CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL DISTRUST AND AFRO-PESSIMISM IN NIGERIA POLITICS; THE FOURTH REPUBLIC IN FOCUS

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Abstract

Democracy is highly celebrated as the best system for governance. The introduction of democracy into African society which in time replaced the old African political system, However, even after political independence majority of African society continued with this same western political system which was seem as been more advance in providing equal opportunity, collective responsibility, human rights advancement, state development, etc. However, there have been a repression, backsliding and crisis in the democracy of some states. Crisis of democracy are the threats to democratic principles. Huntington (1975) sees it as the excesses of government rule and citizenry repressions. Poor governance and "bad" politics in African countries as the personalized nature of rule, the failure of the state to advance and protect human rights, the tendency of individuals to withdraw from politics, and the extreme centralization of power in the hands of few people are the basis of the crisis of politics. The crisis in democracy has therefore expounded distrust, pessimism and skeptical relationship between the political elite and the citizenry. The research applies the quantitative research methodology. Further, the constructive theory of idea was employed to show the relationship between the crisis of democracy, distrust and afro-pessimism. More, the research found out that the historical trend of corruption, political repression, maladministration, political and ethnic crisis etc. are the factors mitigating against democracy. The research thereforerecommends that succinct and apt application of democratic principles and the end to political and administrative corruption is the major way out for solving Nigeria's crisis of democracy.

Keywords: Governance, Democracy, Politics, Development

1. Introduction

The coming together of individuals to end the state of nature and give rise to the social contract that happened in Europe can also be likened to the divine rule system that was practiced in the African society. The idea of law and order in Nigeria, can be traced to the pre-colonial era traditional rulers. The rulers were seen as high in wisdom, and divine mandate to rule the kingdom. However, with the coming of the Europeans into Africa society with the various marriages of inconveniences and society merger to enhance the easy colonization of the African society, the African political system was replaced with

the European system. The journey of the democratization from the traditional rulership system to a modern democratic state has experienced various hiccups. The major notions for democratization is for economic and political development.

In international development, good governance is a way of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a preferred way. Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)". Governance in this context can apply to corporate, international, national, or local governance as well as the interactions between other sectors of society. (Wikipedia 2022)

The European democracy was introduced as the best form of government which in time replaced the old African political system, however even after independence majority of African society continued with this same western political system which was seem as been more advance in providing equal opportunity, collective responsibility, human rights advancement, state development etc. Democracy is the rule of the majority either directly or indirectly. Democracy is the system of government that allows for citizens participation in the government either directly or indirectly by representatives. Here state power is vested on the state through the people's representatives and mandates. Democracy can be traced back to the city state Greek society.

According to the Webster dictionary, democracy as the government in which supreme power is invested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through representatives. Abraham Lincoln the 16th president of the USA defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people. Democracy was described as the best system as it describes the system of government with four key elements which are; a system for electing and choosing representatives with periodic replacement through a free, fair and just means, active participation of the people in the governance, the entrenchment and promotion of the fundamental human rights of all accompanied with an established constitutional rule of law.

However, the democratic principles of democracy which includes good governance, rule of law, participation, political tolerance, transparency, multi-party system, control over the abuse of power, human rights, free and fair elections, etc. has not been worthwhile in Africa. Quite the opposite has been seen to be the characteristics of the day in most African

countries. Democracy was painted and celebrated by the democratic peace theorist and western powers in the northern hemisphere has the best system for governance and developments. The various principles of democracy were seen by the modernization theorists has the best path way for development in which the adaptation of the western practices will also lead to development in the new world countries of Africa.

Crisis of democracy are the threats to democratic principles. Huntington (1975) sees it as the excesses of government rule. The Huntington reports outlines that the Western Europe government are overloaded with participants and demands" which the highly bureaucratic political systems are unable to handle, thus rendering the society ungovernable. However, in the USA crisis of democracy is seen from the paradox of "impulse of democracy" to make government pro-active to increase its function but less powerful and decreasing its authority. However, the African crisis of democracy has been more of political distrust and skepticism. The state government are seen as the elite class who in practices represents the selfish interest of self's and the elite. Therefore, the democratization of Nigeria and other society has not been able to complete ensue development as resources curse in which societies with vast presence of resources such as minerals, oils, etc. fails to develop because the elite class live off the profits of the resources. Therefore, economic and social development remains an abstract thinking, as meaningful development are seen as illusion or elite based.

1.2 Problem statement

The skepticism and distrust of the political hierarchyin Africa has been characterized with Legalization of illegality, Atrocities in government, embezzlement of funds, social injustice, syphoning of funds, gross malpractices and misconducts, the tales of corruptions, incompetence, and untold hardships that have been imbibed on the citizens by the ruling elite has overtime, builta pessimistic relationship between the citizens and the ruling elite whom distrust over corruption and ill motives have been seen as the continuous events of the day.

Moreover, reasons for poor governance and "bad" politics in African countries as the personalized nature of rule, the failure of the state to advance and protect human rights, the tendency of individuals to withdraw from politics, and the extreme centralization of power in the hands of few people. More, it

was noted that democracy in Africa has been badly hindered by the state's control of the economy; this has meant that the only way to get rich has been through political office, intensifying the problem of corruption, and inducing leaders to cling to political power. This has been disastrous for the economies in African countries. Thus, economic liberalization, empowering ordinary producers, may well be an aid to political democracy.Furthermore, in most African countries, the small number of individuals with power have managed to erode any semblance of accountability, legitimacy, democracy, and justice, which has been a basis of considerable disappointment to the planners, economists and policy makers who want African governments to introduce a reasonable and collective attack on poverty, disease, illiteracy, and other challenges to development. In the deliberations, certain desperately needed elements of good governance were identified, including popular participation in governance, accountability and transparency, the elimination of corruption, the protection of freedom of information and human rights, and the decentralization and devolution of power. (National research council 1992)

1.3 Research question

This therefore raises the questions of what are the reasons for the crisis of democracy in Nigeria and the socio-political pessimism impact on government policy.

2. Research Methodology

The research applies the primary and qualitative descriptive methods. Here, primary data are sourced from the use of questionnaire while the secondary data are been used to thematically analyze the objectives of the research.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Constructivism

Constructivism argues "that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature". Constructivism is ‘an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner. Constructivism is the claim that significant aspects of relations are historically and socially constructed, rather than inevitable

consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics. To this theorists relations are based on shared ideas which becomes a theory.

Relevance of the Theory

The arguments that Nigeria has been useless or stagnant since independence is a flawed ideas that have passed immemorial from generation to generation and society to society. There have been the flowing notion that nothing good can be achieved from Nigeria, and this a flawed idea that has taken footnote in some social and political relations thereby breeding pessimisms and distrust in politics.

3.2 Conceptual Clarification

3.2.1Concept of democracy:

Democracy is the system of government that ensues popular participations, accountability and representations.

To Abraham Lincoln, democracy is simply the government of the people, by the people and for the people. The system of democracy cuts across the participation and involvance of the people in the socio-political, economic issues of the state.

Principles of democracy

i. Transparency
ii. Rule of law
iii. Accountability
iv. Periodic elections
v. Fundamental human rights
vi. Economic freedoms
vii. Representation
viii. Good governance
ix. Responsive
x. Equality

3.2.2 Concept of development

Development can be defined as the social cultural, political, economic and individual advancement in a society. Development is a broad spectrum that cuts across various sectorial advancement in the society. The increase in the social being of the citizens, in standard of living and purchasing power, the economical increment of Purchasing power parity, GDP and GNP and also the peaceful coexistence of various religious and ethnic groups in the society.

Development envisages individual micro level and national macro level. The individual level focuses on the standard of

living, capacity building and purchasing power of individual. The relevance of capacity building in Nigeria could be situated vis-à-vis economic development. This is because capacity building captures the actual meaning of development in that it is people centered (World Bank 2005)

3.2.3Concept of Good Governance

Etymologically speaking, the term ‘‘governance’’ is believed to have originated from the ancient Greek. Semantically, it is being used as a verb kybernein (infinitive) or kybernao (first person) which literally means ‘steering’, ‘guiding’, or ‘maneuvering a ship or a vehicle’. Governance is referred to as the political administration of policies for effective and meaningful development.

Governance to the World Bank (1993) is a system through which ‘power is exercised in the management of a country’s political, economic and social resources for development’. The emphasis here, according to the World Bank, is ‘the use of power to control political and economic resources of the nation’. Thus, governance is about securing political power in order to control economic power for the purpose of nation’s development. Put differently, it is about using nation’s wealth for the benefit of the nation only.Governance has to do with the totality of governmental actions and activities that are geared or directed toward making and realizing effective economic policies. IMF (2016)

However in Nigeria and other third world society governance has been laden with some emphatic issues which therefore reduces its efficiency. Governance in cases have been able to lead to meaningful development and in some cases not being able to infer any meaningfulness. Good governance refers to the proper application of policies for societal development. (Lambe 2023) good governance envisages leadership, actions, rule of law, accountability and strategy for public policy.The former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan sees ‘good governance’ as ‘the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development’ (Annan, cited in UN 1998). He asserts that lack of good governance will continue to promote hunger and underdevelopment. It is through good governance that impact of governmental activities can be felt, particularly in the area of economic growth and development.



Sources; The United nation

3.3 Indicators of Crisis of Democracy

Political repression

In the act of democratic declining which involves the weakening of democratic institution by forcefully controlling citizens for political reasons. In the act of restricting citizens ability to partake, call for policy accountability and citizenry opposition government therefore restrict citizens by politically repressing their stands amongst their fellow citizens. Political repression targets actives, knowledgeable, influential citizens who are likelyto challenge the political and elite ideology in the state. Direct political repression when sponsored by state might include witch-hunting of challengers and oppositions, state sponsored terrorism, genocide and politicized. In Nigeria, cases of political repression has been a characteristics actions of the state against those whom challenges its actions or policy. Those who fight against corruption or oppose the government are been targeted by law enforcement agency, extra judicial activities or by political thugs. This repression affects democracy and citizens drive to partake in the society.

Democratic backsliding

The decline in democratic practices is a standing attribute on the crisis of democracy in states. Democratic principles expounding the ideas of transparency, accountability, free and fair elections, rule of law. However, in states where this becomes an illusion it causes crisis of democracy. The Polity in Nigeria has overtime revolved around the elite and wealthy. The electoral processes since independence have been laden with allegations of malpractices, corruption and embezzlement of funds, administrative malpractices and lack of following of due processes etc. has played an elementary role in the crisis of democracy. More, the backward movement of democratic

practices to autocratic processes that makes political policy and actions more arbitrary and repressive. Autocratization of leadership and lack of political democratic practices is an impediment and a yeast to crisis of democracy.

Ignorance and lack of understanding: The truth versus ignorance battle has been a war that has beclouded policy relationship between the government and the citizens. The combination of a crisis atmosphere and wide ignorance threatens democracy. The complex relationship between the government and citizens is exemplified by low knowledge, ignorance, high expectations without complementary actions etc. The new order of the netizens and social media has changed the phase of communication, feedback and displeasure between the government and the citizens. A total number of over million Nigeria was recorded to have access to mobile phones and social media. With this easy access of spread of information and freedom of speech pessimism about the government and its policies. Most informations online are usually uncensored, biased and lopsided with ignorance and low understanding, this therefore creates a skeptic and distrust environment in the society. President Buhari reiterated in 24th of March speech "crisis affecting Nigeria has its origin in ignorance" (SaharaReporters 2019)**.**

Interest and value system: the personal interest of individuals in society differs in society. This led Jeremy Bentham to write on Utiitarianism in which majority interest should be the pursuit of government policy. The values democracy embodies in freedom to elect by choice majority gives room for some being displeased by while some pleased. Every interest cannot be satisfied, and this often than not leads to negative criticisms, unruly portray of political leadership etc. The decision system in Nigeria has become too porous giving room for too many actors to stifle interest. The government do not trust the citizens and the citizens also do not trust the government. The conflict of interest and value here also constitutes a problem

Administrative abuse of political offices:abuse of power or authority is the malpractice of political and constitutional roles, it includes actions which are illegal, violate constitutional procedures, or the misappropriation of public good for personal or private good.Administrative abuse in Nigeria more, takes the form of political office holders misappropriate and misuse power for illegitimate purposes to promote or protect selfish or elite needs, the Historical trends of corruption; corruptions in

civil service, public services, political office holders has reduced the minds of the people into pessimism of Nigeria development. Corruption causes crisis of democracy has it reduces the minds of the people into negativism from the government policy. The major impediments to development has been so far linked to corruption and administration, therefore some thinkers perceive democracy in Africa to impede development. This abuse are present both in the executives, legislative and also judiciary. This abuse could be in form of electoral malpractices, social/political injustices, nepotism, misappropriation of funds, illicit use of government offices etc.

Political instability: the phenomenon of replacing old shackles with new ones, the change of policy and no policy continuity, change of government equaling to change of policy. These and more creates a vacuum for political instability and lack of trust on the government. The rapid change in government policy impedes long term development therefore increasing the likelihood of subsequent instability. Leadership administration sets the tone for development however macro development usually take more effect in long terms and stable growth. However, the government of Nigeria has been more noted with the presence of more of change in policy from government-to-government thereby resulting in wasting, non-incremental policy, investors distrust, and short-term benefits etc.

Political and ethnic violence: ethnic violence and crisis is a form a political violence. The ethnic volatility in African states has continued to raise tensions which affects its political democracy. Ethnic hegemony is an impediment to democratic development. Marginalization and suppression of a minority and ethnic group could transcend into political withdrawal, sometimes violent reactions. Nigeria beinga multi ethnic society with diverse interest and ideas has a more tendency in violence. This a major issue affecting the crisis of democracy in Nigeria has over time certain depressed marginalized groups have taken up arms and have cost the state immeasurable loss in lives and cash. Political and ethnic crisis have deep seated structural impact on democracy consolidation in a state. A state envisaged with crisis will negate development.

3.4 Concept of "Failed State":

Nation state fails due to internal and external events that beclouds the state. After the drive of independence and the end to colonialism, states where given ample mandate to govern

themselves. However, countries in the third world and beyond has been faced with inherent challenges which has constituted blockages and impediments to the development of the country. The end of the Soviet Union created notions that Africa and other new world countries will take an epicenter in the development of the state, however it has been an illusion. Countries where the government are no longer in control becomesa failed state.

A failed state status indicates the lowest possible conditions a state can fall into. A failed state is a repressioning state characterized with low or no constitutional orders, rule of law, gangs/ethnic or violent groups, low standard of living, reduced state authority/power etc. It is a state that has lost its essence and ability to effectively administer the citizenry. A failed state is a gradual declination process a sovereign state faces. Other concepts that takes similarities to the failed states includes; weak state, fragile state etc. a state doesn't become a failed state overnight it takes time for it to end there.

Characteristics of a failed state

i. Inability of government to effectively tax the citizenry
ii. When there are sufficient challenges to its sovereignty
iii. When government shares power and authority with violent actors within its territory
iv. Presence of multi laws and constitutions
v. Violence, crisis and pandemic laden in the society
vi. Economic recession
vii. Social disorderliness and lawlessness etc.

5. Results and discussion

Below are the figures gotten from the analysis of the questionnaire.

Figure 1:Academic Qualification

Academic qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
primary education	**3**	**2%**
Secondary education	**32**	**37%**
Tertiary education	**47**	**53%**
Others	**7**	**8%**

Total	**89**	**100%**

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 2: Occupation of Respondent

Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
civil servant	**14**	**16%**
self employed	**23**	**28%**
Student	**36**	**39%**
Others	**16**	**18%**
Total	**89**	**100%**

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 3

The government serves the interest of the elite political class over state interest					
		Frequency	**Percent%**	**Valid Percent%**	**Cumulative Percent%**
Valid	**strongly agree**	**25**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**28.1**
	Agree	**37**	**41.6**	**41.6**	**69.7**
	Undefined	**18**	**20.2**	**20.2**	**89.9**
	Disagree	**5**	**5.6**	**5.6**	**95.5**
	strongly disagree	**4**	**4.5**	**4.5**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 4

Elite profiteering rather utilitarianism clouds government policy				
	Frequency	**Percent%**	**Valid Percent%**	**Cumulative Percent%**

Valid	**strongly agree**	**21**	**23.6**	**23.6**	**23.6**
	Agree	**41**	**46.1**	**46.1**	**69.7**
	Undecided	**20**	**22.5**	**22.5**	**92.1**
	Disagree	**6**	**6.7**	**6.7**	**98.9**
	strongly disagree	**1**	**1.1**	**1.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 5

Political distrust is as a result of historical trend of corruptions					
		Frequency	**Percent%**	**Valid Percent%**	**Cumulative Percent%**
Valid	**strongly agree**	**19**	**21.3**	**21.3**	**21.3**
	Agree	**34**	**38.2**	**38.2**	**59.6**
	Undecided	**35**	**39.3**	**39.3**	**98.9**
	Disagree	**1**	**1.1**	**1.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 6

Accountability and transparency are important for bridging political and citizens trust

		Frequency	Percent%	Valid Percent%	Cumulative Percent%
Valid	**strongly agree**	**25**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**28.1**
	Agree	**37**	**41.6**	**41.6**	**69.7**
	Undefined	**18**	**20.2**	**20.2**	**89.9**
	Disagree	**5**	**5.6**	**5.6**	**95.5**
	strongly disagree	**4**	**4.5**	**4.5**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 7

Political skeptism and pessimism is as a result of ignorance of the populace					
		Frequency	**Percent%**	**Valid Percent%**	**Cumulative Percent%**
Valid	**strongly agree**	**19**	**21.3**	**21.3**	**21.3**
	Agree	**4**	**4.2**	**4.2**	**68.5**

	undecided	**24**	**27.0**	**27.0**	**95.5**
	Disagree	**42**	**47.5**	**49.5**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

Figure 8

The economic and social condition of the country is as a result of political leadership

		Frequency	**Percent%**	**Valid Percent%**	**Cumulative Percent%**
Valid	**strongly agree**	**22**	**24.7**	**24.7**	**24.7**
	Agree	**37**	**41.6**	**41.6**	**66.3**
	undecided	**25**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**94.4**
	disagree	**5**	**5.6**	**5.6**	**100.0**
	Total	**89**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: researcher's survey

5.2 Discussion

The first questions of the government serving the interest of the people enshewed that citizens perceptions of the government towards serving their interest is low. Majority of citizens believes that the policy of government are not in the populace best interest. Corruption, distrust and syphoning of funds being the agenda. The second questions which showed that majority of the respondents agrees that elite profiteering is the agenda of the government rather than the principles of utilitarianism. The questionnaire went further by asking if ignorance is the reasons

for political distrust and pessimism and the respondents responded both ways showing that some citizens are clouded with ignorance and lack of understanding of governmental ways and some arguing against that the government are the major causes of the pessimism. A trend of corruption, embezzlements, racketeering etc. has made the citizens pessimistic towards the government. Lastly, majority of the respondents agreed that the economic and social condition of the country is as a result of political leadership. Political leaders are the drivers of the state. The performances, developmental paradigm depends on leadership, governance and administration.

5.3 Conclusions

Development of a state relies on mutual development amongst the various sectors of the society. However, the leadership class plays a pivotal role in the development of a state. The development of the country from independence to present day though have not brought upon equal development rate with the western world or Europe and America however it has brought upon development in its own pace. The political distrust and crisis of democracy can be traced to the historical trends of corruption and lack of good governance moreover looking at various republics, administration and regimes it is worthwhile to know that there have been growth in the various sectors of the state, only not a match to the development stage of the western world. With the eradication of corruption, good leadership characterized with accountability and transparency the collapsed bridge of trust in the political leadership can be reconstructed. African leaders have more often than not driven on the bus of corruption, so amassing public goods and funds for private profiteering is a common characteristics. The political administration structure in Nigeria and Africa is opened to easy manipulation from those at the leadership positions due to lack of accountability and transparency. The distrust and pessimism as therefore grown as a cancer in the society negating political leadership and policy, impeding the relationship between the upper and the lower class. Lastly, the objective of the upper class, political class, administrative class and lower class in Nigeria seems to be tilting towards opposing ends.

Nigeria is not a failed state. Studying the works of Robert Rothberg chapter on failed state, Nigeria do not fall under the criteria's to be a failed state. However, the constructivism ideas and individual disdain towards the polity of the state as beclouded society thinking. Insecurity, corruption, crimes, vices, ethnic and gang violence are global phenomenon not secluded to Africa or Third world countries alone. Editorials,

publications and official statements that considers one side of the development and progress(often the dark side) is dangerous to the manifestation of a nation to greatness. Considering only the negative side of a nation on its pilgrimage to glory is neglect of the positive contributions and labour of love of the well-meaning citizens of the country. A one-sided story of darkness diminishes and demoralises the rich and worthy contributions of the citizens. Surely, there are positive successes Nigeria has recorded over its 63 years of nationhood. If we do our part individually and trust and hope in remembering the national anthems that pledges love for state and remembering the labors of our hero's past, Then Nigeria will be great.

5.4 Recommendations

Corruption constitutes the major antithesis to the development paradigm of a state. Therefore, the first recommendation is tilted towards the eradication of administrative and political corruption. An establishment of a bureaucratic administrative structure which is accountability and transparency driven is a major reconstruction that needs to be done on the political administration of the country. Proper documentation, accounting checks and public awareness is a tool which could be mandated on the political, administrative sector of the country.

Development is a tangible and intangible societal paradigm which encompasses both social economic and infrastructural growth. Therefore, citizens trust are built on good governanceandleaderships that builds societal transformation in infrastructural development, social amenities, economy development etc. SO, the state government need to embark on visible developments.

Reorientation of the masses to build on trust and reduce the knowledge gap. Ignorance as over time beclouded the citizens. The Citizens perceptions of the government as over time been beclouded with ignorance and lack of understanding of government policies and actions. Therefore, the government need to invest in enlightening of the citizens

Communication gap should be bridged by truthfulness and accountability to the citizens, the policy cycle as over time not inculcated the people's feedback and opinion on policy impact due to the top-bottom approach. So, investment in bridging the gap between the government and the people should be embarked by the government.

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