely for the people.

What is Conflict/Definitions

The advent of democracy has in no small measure brought about some notable changes in the history of our nation. Hence, this democracy is accompanied with so many conflicts which resulted in some changes in our nation, because issues of conflict usually brings about changes and development, some of this changes includes social, political, economic etc.

Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

It is obvious that political conflicts are common these days, and the results of these conflicts likely to be exceedingly unpleasant. But what these conflicts are really about is not clear and it is not explained by describing them as ideological differences. The position is that few people are quiet certain whether the powers that be, are at enmity with one another, over economic advantages or political organization or some thing more vague but equally important which may be called the claim of the individual to determine his own life and conduct; and there is no agreement as to whether these are separate questions or are so intimately connected that they can profitably be considered only as a single problem.

It may well be admitted that we have here, the different kinds of ground for disagreement and also that, there are important connections between them. The essences of this paper is therefore to relate democracy and conflict to our national development, and to see, if this democracy and conflict has brought some changes positively or negatively to our national development.

Conflicts clearly stated are common these days and the results of this conflicts are extraordinarily unpleasant. What these conflicts are usually about is their personal or group interests that is why, the position of some people is that whether the major power players are constantly in enmity or not with one another, what usually results in political conflict among them, is the disagreement in deciding who is to be in and who is not to be in power. Furthermore, there is also a controversy between the electorates and the representatives in relation to their activities or inactions to the constancy. Therefore, from the above positions, it can be seen that conflict is a disagreement between two or more or a group of people mainly over issues of personal interests or group interests.

Definitions of the Term Conflict

According to Pruitt and Robbin (1986) conflict is defined as a perceived divergence of interest or believes some of our political leaders today, have divergent interests. For some of them are not their for the interest of their electorates, they are there for their own interests and this often leads to conflicts between them and electorates. Furthermore, Nwolise. (2003) defined conflict as a clash, confrontation, battle or struggle, and this connotes disagreement, controversy in idea or view points held by two or more groups of people.

Causes of Conflicts

- 1) Class struggle
- 2) Quest for power and position
- 3) Social injustice
- 4) Marginalization
- 5) Social and environmental cause

The few listed above are usually some causes of conflicts. These are elaborated as follows:

Pristine

1. Class Struggle: The discussion of class struggle in conflicts hinges critically on the demonstration of the existence of social classes and the nature of class formation. This is particularly important in Africa where obscurantism and ideological distortions beclouds the rational analysis of classes.

This concept of class struggle anchored on the ownership of the means of production, where ownership includes both control and appropriation of surplus value by one social group from another.

One of the features of social class emphasise by this conception is their dynamic nature. This arises both from the fact that the relations of social production that define classes are basically dynamic and changing phenomena. Moreover, the process of class formation involves structural changes. Hence, class structure with society is further subdivided into:

1. The upper class
2. The middle class
3. The lower class

1. The upper class are those who conforms with the descriptions given below, and these are the groups who continuously dominates our political scene. These people are those who come to power either by democratic or by struggle, which advertently results in social conflict. This upper class people usually dominate those in the middle and lower class, and the struggle by which people get to the upper class consequently results in conflicts.
2. **Quest for power and Position:** The quest for power and position and the inordinate desire to get into power by all means often results in conflicts amongst some groups of people.
3. **Social Injustice:** This is an inhuman treatment meted out by those who through undemocratic process or who by their own struggle got into-power to their representatives, or a denial of social justice by those in the upper class to those in the middle or lower class, which often leads to conflicts.
4. **Marginalization:** This is a perceived denial of some rights, positions of trust, privileges, resources or social amenities and infrastructural facilities by some group of people, which lead to conflicts for example the Niger Delta crisis.
5. **Social and Environmental Causes:** This can also lead to conflict, when the environment is polluted, and there is no effort by the government in ameliorating the effect of such pollution on the people. This often leads to conflicts again as we have seen in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It can be seen that, conflict is a disagreement between a group of people in order to effect changes or to get things done, because people and nations are genuinely at variance about principles, and

Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

there is no ground whatever for supposing that such disagreement can be disposed of by a course of philosophy.

Furthermore, there is no evidence for the contention that Plato or other philosophers do possess any special knowledge which qualifies them to act as consultants on actual political and economic affairs, nor have their incursions into these departments being particularly fortunate.

The proponents or crusaders of democracy thought it wise to establish a government that duly represent the peoples dreams and aspirations on ballots, that is to say that a government in which the people deem fit and capable to represent them, this was the initial plan and aspirations of those who fought for democracy. But on the contrary, it seems that the dreams and aspirations of these has been dashed because in some countries of the world today, democracy which is supposed to be a government of a representatives of the people through ballot, have been replaced with struggle to get into power by all means, through blood shed, massacre. etc. All these often leads to democracy conflict.

Furthermore, democracy conflict is a war of ideologies. In other words, it is a sort of crusade by democratic people against the tyranny of fascism. Now, on the face value, democracy and fascism have no moral or religious meaning whatever. They are just names for different methods organizing human beings as such, are as unsuitable to crusade about as limited liability or public utility corporations. Few people would be prepared to shed their blood in order to substitute proportional representation for our present electoral system, or to obtain a decimal currency. So one is led naturally and rightly to suppose that 'democracy' and 'fascism' in this context really means something quite different from what they seem to mean.

It is not easy to say exactly what this highly important meaning is, and statements that it is the British, American or German way of life that is in question, have done nothing whatever to clear up the difficult. They merely suggest that the war was something to do with Bank Holidays, German sausages or refrigerators, and evoke much enthusiasm without shedding any light. This is not surprising since fascism, democracy, communism, socialism and similar terms, are all of the significant only in relation to a system of political philosophy: and they stir the emotions because of the moral principles which such systems involve.

Political Conflicts in Nigeria

Conflict is a major problem in any given human society and often it is inevitable. It is a serious disagreement, an armed struggle, an incompatibility, opposition of ideas or desire etc between personal, organization, and nation.

In Nigeria, conflict is the result of the interaction of politics, economics and social instability frequently stemming from bad governance, failed economic policies and inappropriate development programmes stemming from exacerbated ethnic or

Pristine

religious differences in society. This fundamental problems in conflict are the religious beliefs an practices, ethnicity, boundary dispute, land ownership and resource control and competition, poverty, marginalization, unemployment. This shows that the churches and her leaders have the potentials to manage and resolve conflict in Nigeria through teachings of love, peace, forgiveness, justice, tolerance etc. A lot of political conflicts has risen in Nigeria, but we be looking at a few out of all some which are:

1. The endless killing and burning of houses, cars, motorcycles etc in Ekiti State for the past 5 years is said to have been politically motivated by opponent of the then government and present government. It is said that hoodlums where merciless has they look lives of innocent souls in the name of not letting peace reign in the State. Pre and post election violence is recurring decimal in Ebonyi State. In 2007, Urubu the hometown of former Abia State governor and national Chairman of all Nigeria People party (ANPP) and Ebonyi State, Deputy Governor, Engr. Dave Umahi went up in flames. There were allegations that there was an attempt bring the governorship election in that area even as some claimed that the disturbance was precurditated. Several houses, filling stations, cars and other property were razed. Wads of currency running into millions of naira were reported by burnt in the home of a former Local Government Chieftaincy uptill 2012 Democracy Day, innocent blood has continued to flow in Ebonyi State. According to news report “a group of youth, which is said to enjoy government patronage, squared up with the police at the state capital, most marring the exercise”. A report said: “several policemen attitude to Governor Elechi were seriously beaten up and injured in the clash.

Secondly, the lack of good governance and high corruption rate in Nigeria caused a political conflict early this year in January due removal of fuel subsidy. In every country, especially in a developing country like Nigeria where much is stolen and wasted in a country with clearly mental needs there are a lot of poor masses and when the political leaders took that decision of subsidy removal as early as the 1st day of 2012 was a great financial task on the common Nigeria citizens. These crisis which was also politically motivated turned to a protest that lasted for days and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) was in full support even former minister, senators, governors, musicians, clergy(s), Iman(s), actors and actress came out on mass to speak of the hurt or political leaders put on us at such early stage of the year when nobody has been paid salary and children have to return to school. During these peaceful protest, some policemen released fire (ballet) and innocent citizens lost their lives due to this political injustice done to the people.

The battle between former Edo State Governor Osumbo of People Democratic Party (PDP) and the present Governor Adams Oshiomole of Action Congress (AC) due to election rigging. After the 2007 governorship elections which made Osumbo the governor of Edo State, Adams Oshiomole sent an appeal to court that the election was rigged by PDP and went with his evidence. The case lasted a while in court, from one hearing to another, the case was adjourned form one day to another, finally the position

Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

of the governor was taken from Osumbo and given to Governor Adams Oshiomole who is ruling the Edo State till date.

Another Nigeria Political conflict/crisis was that of Dr. Hassan Muhammad Lawal who was appointed Minister of Works and Housing on December 17, 2008 in a cabinet reshuffle by the Late President Yar'Adua. He left office in March 2012, when the Acting President Jonathan dissolved the cabinet. During Dr. Lawal's tenure some major roads, including Apapa Road that serves the Port in Lagos, got so bad that most newspapers attacked government for neglect. Allegations of fraud and money laundering to the tune of ₦75.5 billion, over which Lawal and 15 others have been arranged.

Ministers and other government officials bleed the economy in a way that stalls programme implementation and economic development. The blame of this political injustice on the masses goes on the President because political appointees are not elected by the people but by him.

The Nigerian Civil War, popularly known all over the world as the "Biafran war" was fought from 2nd July 1967, to 15th January 1970. The war was between the then Eastern Region of Nigeria and the rest of the country. The Eastern Region declared itself an independent state which was regarded as an act of secession by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. The war was fought to reunify the country. The West also threatened to secede over the non-inclusion of Lagos in the West in the new constitution. The 1954 constitution confirmed and formalized the wishes of Nigerian leaders to move and remain as far as they possibly could. The choice between Unitary and Federal options. Thereafter things happened fast in the political arena. There were constitutional conferences in 1957, 1958, and 1959 in 1960 culminating in the granting of independence of Nigeria on October, 1st 1960.

From 1954 onwards, the political direction was constantly away from a strong centre towards a formidable, almost insular base of each major political party. The failure of the Willink Commission to recommend the creation of more states in 1958 for the Nigeria type of Federalism planted the most potent seed of instability into the evolution of Nigeria's a nation in the 1950s. All the political leaders who had strong and firm political bases in the regions fought hard for maximum powers for the regions which weakened the centre. At the same time, the ugly members of tribalism and sectionalism had been fanned into a deadly flame by all the political leaders. These leaders rode on the crest of this cancerous tribalism and ignorance the people to power, at the expense of national unity and the nation.

The Niger Delta issue was a political one which de-generated to a militant issue. The Boko Haram was intimately looked at as a political issue because it escalated immediately after the President Jonathan came to power as politicians were using it to settle their differences which finally resulted in all-out religious war.

Pristine

Conceptualizing Development

According to Mclean and Macmillan (2003), development is a concept referring to a multi-dimensional approach. Some see it to be relative to time, place and circumstances and disagree with any single formula for development. Development could mean increased economic efficiency, expansion of national economic capacity and a country's advancement in technology. It could also be measured in relation to the Gross National Product of a country and average real incomes of the citizens.

In the words of Oxford (2012), development means the availability and the satisfaction of the basic needs of individuals in a country which include shelter, food, security to life and property, education, health etc. increased national self determination is also used for development. This nation is based on the fact that development is what a nation does for herself by reducing external dependency there by increasing her export products. The development of a country may also be considered through the institutions, attitudes and values that form the political power system of a country.

On the contrary, development is neither catching up with the advanced countries, nor the procurement of artifacts. Under certain conditions the artifacts emanate from the development process and reflect it. But the artifacts are not development itself and in certain cases may have no relationship whatever, with that process, they reflect development only when they are the end-product of the efforts of the population to apply their creative energy to transformation of the local physical, biological and socio cultural environments. This is the situation in the advanced western and eastern countries.

What is National Development?

Development is a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological, and their human environments, transforming them for their own betterment and humanity at large. The lessons learned and experiences acquired in this process are passed on to future generations, enabling them to improve their capacities to make further valuable changes in their inter human relations and their ability to transform nature.

Development in this context is first and foremost a phenomenon associated with changes in man's humanity and creative energies, not in things. It is the unending improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control and manipulates the forces of nature as well as themselves and other individuals the societies for their own benefit and that of humanity at large. Development is a process of actualizing man's inherent capacity to live a better and more useful life. It implies increasing skill and capacity to do things, greater freedom, self-confidence, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well being. People of ages have shown a greater capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life than before. The only major difference is in the rate of this development. Therefore, there is noting in the process of development which suggests that westernization or its euphemistic variant, modernization, should be uncritically accepted. In fact, the distinction between

Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

developed and underdeveloped or developing societies is untenable because every society is still struggling to fully realize its potential creativity and probably never will. It is a progressive process that probably has no end.

Indeed, there is no nation that has achieved a complete mastery of all the obstacles in its path to social freedom, and there may never be. As old challenges have been overcome, new and sometimes more intractable ones have emerged. Therefore, development connotes training in the art of using local resources and creative human energy in problem – solving rather than a wholesale imitation of the path to a good life that societies have achieved. Capitalist societies of co-operating so closely with them as we now do.

Development refers to man's progressive qualitative and continued self improvement. Since man extends and reproduces himself socially, through labour, he improves himself economically, socially and culturally through the co-operative use of his labour with others in the transformation of his immediate physical and human environment. It is in this way that he is able to tame the wilderness and build very complex structures, organizations, and institutions for his own welfare. Therefore development or man's qualitative self improvement occurs when his labour conditions improves. Such an improvement varies directly impediments arises either from the hostility of the physical and biological environments, or from the hostility of the inter-human environment, the existing domestic and international pattern of social, economic and cultural alienation of labour. However, alienated labour loses its self liberating and self-extending qualities. Therefore, labour alienation arises when the worker, in his place of work, is divorced from continuous contact with the mental image of the end-product of production at all stages in the production process. This arises essentially as a result of increasing division of labour in the production process generated by growth in production. It may also as in the case of Nigeria, arise from an externally-imposed international division, in which the basic needs and habitual consumption patterns are not the basis for significant capital investment local resources are not the primary and major basis for economic transformation, and foreigners do most of the creative jobs. Under this circumstance, the creativeness of human labour is dampened, adversely affecting the quality of the human population.

Nevertheless, a good development policy must, therefore, find a way of ameliorating, if not totally eliminating, this kind of alienation of labour. Such a policy must attempt to involve the workers actively in the organization of the production process, at the same time as he is the executor of one or more productive functions in conjunction with others, co-operates with others to use the means of production and dispose of the products of labour, and is responsible for the work of the production collective and, ultimately, of the entire national economy.

The Linkage Between Democracy, Conflict and National Development

Democracy devoid of any kind of conflict will naturally usher national development. For democracy is government of the people for the people. Meaning that,

Pristine

when the people or their representatives are participating in the governance of the state and therefore there will be peace and tranquility. In the process, the money that will be used to fight or prosecute any conflict could now be diverted for developmental purposes. This will lead to national growth.

Conversely, if conflict is not properly resolved it will lead to open, direct or structural violence and war which could bring about breach of the peace. It is an undeniable fact that, where there is war, there is no peace. And where there is no peace, there is likelihood of lack of development and social progress of the nation. Moreover, in a country where there is structural violence like poverty, oppression, intimidation of ordinary people, and monopoly of resources by those in power, will lead to stagnation as well as retardation of national development and growth.

Generally therefore, conflict creates opportunity for pillage of a country's natural resources. For in a country where there is war, not only will the leave in their droves to a peaceful place for safety. In the process, the option left for the government is to invest in the security of the nation and her citizens. In the circumstance, it is only those who gain through conflict will gain by controlling the resources of the area.

The resources meant for developmental purposes will be used to service the war. For the resources unmarked for the development of such region will be diverted for prosecuting the war and ensure that normally returns to the land. Imagine what happened in the Niger Delta region earlier and what is happening now in the North East because of the Boko Haram menace.

Positively it creates opportunity for development. For example, the conflict in the Niger Delta exposed the infrastructural decay in the region and the lack of governmental attention to the plights of the people. Today, the world have known about the Niger Delta problems and attention have shifted to ameliorating the problem of the sub-region which, if properly handled will bring about development in the region. Finally, conflict and violence scares investors away and in the process, there will be economic retardation as no one will be prepared to invest or fish in troubled waters.

An Appraisal

It must be categorically stated here that, due to the internal contradictions in Nigerian societal base as a result of institutionalization of bribery and corruption in the body politics, ineptness, rampant fraud, nepotism, forgery, certificate racketeering, examination malpractices, drug riddling, election rigging, etc (Nduka; 2006). Democracy and good governance has been threatened from time to time resulting in conflicts. Conflicts is bound to be when, there are people with different perception of how things should be done. Conflict therefore has helped to highlight important issues in the society. Democracy has been established as a means of good governance that has to reduce conflict which in the long run will usher in the much desired national development.

Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

Sadly enough, in many African states, democracy is mistaken for elective government, multi-party politics and longevities of regimes. There are many dictatorial regimes in Africa. Such regimes do not promote democracy and national development. There are the conflict generators in the continent, Democracy is therefore the major issue in national development and may not bring conflict if there is fairness and equity in the nation. The government must endeavour to nib any conflict situation on the bad in view of the consequences the country is passing through with the Boko Haram crisis and other internal destabilizing forces like kidnapping, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, etc.

Nigeria just like every other nation cannot exist without conflict, especially when it has to do with politics, power, money etc. Competition one of the root cause of political crises/conflict in Nigeria. It is wasteful to the national economy and only exemplary leadership and robust anti-corruption drive can curtail it.

Recommendations

Democracy generally will usher in good governance which will bring about national development. This would eliminate conflict and bring in fairness and equity in the nation. Democracy therefore is a panacea for good governance and international best practices which in the process will usher in national development.

Man by nature is conflictual. There is no fight for change or to right the wrong that does not bring conflict. How this conflict is settled is what actually matters. It is necessarily only in democracy that wrong can be righted. The Odi Massacre in 1999 in Bayelsa state during Obasanjo's 1st tenure in office happened in a democratic dispensation. This for example exacerbated the Niger Delta crisis even though it led to amnesty that was granted to the militants. Nevertheless, democracy should not be mistaken for elective government, multi-party politics, and longevities of governments. For such dictatorial regimes do not promote democracy, good governance or national development.

Moreover, according to Offor (2012), "In order to achieve peace, unity stability and development in Nigeria, there should be a balance in the educational system, balance in the sharing of political positions, even spread of infrastructural amenities, promotion of culture awareness, the elimination of god-fatherism, a legislation against any form of official discrimination and into clearance, and if possible, the introduction of one state religion in Nigeria". And in the words of Governor Rotimi Amachi (2013), "I must congratulate Abdusalam Abubakar for settling up this peace institute, but you must know that, where there is no peace, no development will thrive. Peace is a complex issue. It is ideological; we must not deny our citizens their legitimate rights. By this way, peace comes in and we begin to experience sustainable development".

1. The government should try as much as it can to bring down conflicts in the society. We know that where there are differing opinions conflict is bound to occur. But when they do occur, amicable way of settling it should be found. The conflictual situation should therefore be nipped on the bud.

Pristine

2. The prosecuting of democracy should not lead to spending more than 70 percent of the country's revenue on itself and 30 percent for the people. This is not good in the name of democracy. Samisi, the Central Bank Governor had said that, the cost of governance in Nigeria is high. He argued that the present structure of governance in the country had contributed to the high recurrent expenditure in the budget. He went on to say that government existed to serve people, adding that it was not sensible for the government to spend 70 percent of the country's revenue on itself and 30 percent for the people.

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Fineface Ogoloma, Ph.D and Dr. Beatrice Nyege Sampson

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Pristine

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