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DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE SECURITY CHALLENGES OF THE NIGERIAN NATION: AN APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

The democratic system of government in Nigeria that should comparatively bring peace and development has been retrogressed and obviously stagnated by unending security problems. The paper addressed the following objectives. Assess the relationship between poor democratic practice and security, establish relationship between democracy and security challenges, and identified the nature and activities of security challenges and consequences of security challenges on political stability and democracy in Nigeria. The study adopted the frustration aggression theory as theoretical framework and the qualitative research analysis method. This enable the researcher to be involved in critical observations, case studies just to mention a few. The principal findings include the following: failure of democracy brought about state security challenges, security challenges arose from the alienation of the people from the state etc. the study includes that security challenges have destroyed the Nigerian economy. It was recommended that government and stakeholders of democracy should work in tandem to improve on governance. There should also be cooperation among those in charge of security to curb challenges.

Keywords: Democracy, State, Security, Challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Apart from the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 that stagnated the country for period of three years, where socio –economic activities were halted, the Nigerian democratic setting since 1999 when it commenced has not in any way placed this country in a sound and peaceable economic as well as political pedestal. It has always been one challenge or the other. As a matter of fact, the ushering of the democratic system of governance from the military incursion into politics since 1999 would comparatively be seen and considered as a relief and hopes build on the

aspirations and expectations of good leadership. Unfortunately, over the years till date the situation has retrogressed our economy and consequently made begging and pretentious respect a life style to survive in the hands of our fellow human beings, some of whom are even responsible for our predicament and despicable situation. According to (Atani, 2021), political leaders have thus fashioned out ways to rig elections in their favor through the weapon of fear perpetrated by hired thugs who render services to political parties in exchange for money and other political favors.

Arising from the above, the unbridled challenges that came with the practice of democracy in our polity have inevitably overstretched our security apparatus from the standpoint of discontentment and frustration suffered by the citizens in the hands of political manipulators. There is hardly any sector of the Nigerian economy that seems to be working effectively. Our roads, streets have been inundated with all manner of people whose physical presence sometime sends bad and dangerous signals to people going about their legitimate businesses. In the time past, perhaps in the 1980 and 1990 when one was faced with an issue that requires the intervention of the police, the conflict was amicably settled with every sense of equanimity and ambience of a discipline corps and serene environment. Presently, staying away from such conflict that involves the police intervention is the best approach to living a happy and satisfactory life since it is clear to every discerning mind that they now work in tandem with the street urchins and those that can comfortably offer them enough money in other to kill justice.

Therefore, the paper is set to interrogate some of these seemingly intractable problems (Security challenges ranging from killing, kidnapping, banditry, the herders attack and a lot more that have become the aftermath or consequential effects of bad democratic practices. This is obviously because no country can make any meaningful progress in a country saddled with unending skirmishes and squabbles borne out of poor democratic practice. According to (2009, p xxiii), “there is therefore a new challenge for African nations, particularly Nigeria, to re-examine and re –order their practice of democracy, redefine their external relations and attach value to the cultivation of good national images. A good reputation, according to biblical injunction is better than silver and gold”.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

For a clearer and meaningful understanding of this paper, some concepts in this paper have adequately been considered and examined. Below are some of them:

Democracy: Democracy is a representative government that is borne out of the selection of few by the electorates. In the words of Ozumba and Opara (2020, p. 104) “democracy is the rule of the people for the people and by the people, the government is not going to rule for its own interest but for the interest of the people”. Democracy is a people based rule, where the people are involved in ruling themselves (Ozumba & Opara, 2020). So, it is that type of government where the interest and what matters to the generality of the people is carried out through an elected representatives. Jega (2007, p. 133) opined that “democracy must be deeply rooted in participation and or representation and that government in democratic systems derive its power and legitimacy from the people”. In line with the above, Barber and Watson (1988) acknowledged that democracy is a charming form of government, they anchored their belief on the fact that it has the ability to improve the quality of the system and government through citizens participation, this is part of the norms inherent in democratic settings.

State: A state is a body of persons occupying a geographical area, having an organized government, free from external control and having the coercive instrument and having the sovereign power to make decisions without external influence.

Security: Security implies orderliness, peaceful co-existence of people going about their legitimate businesses without threat to life, rancor, skirmishes, or anything disrupting the peace of the environment or society. Efeurhobo et al. (2013, p. 298) saw “security as a state of existence that is free from danger, fear, threat, anxiety and uncertainty”. Similarly, Arnold (1962) in Olayimolu (2103, p.13) noted that security in an objective sense measures in a subjective sense, the absence of threats to acquire values in a subjective sense the absence of fear that such values will be attached. Nabon (2012) observed that security is the capacity to achieve reconciliation among diverse groups in the society:

- **State Security:** State Security implies the ability of state government to guarantee peace and order to its citizens. In other words, it is state security when an existing government is able to provide laws, rules, etc. that will deal with the defaulters of state laws and fundamental principles that enhances peaceful co-existence of humanity.
- **Challenges:** Challenges are existing hindrances and problems that prevents an individual, organisatin, state or society from pursuing his or its goals. For instance it is correct to say that the presence of kidnappers, bandits, etc. are challenges because their actions prevent people from going about their legitimate businesses and works.

Statement of Problem

The Nigeria nation has been besieged with a lot of economic and political problems that have consistently and unabashedly disrupted socio-economic activities. The situation has become so tense and helpless that the overwhelming presence of the street boys, some of whom have transformed to different groups, ranging from armed robbery to kidnapping, banditry amongst many have made life very intolerable and unbearable to humanity. Different scholars of different intellectual background have engaged themselves in rigorous research as to what would have necessitated this unguarded action. Some have been able to identify very reasonable causes ranging from lack of jobs, drug addiction among others. In the words of Ibaba et al. (2021), the controversy that surrounded the kidnap and subsequent release of the students of Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina State further highlighted the tragedy of the country’s security challenges.

So, it is on the strength of this issues that this topic call for a more critical approach to interrogate the seemingly causes that has triggered the nation’s political instability. And possibly to find a better strategy on our situation can be ameliorated. For it is only when a society is standing on a solid foundation devoid of acrimony, endless disruptions arising from persistent killings of different magnitude that it can comparatively makes unhindered progress.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to see how good democratic practice can prevent security challenges from obstructing it. However, the specific objectives are stated as follows:

- Assess the relationship between poor democratic practice and security challenges;
- Identify the nature and activities of democratic practice in Nigeria;
- Consequences of security challenges on political stability and democracy in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- Can poor democratic practice lead to security challenges?
- Can the nature and activities of democratic practice lead to insecurity problem in Nigeria?
- Can the consequences of security challenges affect political stability and democracy in Nigeria?

Significance of Study

The paper is important to researchers, students and people with strong affection for democratic as well as security challenges. It is important to note that research input on perceived challenges help to redirect the need to systematically and if possible eliminate security challenges in Nigeria in other to guarantee healthy and peaceable practice of democracy. The paper considered the frustration aggression theory as a basis for rationalizing the nexus between democratic practice and security challenges.

The frustration aggression theory is borne out of some level of disappointment on the part of the citizens arising from high degree of expectations or promises from the political class or leaders. It is worrisome and disturbing to know that those that have found themselves in the corridor of power often time abandon those who have assisted them into offices, which consequently result to some level of disenchantment and hopelessness. It is therefore pertinent to note that findings in this study noted the argument of frustration aggression theory to point the relationship between poor democratic practice and security challenges in Nigeria.

The findings of this study will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the ministry of foreign affairs towards the articulation of policies in curbing the menace of security challenges and other related crisis that may erupt out of poor democratic practice. The study noted that given the unending security challenges that have disrupted the Nigerian economy, most foreign investors are scared of doing business in Nigeria. The study further recognizes some of the negative aspects of security challenges and poor democratic practice. Therefore, policy makers are better informed on these issues through this research in other to come up with sound measures on how the country's economy can be sustained and attract foreign investors.

METHODOLOGY/DATA COLLECTION

The method of study adopted in this paper was mainly from secondary sources considering the fact that it is a descriptive study. The data collection sources include; text books, journal articles amongst others. Content analysis for discussion was adopted for analysis from which inferences were drawn as basis for the way forward, conclusion and recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories that are suitable to this study but for purpose of clarity and logicity, the frustration and aggression theory have been lucidly considered for this topic. This theory was developed by John Dollard (1939) and became popular through Aubrey Yale (1962). The basic thrust of this theory is that violent behavior is a consequence of inability to fulfil needs and promises made during and after elections. The logical derivation of this is that the study is anchored on the inability of some of our leaders that have always failed to meet up with the expectations of the electorates and members of the society. What has always generated controversy and conflict in the society is as a result of the greedy leaders who have always formed the habit of cornering what belongs to members of the society. Man according to Okonkwo (2011), is synonymous with disobedience, hence there has to be the imposition of checks and to limit impunity. It is this uncontrollable reaction of the disappointed group that poses as a check to limit the impunity of the leaders.

In line with the above, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that the reactionary behavior of the youths however negative is as a result of the failure of the leaders who often time provoke the youths to aggressive and frustrated behavior. The onus therefore is for the leaders to do the right thing always in order to eschew this unwarranted and provoking behavior arising from members of the public and consequently affects the polity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy and the State security challenges

When in 1999 the democratic system of governance was introduced to replace the military system of governance, people gave sigh of relief and were happy considering its advantages and usefulness that it may bring on the people of Nigeria. However, since its inception, rather than witnessing and experiencing the much anticipated dividends of democracy, the resultant effect has been that of treachery, divisiveness, neglect, disorderliness and other crisis of different magnitude that has stagnated the nation's growth and economy. For a man to fulfill himself and actualize his potentials, he must first be properly fed, clothed and housed, relative to what is possible under the prevailing relations of production (Ekekwe, 2009).

So, democracy has suffered a lot of setback because of the way and manner it is being practiced in Nigeria. The use of thugs, character assassination and many other strange and terrible vices have made the system intolerable and full of disappointment. The political apathy of the electorates is so pronounced that political analysts begin to wonder what next line of action is necessary for the nation to consider towards its means for better and sustainable governance. I think election period is supposed to be peaceful and full of hopes. In the developed industrialized countries of the world, comparatively speaking, elections are characterized by some levels of stability, orderliness and good behavioural conducts. It still beats my imagination to know why elections in Third world countries(TWC), Nigeria as a case study exhibits uncontrollable traits of gangsterism and absolute lawlessness when elections are going on. The safety of the individual, property are not guaranteed. This is obviously because politicians that are desperately seeking for power equip and encourage some of the youths with sophisticated weapons to disorganize elections that are supposed to be peaceful.

Consequently, people may want to call themselves to order by probably refusing to go out to exercise their franchise since it is obvious that going out to legitimately cast their votes will cause them their lives and property. Despite the overwhelming presence of security government would provide, the situation is still sketchy and uncontrollable. There are instances where it is observed that security forces sometime compromise with the rules of the game by looking the other side while nefarious activities are going on. This is perhaps because the security men have been adequately settled. It is very worrisome and emotionally disturbing to see how a nation can make progress in such situation characterized by treachery and hooliganism. "It is amazing how, as the French man puts it plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose"= things which are supposed to have changed have only remained the same (Ekekwe, 2015)

FINDINGS

Findings revealed that people's political apathy has increased in political matters. Their level of interest in political as well as matters involving decisions that require their inputs has declined abruptly. This is obviously because they are not happy with the political system that is not satisfying their yearnings and aspirations. Over time promises made by politicians are usually jettisoned once they come into power. Consequently, the citizens are left on their own. Infrastructural facilities are at its lowest ebb. Graduates are under employed. For instance, the N-power program introduced by the federal government to alleviate the problem of unemployment is quite appalling and discouraging considering the amount involved.

Again, findings equally revealed that people are not properly sheltered. Some live in congested hovels in the name of accommodation. Some cannot even feed well because of lack of jobs. Many things that revolve around social matters are actually eluding the masses because of security problem arising from poor democratic practice. The reason is because democracy in Nigeria is not a tool for public service but an instrument by a privileged few to amass wealth and they end up looting the treasury (Zimako, 2009)

CONCLUSION

Arising from the discussion so far, it is glaring for every discerning mind to know that democracy since its inception has not yielded much considering the security lapses it has created. During elections and after elections, people are not satisfied. Apart from some people paying with their live, others get their share of frustration when government fails to carry out its many promises in the name of party manifesto during campaigns. The situation has terribly retrogressed the economy and created a worrisome future. Consider a situation where sensitive and strategic positions in government, in business, in commerce, and industry and even institutions of education are made on the basis of ethnic affiliation and on the basis of plumb plain cronyism (Ndu, 2016).

So, the situation of poor democratic practice that has ignited the country over time is a reflection of the postulation above. People increased political apathy is comparatively higher. Except governments adopt a rational approach to relating with the people as far as democracy is concerned in order to reduce the violent behavior and other acts of insurgents the country is bound to have more terrible situation to contend with as time unfolds.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will help address the situation of poor democratic practice and security lapses in Nigeria:

- Leaders should learn to be accountable to their subjects.
- Leaders should form the habit of fulfilling promises made during elections.
- Democracy as a system of governance should reflect the wishes of the people.
- Security forces should be strict and objective in their call to duty.
- Welfare and economic programs should be prioritized in the eyes of the government.

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