

Challenges of democratic survival in Nigeria Between 1999 and 2011

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Abstract

Nigeria as sovereign nation got her political Independence from the British Colonial Masters on the 1st October, 1960. She practiced democratic administration amidst of electoral violence and crisis between 1960 to 1966 and the military seized and hold onto power up to 1999 though, with a deceptive intermittent democratic rule for these period. Nigerians happily, joyfully and massively came out and elected leaders of their choice at the poll in 1999 with the enthusiasm and hope that Nigerians must have learnt their lessons to practice the long awaited democracy with the maximum cooperation of all Nigerians so that our nation could join the rest of the democratic nations of the world to enjoy the fruits and dividends of democracy. However, to the utter dismay and disappointment of rational and reasonably thinking Nigerians, the entrance into democracy by the Nigeria state was rather a curse than a blessing. It is in the light of the above that this paper examines the challenges of democratic survival between 1999-2011 in Nigeria. The paper equally concludes that the major problems of Nigeria is selfishness of Nigerians on the basis of tribal, religious and ethnic bigotry. The paper recommends that Nigerians should shun placing ethnic, religion and tribal consideration above national integration because it is only on this premise that Nigeria would thrive and survive democratically

1. Introduction

Today in all parts of the world, the most widely acceptable form of Government among all the multiple forms of Government is democracy. Democratic spirit has penetrated every nooks and crannies of all sovereign States in the World. The reasons for the wide acceptability of democracy across the Globe is claimed by its appeal and respect for National and International development, obedience to rule of law, propagation of human rights and civic participation, strict adherence to accountability, preaching of social justice, equity of all, and its total freedom guaranteed to the followers to question, criticize, prescribe to leaders what is good. Other qualities of democracy include responsiveness, transparency and good governance, regular, free and fair elections etc. Summarily, Abraham Lincoln's (former president of the United States of America) definition of democracy as "government of the people by the people for the people" (quoted in Hassan 2003:31) indicates that it is people's government administered by the people (through their representatives) for the good of the people. The violation of the characteristics of democratic rules and ideals by other forms of government calls and points to the reasons why there are serious crisis in many parts of the world due to leadership failure. Though, some countries like Nigeria may have adopt democracy but still face some challenges.

In the light of the above, this article is examining the various challenges of Nigerian democracy from 1999-2011. This period under review is necessary because for the first time

since the name Nigeria was mentioned, Nigeria has experienced uninterrupted democratic rule for thirteen years. The main proposition of the paper is to portray to the World the challenging aspect of Nigeria democracy using historical research.

The paper is mainly history of democratic practice in Nigeria from 1960 independence to 1999, examination of the major challenges in Nigeria and finally, the paper ex-ray the conclusion, recommendations and of the enumerated challenges to democracy.

2. Challenges Of Democratic Survival In Nigeria Between 1999-2013

Despite the good qualities of democracy which made it to become the most widely acceptable form of government across the World, even Countries that eventually agree and accepted to fully entrench democracy like Nigeria have done, are also not totally and wholly free from challenges that could be found in other forms of government.

On the 29th May, 1999 President Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo was sworn-in as the Commander In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. After a few months, Obasanjo lined-up his program but his attention was diverted due to the following challenges.

On the 11th December 1998, a group of the Ijaw people drawn from Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, and River states representing communities from over forty clans making up the Ijaw nation and representing 25 organizations launched the Kaima Declaration of 1998 to coined the words "resource control" which was a political platform to demand for the control of their resources within their states. This took place some few months before the Obasanjo Civilian Administration came on board.

On 27th October, 1999 Governor Ahmed Sani (Yarima Bakura) launched the Shari'a Legal system known as Islamic Law. His action was also followed by some other 11 Northern State Governors namely, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe and Borno. The aim of the full adoption of sharia is purposely to check evils in the society particularly transparent moral acts such as prostitution, stealing, adultery, gambling, operation of alcoholic houses and business ventures where prostitutes stay and commit their immoralities. When the sharia was launched, people particularly the non-Muslims fearing the danger of the likely consequences on their social and religious life began to question the adoption of sharia legal system from the legal and Nigeria constitution point of view. The resultant effect of this development was crisis in some parts of Northern and eastern Nigeria among Christians and Muslims which led to lost of lives and properties. The then new democratic civilian government has to contend with providing adequate security to protect lives and properties accordingly.

In a related development, there has been pockets of inter/intra-tribal and inter-religious conflicts across the Country. Agbodike (1999:113) states that "the regionalization of the Country which restructured the nation into tri-national state, sectional loyalties were introduced into the politics of Nigeria and this continued even after independence". As a result of this the Obasanjo Administration particularly in his first tenure contends seriously with various crisis as diagrammatically represented below between 1999-2004.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria

S/N	Date	Location	Principal Actors
18	Thursday, July 22, 1999	Kano Reprisal Killing	Hausa/Fulani youth took vengeance on the killing of their Kith and Kin in Sagamu. Their target was the Yoruba community.
19.	February 28, 2000	Kaduna Mayhem (Kaduna State)	Kaduna city exploded in violence as Muslim and Christian extremists and other hoodlums clashed

			over the proposal to introduced Sharia.
20.	Friday, April 14, 2000	Agyragu Crisis (Nasarawa State)	Communal clash that started with a protest again the location of Local Government Headquarters. The militant youth group started the riot and later took to the streets, killing and destroying.
21.	July 2000	Tsagari Crisis (Kwara)	Clash between Tsagari and Share communities of Kwara State which claimed several lives
22.	September 8, 2000	Kaltungo religious (Combe State)	A religious violence that was sparked off by the presence of the states Sharia implementation committee.
23.	October 17, 2000	OPC-Hausa/Fulani (Kwara)	A face off between the militant members of OPC and Hausa/Funlani community over supremacy of Emirate system in the state.
24.	Saturday, October 27, 2000	Minna reprisal (Niger)	Violent ethnic crisis erupted after the OPC assaults in Kwara and Lagos States.
25.	Saturday, December 02, 2000	Hadejia Crisis (Jigawa)	A sectarian disturbance that was caused by a debate between Muslim and Christians in Hadeja (Jigawa). There was wanton destruction of worship places
26.	Thursday, June, 28,2001	Azara crisis (Nasarawa)	An ethnic conflict between the Tiv and the Azara indigences. It started with gruesome killing of an Azara traditional leader, and later spread to the Tiv village, with the Tiv community on the defense.
27.	Friday, September 07, 2001	Jos crisis	A violent ethnic/religious crisis between the Muslim/Hausa Fulani and Christian/Indigences. The subject of discovered between the Jasawa Development Association and Plateau Youth council was over political appointment in Jos North.
28.	October 12, 2001	Kano Riot	A peaceful anti-American protest over the bombing of Afghanistan turned violent, taking ethnic and religious dimension, it degenerated into uncontrollable violence which claimed lives and damaged properties and places of worship.
29.	Monday, October, 29, 2003	Tiv-Jukun/Fulani Conflict	An ethnic clash between Tivs and Jukwun/Fulani which was an extension of the May 2001 clash and could be linked to the protracted dispute between both sides. <i>Newsivatch</i> reported that 16 soldiers were killed which later led to the gruesome revenge on the Tives, by the Nigerian Army.
30.	Friday, November 02, 2001	Gwantu crisis	A clash that started on a political ground (over the relocation of LG Headquarters) later took on ethno-religious dimension in which places of worship were destroyed
31.	Sunday, December 30, 2001	Vwag crisis	A violent communal conflict in Vwang district between the indigences and non indigences, exploded in the backdrop of the September 7 Jos crisis. It started when an illegal group of 40 men attacked the district Head of vwang. It also had

			religious colouring.
32.	January 18, 2002	Awe crisis	A renewed communal clash between two indigenous communities in Awe Local Government of Nasarawa State. The cause was not certain but two people were killed and several others injured.
33.	May 2, 2000	Jos Mayhem	Another mayhem that followed PDP congress but later took an ethno-religious colour
34.	May 2, 2002	Fulani-Irigwe crisis	An ethnic clash between the Hausa/Fulani and the Irigwe indigences in Basa, Plateau which was said to be a reprisal attack.
35.	Saturday, June 01, 2002	Yelwa-Shendam Mayhem (Plateau)	A religious-cum ethnic fracas between the native people (predominantly Christians) and Hausa settlers (predominantly Muslims). This violence extended to about four Local Government councils in Southern Plateau.
36.	Monday, July 01, 2002	Wase (Plateau)	The Yelwa-Shendam riots spilled over to Wase
37.	Tuesday, July 01, 2003	Edo/Kogi	Communal clashes between border communities in Edo and Kogi States Ekepedo and Ogori over land ownerships.
38.	Thursday, January 1, 2004	Ganye, Adamawa	Clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers over grazing lands.
39.	Thursday, January 1, 2004	Yobe	Militant Islamic group operating under the name of <i>Muhajiran</i> launched a Taliban-like attack on police. Men of the Nigerian Army killed five and arrested several others.
40.	Sunday; February 1, 2004	Wase/Kanam (Plateau)	Violent clash between Mavo and Taroh communities, which claimed 11 lives. Suspected Taroh youth were alleged to have raided Mavo villages.
41.	Saturday, February 1, 2004	Wase/Kanam (Plateau)	Communal clash over land ownership between Minda and Kparev groups. Several lives were lost.
42.	Saturday, April 3, 2004	Makarfi, Kaduna	Religious protest in Makarfi town over the desecration of the Quran by a Christian teenager.
43.	Sunday; April 11, 2004	Lantang South, Plateau	Continued clashes that led to the sacking of Taroh villages in Lantang South LGC by suspected Hausa-Fulani insurgents.
44.	Monday, April 26, 2004	Bakin Chiyawa Plateau	Renewed hostilities launched by suspected displaced Fulani herdsmen. The conflict was believed to be spill over of the ethno religious crisis that has been bedeviling southern Plateau Local Government of Langtang South and North, Wase, Kanam and Shendam.
45.	Saturday, May 1, 2004	Yelwa Shendam, Plateau State	A fresh ethno religious mayhem that claimed over 650 lives and over 250 women abducted by suspected Taroh militia.

46.	Wednesday, May 12, 2004	Kano	Kano may hem following the Yelwa Shendam ethno religious crisis in Plateau. Non Muslims were attacked in reprisal of the Plateau crisis. Over 200 lives were lost and the traditional ruler of the area deposed.
47.	Saturday, June 8, 2008	KonshishaGwer, Benue	Boundary disputes between neighbouring Konshisha an Gwer communities. Thirteen lives were lost.
48.	Tuesday, June 8, 2004	Numan, Adamawa	Ethno-religious crisis in Numan over the construction of a mosques minaret over the Humma Bachamas palace. Over 50 people were feared killed and the traditional ruler of the area deposed.
49.	Tuesday, August 3, 2004	Quanpam, Plateau	Fresh outbreak of violence in Lankaka village. Suspected armed milita from neighbouring state allegedly stormed the village community killing two and razing twenty houses.
50.	Monday, September 27, 2004	Limankara, Borno	A self-styled Taliban group hiding on the Goza hills and Madara mountains on the north-eastern boarder with Cameron raid police station killing officers and stealing ammunition.

Source: News watch Magazine November 2, 2009 (this information is an extract from the entire data. Therefore, the serial number is correct)

The above inter-tribal and inter-religious crisis above did not only assisted to create severe problem to democracy but made the Federal Government to channeled resource meant for development to controlling and preventing the destruction of lives and properties.

In a related development, the number of political parties in Nigeria particularly as at present is alarming and outrageous. Voters only see the name of some political parties and their logos when casting a vote during general elections. The confusion and challenge to democracy here is that voters in Nigeria get confused at the poll no matter the level of one's education not to talk of the illiterate ones. The resultant effect of this is that many invalid votes are recorded across the Country.

Lack of acceptance of defeat by electoral contestants at the poll is one great challenge to Nigeria's democracy. As a result of this the electoral Tribunal which is a special court set up to entertain cases relating to electoral matters in Nigeria have more than enough electoral cases to disperse with. This development not only delay justice but in some cases led to denial of justice of some individuals. Ugochukwu (2012:1) who witnessed one of the electoral appeal cases arising from the 2003 Senatorial elections in one of the states in Nigeria said "after overcoming several overt and disguised attempts to stop it from delivering a judgment eventually concluded hearing the appeal and set a date for its judgment. On the date of the judgment in this case that was laced with phenomenal political overtones, the court room was jammed by 9 o'clock in the morning by people from all walks of life, and they had come ostensibly to be witnesses the history that was in the making.

Nigeria got into exponential debt spiral in the hand of the international foreign creditors which was incurred at "non-concessional terms during the late 1970's and the early 1980's during a period of significantly low interest rate regime when the London inter-bank offered

rate (LIBOR) hovered between 3 and 4 percent. The debt grew rapidly through the eighties for two main reasons. The first was accumulation of debt service arrears due to worsening inability to meet maturing obligations. The second was the escalation of market interest rate. LIBOR peaked at 13 percent in mid 1989.... The trend of the external debt highlights the fact that much of the Country's external debt is owed to fifteen (15) creditor countries belonging to the Paris club; as a percentage of the total external debt, Nigeria's indebtedness to this group rose almost consistently from about 30% in 1983 to about 80% in 2001. (Debt: challenges to Nigeria's sustainable development retrieved via www.nigeriafirst.org/printer_55html on the 7th march 2013. The projected debt service even as at 1999 when President Olusegun Obasanjo assumed office was about US\$2.4 Billion. It is on this debt cub web that Nigeria democracy has been operating resulting in poor economic policies, unfavourable infrastructural development, increase poverty level budget deficit unemployment, low per capita income and poor standard of living etc. Low political culture and socialization, Political awareness in Nigeria is very low and people are not cultured politically therefore, only few Nigeria Voters know exactly why they are voting.

Since the inception of democratic rule in 1999 particularly in November 1999 and in 2002 scores of civilians were killed in Odi in Bayelsa State and in Zaki Biam in Benue State by rampaging soldiers over twelve (12) policemen and soldiers that were killed by local gangsters. The incident shook Nigeria and this made Nigerians particularly people in the affected areas to lose confidence on the type of democracy we have in Nigeria.

"One of the critical concerns to Nigerians has been billions of naira lost through corruption. Yet no end in sight to such unwanted state plunder resources" (Guarama 2006:3). The government of President Olusegun Obasanjo in trying to check corruption in the Country on assumption of office set up the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and also Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Though, these anti-corruption bodies have been doing their work, Nigerians are not too comfortable with the increased level of corruptive practices in Nigeria. The set back of Nigeria democracy as a result of corruptive practice in Nigeria is enormous. Corruption is responsible for the decay in our infrastructures, education, health facilities and services, etc.

Ngofa (2006:4) observed that "the power and energy crisis in Nigeria needs to be addressed squarely and urgently to arrest the imminent collapse of the economy... The energy crisis remains a national embarrassment to the Nigerian Government". Democracy work well where there is power and energy. The government at all level, private organizations, individuals and banks carrying out one business or the other depends on generating set and high voltage plants to power the economy. The consequences of this development are that financial resources meant to be used for development go into procurement of fuel or diesel to power the plant. For instance, a Rector of one of the Federal Polytechnics during his 2013 budget defense in the Nigerian National Assembly claimed to have spend N1 billion on fuelling of generators in his Polytechnic.

Fracas in states and central legislative assemblies since 1999 to date is a bane to democratic survival in Nigeria. There have been allegations of corruption charges on Patricia Ete over the renovation of the speaker's legislative quarter and as well as on Dimeji Bankole. Dimeji Bankole then the speaker of the House of Representatives having been accused of corruption suspended the member and in the course of ensuing argument Bankole ordered them out of the House Chamber. This led to serious fracas where leader of progressive member, Honourable Dino Melaye was attacked by his colleagues and he was almost stripped naked at the floor of the House. Also on 6th June, 2013 "there was pandemonium in the hallow chamber

of the Ogun State House of Assembly.... following attempts by the speaker, Honourable Suraj Ishola Adekumbi to suspend four members for allegedly infringing on the House rules. The uproar witnessed on the floor of the House resulted in the breaking of the mace.....” (<http://www.enownow.comnews/story.php?s=11637>). This is only two story out of dozens of stories of of legislative fracas in nigeria since 1999. A country operating democracy with fracas right in the legislative houses are not showing to the nation and the world that truly they have come to term and agree with democratic principles and ideals.

Latest security challenges in Nigeria are negatively affecting the nation economically, socially and politically. Situations where people capitalize on democracy to destroy lives and properties of innocent citizens and non citizens’ alike calls for concern by all. Since 1999 to date the civilian administrators at different time like any other country has been faced with the challenges of terrorism. Government of Nigeria have been spending a lot on security to protect and preserve lives and properties from terrorist would have been used for economic transformation of the nation (Adibe 2012) capture the depth of the challenge when he argues that:

The Nigerian State contrary to the media hype is regarded as the enemy, not just by Boko Haram, but by several Nigerians and groups, each attacking it with, as much as ferocity as Boko Haram’s bombs using whatever means they have at their disposal..... What all these groups have in common with Boko Haram is that they believe that the premise on which they act is justifiable and that the Nigerian State is unfair to them, if not an outright enemy (Uzodike and Macangwa 2012).

From the relatively vengeance theory perspective particularly for a nation like Nigeria that is made up of over 250 ethnic groupings

“attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, religious and historical relationships between individuals and group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination (Faleti 2006:54-55). In the light of the above Boko Haram though, is seen and regarded as terrorist group could also be seen to be a group trying to influence the government to achieve an objective like any other group. The group only want a recognition that is why its terror campaign, which initially targeted security formations and personnel has expanded to include civilians and non-government targets and the Nigerian public generally (Alozieuwa 2010:1)

Post general election violence also have records within the confines of democratic challenges between 1999-date in Nigeria. There has been violent post-election in Nigeria since independence in 1960 but the one recorded on the 18th-20th April 2011 after the presidential election in April 2011 could hardly be forgotten in the history of Nigeria. “Immediately when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) began the official announcement of the election result of the presidential election which was held on 16th April, 2011, simultaneously across twelve states of the Northern Region namely Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto and zamfara states respectively (Human Rights Watch 17 May, 2011 in Odoh (2012:2). Lives and properties were destroyed and this consequentially led to reprisal attack in Kaduna and some other part of Nigeria. Though, the election was adjudged as the most free and fair election conducted since the 1999 democratic era in Nigeria, nobody has given any tangible explanation as to what really was the problem, except that people held the view that president Goodluck’s victory in the election was the reason for the problem. This

development may have a serious consequences on future democracy in Nigeria. The incidence really deepened the already existing hatred among the northern and southern people of Nigeria.

The sudden removal of oil subsidy on the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) by Jonathan Goodluck on the 1st January, 2012 also have a serious consequences on Nigeria democracy as the decision thrown the nation into a nine days uninterrupted industrial action organized by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). The strike action was accompanied by a coordinated national peaceful and violent demonstration resulting in injuries and death of people as well as destruction of properties. The economic lost to the nation was unrecoverable as the oil industries and other economic ventures was shut down for the period that the strike lasted.

Lastly, one of the bane of Nigeria democracy is the level of poverty in the country. Overwhelming majority of Nigerians lives below the poverty line. The consequences of this is that the bourgeois and political leaders easily manipulate the electorates during electioneering campaign with any little amount to convince them to vote for them. This development is of great consequences on democracy because it aid, abet and encourage electoral malpractices.

3. Conclusion

Based on the study, it is evidently clear that the present democratic rule which started on the 29th May, 1999 have not been operating on a smooth and safe ground because the nation's democratic journey is full of challenges ranging from economic, social, cultural, political and religious. These draw backs not only negatively affected the growth of democracy and its ideals in Nigeria but have made Nigeria democracy an opportunity, a platform and a battle field for the different ethnic, tribal, religious and the different characters to effectively launched war against one another. After all, democracy provides without questioning uninterrupted rule of law and fundamental human rights for everybody to do what they feel is good. All the democratic challenges analyzed is nothing but a cold war of one ethnic group against one another trying to seize the political and economic power from one another. Indeed, a careful and cross examination of the trend of activities in Nigeria since 1999 shows that the war is for domination and control and management of the accruing resource from "oil" the major resource in Nigeria.

In 1999 when Obasanjo won election and became the president, hardly could anyone hear any distraction from the south-west groups particularly during 1999-2007. Even the popular Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) and the popular June 12th saga went into cooler. In 2007 when President Umaru Musa Yar'adua was elected through the most unfair and unfree election since the history of Nigeria, the Northern region applauded the election and remain calm until 2011 when the Hausa/Fulani bid to allow a northerner to continue in Yar'adua's stead for the second tenure failed under the People's Democratic party (PDP) zoning arrangement. Goodluck Jonathan was elected the president in 2011 general election and the Northerners protested violently against Goodluck victory at the general election. Now that Goodluck Jonathan is currently in power, the youth restiveness in the Niger Delta has been laid to rest. All the happenings in Nigeria is a struggle for for the position of the number one citizen in Nigeria. Any ethnic group that become lucky to produce the incumbent president will no longer constitute a problem to the Nigeria nation.

4. Recommendations

Judging from the conclusion drawn above, the following recommendations become inevitable.

One, Nigerians should place national integration of Nigeria above ethnic, religious, tribal and regional considerations in their daily relationship with one another politically, socially, economically, culturally etc.

Two, rotational presidency or zoning is inevitable in Nigeria because it will strengthen the various ethnic groupings and create a sense of belonging to all Nigerians that they will have opportunity to produce the presidency no matter how long it will take.

Three, emphasis should be placed on agreed percentage of revenue to be contributed from the states to the central government as the case with other federation like United States (U.S) and not only on what the states should share from the Federation account monthly. This will go a long way to discourage people from putting and placing too much emphasis on producing leadership particularly the president. Essentially, true federalism is the only answer to Nigeria's lingering challenges to democracy.

Four, a sovereign national conference should be organized in which members shall comprise of all the elected representatives at the National Assembly to address and redefine once and for all the relationship of the ethnic groups and how we could manage ourselves in the Nigerian state.

Five, equitable redistribution of wealth, social facilities and economic opportunities is a cardinal point that shall make Nigeria democracy flourish uninterruptedly. The present economic and social strata that placed the extremely rich and the extreme poor to co-exist always calls for economic and social violence, hatred, anger etc.

Lastly, the state should institute a policy of equal opportunity for education for all in order to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich in relation to acquiring education.

The above recommendations if adopted shall go a long way to checking the various challenges against democratic consolidation that have been bedeviling Nigeria since 1999 to date and Nigeria will gain international democratic height in the comity of nations.

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