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The Main Challenges Of Democratic Consolidation In Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to target the main problems that impede the democratization of Liberia via comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, political conflict, gender issue, poverty, corruption, political forces and military rule are challenges which could prevent democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Besides, the major challenge of democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the ethnic complexity of the country which has generated intense and sometimes catastrophic political conflict. In conclusion, democracy was welcomed in Nigerian society with high expectation and hope. However, there were some obstacles in the way of democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, Democratic Consolidation, Challenges, Issue.

Los Principales Retos De La Consolidación Democrática En Nigeria

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es abordar los principales problemas que impiden la democratización de Liberia a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, los conflictos políticos, las cuestiones de género, la pobreza, la corrupción, las fuerzas políticas y el gobierno militar son desafíos que podrían impedir la consolidación democrática en Nigeria. Además, el mayor desafío de la consolidación democrática en Nigeria es la complejidad étnica del país que ha generado un conflicto político intenso y, a veces, catastrófico. En conclusión, la democracia fue bienvenida en la sociedad nigeriana con gran expectativa y esperanza. Sin embargo, había algunos obstáculos en el camino de la consolidación democrática en Nigeria.

Palabras clave: Nigeria, Consolidación democrática, Desafíos, Tema.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the developing countries where democratization took place in several stages. The new democratic dispensation in Nigeria has launched again in 1999 leading to the emergence of the fourth republic (Adagbabiri, 2015). This came after a long time of despotic military rule in the country. Immense hopes and expectations greeted the return to multi-party politics in 1998 and consequently civil rule in 1999 (Oni, 2014). Democracy was highly embraced by all, with expected hope that it would deliver good dividends and socioeconomic development. However, this process did

not occur, it was accompanied by many challenges, namely: corruption, military rule, conflict and violence, poverty which lead to mass unemployment, gender issues and so on. These challenges have a strong impact on democratic stability and consolidation in Nigeria. The object of the study is to target the main problems that impede the democratization of Liberia (Radhy, 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of democratic consolidation has been discussed by many researchers. According to Abisoye and Adesiyan (2014) corruption has been the major challenge in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Other researchers such as Tripp (1998); Okeke (2015) argue that gender issues or exclusion of females from public life was one of the big impediments in democratic consolidation in Nigerian society. The number of women in the political process is still inconsiderable. Poverty is another aspect in the challenge of the pathway of democratization. As Inokoba and Kumokor (2011) note there is a large minority of the Nigerian population still living in poverty and 92.4 percent of Nigerians live on less than $2 per day. However, as Tripp (1998) and Okeke (2015) believe, the major role of underdevelopment of democracy has directly played a role in gender issues and military rule. The military rule which has prevailed in Nigeria for more than 20 years has brought Nigeria to the economic crisis. One way or another, all these trends influence negatively on the establishment of democracy in Nigeria. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to identify

the main challenges in democratic consolidation in Nigeria outlined above. It will conclude by recommending how Nigeria can improve its democratic consolidation (GHAZANFARPOUR et al, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

The systematic selection of relevant studies was defined by several inclusion criteria. There were used research conducted by different international organizations such as the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and UNEP United Nations Environment Programme) particularly in African countries including Nigeria. Also included were studies on some challenges of democratization in Nigeria. Since our search was mainly based on English-language databases, most of the selected literature was in English.

The papers having relationships to the obstacles of democratization in Nigeria were read, evaluated and annotated. Most articles contain separate case studies. The case of Nigeria is particularly widespread (Ayeni and Ajibogun, 2013; Adagbabiri, 2015). Other case studies, including Africa in general, were discussed in terms of the notion democratic consolidation and obstacles such as corruption, the conflict between political forces, the military regime and ethnic problems in consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Some publications Ngara et al. (2014) discussed the problems of gender issue and poverty in terms democratic governance. A number of papers Haynes (2001), Abisoye and Adesiyan (2014) addressed issues related

to the main challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria in general.

A substantive constraint of the databases was the limited amount of grey literature such as research briefing papers, advocacy documents and policy papers (Cuvelier et al., 2013). These reports are often considered important experts and contain relevant empirical data, but are not found in academic databases. To include this data in the review, there were asked to identify influential non-academic references. There was some hesitation to share these sources, in part because this grey literature Cuvelier et al. (2013) is considered part of the intellectual capital by researchers and, therefore, is not so easy to share.

3.1. Democratic consolidation

Since the emergence of the notion democratic consolidation, there have been many definitions by scientific researchers. According to Valenzuela cited in Okeke (2015) the construction of a consolidated democracy incorporates, in particular, an affirmation and strengthening of specific institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights, which have been created or recreated during the course of the transition. In this case, democratic consolidation becomes a post-transitional condition, curiously akin to some developmental fixity (Okeke, 2015). Diamond (1999) further opines that democratic consolidation as the process of achieving legitimization thus that all politicians understand that democracy is better for their society than

others. Some scientists tend to view democratic consolidation as a realization – an attainment. However, democratic consolidation implies increasingly than all of this. Actually, democratic consolidation is a feature of all democracies. In terms of Africa, an emergence of a middle class contributed to the development of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. However, the process of democratic consolidation which occurred with many challenges could not establish a democracy immediately.

3.2. Political conflict

The major challenge of democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the ethnic complexity of the country which has generated intense and sometimes catastrophic political conflict. Nigeria has a huge diversity of ethnic cohorts; there are more than 200 ethnicities. A great many of these ethnic groups are small and politically inconsiderable. However, there are three large ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani (two peoples who are typically grouped together because of their cultural and political integration), the Yoruba and Igbo which have played a significant role in the political sphere of Nigeria. In terms of the centralized ethnic structure of Nigeria presents a greater challenge to ethnic harmony. The main reason for that is the separation of ethnicities from each other. For example, the Hausa-Fulani were dominant in the North; the Igbo in the East and the Yoruba in the West. However, each region also contained significant minorities of ethnicities that feared and resented the domination of these big tribes (Diamond, 1999). In additional, in the north of Nigeria there were concentrated the Muslim emirates which also cause a lot of concerns

like an implacable fight between different ethnic groups of people because of each ethnicity in Nigeria has its own faith, believes, interest, culture, language and level of aspiration and these specific features seems to influence on the economic fate of each group. Moreover, these factors make the creation of a common identity problem, thereby exacerbating the difficulty in attaining a true democracy in the society. Currently, Nigeria lacks the necessary democratic values such as civil and human rights, freedom of speech and expression, social security and justice, which may help to develop democracy (Kwasau, 2013).

3.3. Gender issue

The next major challenge to democratic consolidation is a gender issue. According to Okeke (2015) and Tripp (1998) the number of females in the politics and economics are small and insignificant. Mostly, it is related to stereotypes that women should engage with only household and distraction from it considered as a violation of the established norm in the society (Tripp, 1998). However, women had opportunities to participate in Presidential elections, but with some constraints. For example, they were not able to vote without the agreement of their husbands. Furthermore, they had to agree with their husbands for whom exactly they will vote it. As Ayeni and Ajibogun (2013) rightly noticed that a woman has no voice of her own except that of her husband. Hence, the lack of freedom in the domestic sphere made women less active in the political arena as well (Tripp, 1998). The only obvious visibility of females in the major political parties in

Nigeria, is it was in result of protest of women against "the exclusion of them delegates from the National Conference in 1991 when only one woman was included out of the original 68 delegates" (Okeke, 2015: 12). Okeke (2015) has amply demonstrated that females still have low participation in the democratic system in Nigeria. He also concludes that the exclusion of women from participation in public spheres of any states creates concern to democratic consolidation (Karl & Rashmi, 2018).

3.4. Poverty

Another democratic challenge facing Nigeria is poverty. As Abisoye and Adesiyan (2014) argue Nigeria, once the giant of Africa has now become economically weak with a low standard of the living population. The country which was one of the richest fifty countries in the past (the 1970s) is now currently one of the 25 poorest countries with 70% of the population characterized as poor and more than half living in absolute poverty (Abisoye and Adesiyan, 2014; Ngara et al., 2014). Surprisingly, Nigeria is one of the immense exporters of oil, although at the same time has the third largest number of poor people after countries including India and China. The average annual growth of GDP in Nigeria in the years 1990-2000 was 2.4%. It is less even in comparison to Ghana (4.3) and Egypt (4.6) (Abisoye and Adesiyan, 2014; Liang, 2018). Similarly, roughly 70% of the Nigerian population live on less than $1 a day, while 90.8 percent lives on less than $2 a day. Also, there is a big gap between the rich and the poor people as up to 95 percent of this great wealth is controlled by about .01 percent of the population (Abisoye and Adesiyan, 2014).

Prah (1996) highlights that unemployment and underemployment have become ubiquitous features of African society. Most African countries are caught up in spiralling inflation. For those who are fortunate to find some job, wages are invariably inadequate for keeping body and soul together, much less maintaining a family (Prah, 1996). Comparatively, Africans have the lowest income in the world. In this sense, Ngara et al. (2014) rightly noticed that the major impediment to democracy in Nigeria is poverty. Poverty declines both participation in democratic life and popular support for democracy. Moreover, since the return to multi-party democracy in 1999, the political space has been occupied by the elite, whereas the significant number of ordinary population has been excluded from the political process. This could be explained by the fact that at that time there was a view that mass poverty may adversely affect the democratic consolidation of the Nigerian state, although "precisely why poverty undermines democracy, however, has been much less clear" (Ngara et al., 2014: 49).

3.5. Corruption

Corruption is another big obstacle to democratic consolidation of Nigeria. According to Abisoye and Adesiyan (2014) corruption is a negative side of the development of any country which does not allow the states to advance in the process of democratic consolidation. The World Bank estimated leakage of about $400 billion from the nation's oil resources (Abisoye and Adesiyan, 2014). However, corruption is not just a current phenomenon in Nigeria. In view of this, Usman

(2013) noted that during the Babangida regime, corruption reached the level of state policy thus all the efforts of the previous government in the fight against corruption have been brought to nothing. Consequently, the government of Nigeria became unable to pay for workers such as teachers and civil servants or to provide the medicines for hospitals and other services including schools that in turn led to many strikes by people creating yet more challenges (Usman, 2013). Corruption spread to all spheres of Nigerian society, from millions of scam e-mail messages sent each year by people claiming to be Nigerian officials seeking help with transferring large sums of money out of the country, to the police officers who routinely set up roadblocks, sometimes every few hundred yards, to extract bribes of 20 naira, about 15 cents, from drivers. Therefore, in some case, corruption has become the norm. Even the elections which took place in Nigeria were corrupt. This is the situation when candidates bribe the votes with money and become leaders. In addition, in Nigeria practiced the so-called prebendalism (client patronage) and all of these have undermined democratic governance in the country (Fateminasab, 2014; Zare & ShekarchiZade, 2014).

3.6. Political forces

According to Diamond (1999) conflict between political forces (the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which is strongest in the Yoruba states and the congealing opposition forces, in particular, the radical Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) based on in the Emirate North) and violence had not contributed to the development for democracy. On the other hand, such a conflict led to unanticipated

consequences such a killing one of the political adviser of the PRP governor, Mohammed Abubakar Rimi in1981. Furthermore, this contradiction is not confined only to these; it marked the beginning of a new confrontation between different political forces and within themselves. Of particular concern was the growing of violence. Even in the first two years of the Second Republic (when the 1979 elections were history, but well before the 1983 election campaign had begun), casualties mounted from the repeated clashes between the thugs of rival politicians, parties, and party factions: the number of killed and wounded amounted to more than 130 people, arrested 376, and the count was forced to run and hide. As the 1983 elections approached, violent clashes took place not only between the opposition parties and also between the leaders of these parties. As a result, political violence led to temporary prohibitions on public meetings and assemblies. In some communities, violence reached a point where people became worried about their personal safety in general. Diamond (1999) believes that the desperation and intolerance among politicians always cause these conflicts and the violence. He also concludes that the politics of bickering, mudslinging, lies, deceit, vindictiveness and intolerance that are again creeping back into the country`s political scene (Etcuban et al., 2019).

3.7. Military rule

Military rule is the next challenge which could prevent democratic consolidation. It is true that since independence from British colonialism in 1960, Nigeria has been ruled by the military for

more than twenty-five years. There were some successive military leaders: Mohammadu Buhari; Ibrahim Babangida; Sani Abacha and Abdulsalam Abubaker (since 1998) (Joseph, 1999). Researchers such as Bratton and Vandewalle (1997) believe that the role of the military is huge because it poses the biggest and most immediate threat to the survival of young democracies. The trajectories and results of Nigerian transitions were in large part a function of military intervention (Bratton and Vandewalle, 1997). Because the Nigerian state manages access to the nation`s disposable wealth in the form of revenue from oil, the system of governance in Nigeria can be classified as biased, exploitative and repressive (Joseph, 1999). As Haynes (2001) and Lewis (1997) note, almost all military leaders have sought to legitimize their rule by promising transition to constitutional order. Besides, military regimes frequently have allowed themselves access too many activities such as associational activity, media independence, and even political debate.

During the military regime of Babangida, he had promised a quick recovery of democracy. In 1987, "Babangida elaborated a complex democratization schedule, with provisions for constitutional change, political party registration, a national census, and an extended sequence of local and national elections" (Lewis, 1997: 139). However, as history shows, he was able to recover just some kinds of the characteristics of democracy and established a nominal electoral commission and a network of civil education (Lewis, 1997). Actually, as Bratton and Vandewalle (1997) state Babangida set a personal control over the course and timing of events and over all spheres of Nigerian political life in general. In fact, there was an authoritarian form of government. After coming to power of General Sani Abacha,

military regime strengthened even more, and as a rule democracy has not received further development. On the contrary, Shivji (1991) believes that each successive Military Government has veered increasingly away from democratic processes under the pretence of Administration Security usually nicknamed State Security. Thus, Nigeria`s democratic transition had been blocked by an indefinite extension of military rule (Bratton and Vandewalle, 1997).

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, as we mentioned above, democracy was welcomed in Nigerian society with high expectation and hope. However, there were some obstacles in the way of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The main of them are corruption, conflict between politic forces, the military regime, gender issues, poverty and ethnic problems. According to Kwasau (2013) continued poverty, reinforced by mass unemployment are a barrier to Nigeria's quest for consolidating her democracy. However, Aguda (1991) believes that it is a military regime which has dominated in the Nigerian society ultimately led to the crisis of democracy. Some scholars such as Diamond (1999) and Kwasau (2013) think that ethnic conflict is a big impediment on the way of democratic consolidation. It is very hard in such diversity of ethnic groups to consolidate into one big centralized state because of their implacability. Every single ethnicity has own culture that makes an impossibility of integration. Moreover, corruption of Nigerian society is one of the most challenges which

continue to threaten to good governance and democratic consolidation (Oluadeyemi, 2012). Simultaneously, Prah (1996) states that Africans are not genetically greedier or more corrupt, tribalistic or chauvinistic than the rest of the human race. The reason for that in the condition that has created permitted and supported the culture of underdevelopment (Prah, 1996). Thus, all these above-mentioned challenges have made the democratic consolidation of the Nigerian society is very weak. In order to improve some processes in context of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, there are some recommendations and suggestions. UN Office of the special Adviser on Africa believes that there is a need to enhance the peaceful consolidation of ethnicities in Africa. More efforts in this pathway will positively influence on democratic consolidation in Africa. Kwasau (2013) proposes to change methods of elections vote in general in order to eliminate unfairness and corruption. According to Ngara et al. (2014) for better democratic consolidation, political class should embrace "Good Governance through prudent use of available resources, provision of social amenities and crucial infrastructure, ensure free and fair election, and promote accountability, transparency and the rule of law" (Ngara et al., 2014: 57).

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