

Change Agenda, Democracy and National Development

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Abstract:

This paper discusses relevant meaning, significance and understanding of President Muhammad Buhari change agenda, democracy and national development. The paper compare and contrast the transformational agenda of former president Goodluck, Ebele Jonathan in line with the vision 20:20 and the change agenda witness in Nigeria in recent times, democracy and the development of Nigeria as a whole. The paper notes that the present state of democratization in Nigeria gives cause for concern, as it tends towards the direction of change agenda. This paper therefore examines some of the development strategies designed to bring about an improvement in the socio-economic life of the people, the challenges of the strategies and the misconception of the concept of development

Keywords: Change Agenda, Democracy, National Development

1. Introduction

Change is the only permanent thing in life and it is ubiquitous in any society, particularly in a society with a strong desire to fulfill human needs. Social change is a product of a true, patriotic and committed leadership. Dike (2008) opines that Nigeria's short life has been packed with successions of changes which cut across the different strata of the nation. There has been the shift from regions to states, farms to cities, agriculture to petroleum and now, political power has shifted from the north to the south west, to south south and in recent times back to north. The irony however is that these changes have not been for the benefit of the common man. The changes recorded in the Nigerian society since independence cut across the different sectors of the national life such as politics, economy, education etc.

That President Buhari's "I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody" statement became BBC Africa's Best Quote of 2015 is not at all surprising. Also coming second in the list of 16 quotes is PMB's quote on Independence Day: "We must change our lawless habits, our attitude to public office and public trust. We must change our unruly behaviour in schools, hospitals, market places, motor parks, on the roads, in homes and offices. To bring about change, we must change ourselves by being law-abiding citizens.

The Transformation Agenda is a blueprint or a general framework of the Jonathan Administration to achieve a balanced growth and holistic national development of Nigeria. The

Agenda, floated few months after the inauguration of the Jonathan Administration on May 29, 2011 was based on the Vision:2020, which itself was a derivative of the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs, was aimed at giving priority attention to all agreed policies, programmes and projects of the government in the next four years, 2011 through 2015.

Worried that the efforts of the successive [past] regimes of Nigeria were characterized by lack of continuity, consistency and commitments [3Cs] to policies, programmes and projects, the Jonathan administration enunciated a roadmap for immediate transformation of the country. Trade, tourism and entertainment were among the critical drivers of this transformation agenda, as they bother on our value orientation, belief system, religion, dressing code, consumption pattern, attitude to work, and the gamut of arts and culture that must be fine tuned, altered or even changed for full implementation and success of the Transformation Agenda.

Commenting on this pet policy of the Jonathan administration, former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida advised that the transformation agenda must widen the scope and capacity of the present administration to generate wealth and providing incentives to foreign and local investments (Onwuemenyi, 2011) On the implications of the Transformation Agenda, Babangida notes that a paradigm shift in Nigeria, as envisaged by the new policy direction of the government, obviously requires a change in beliefs, values and references, something of a fundamental alteration of attitudes by the citizenry through the instrumentality of education and attitudinal orientation (Onwuemenyi, 2011).

However, President Muhammad Buhari Change Agenda means a country that you can be proud of at anytime and anywhere: where corruption is tackled, where your leaders are disciplined and lead with vision and clarity; where the stories that emerge to the world from us are full of hope and progress. A Nigeria in which neither yourselves, nor your parents, families or friends will have to fear for your safety, or for theirs. Also, a Nigeria where citizens get the basics that any country should provide: infrastructure that works, healthcare that is affordable, even free; respect for the environment and sustainable development, education that is competitive and outcome-oriented in a knowledge-economy.

Democracy and development are undoubtedly two most contested concepts in social and political discourse. There are different perspectives on the concepts influenced by history, ideology, discipline and experience. It is common place knowledge that Nigeria has been enjoying democratic bliss since 1999, which is indeed remarkable for many reasons: first, it marked the first time of transition from military to civilian rule after many years of military dictatorship. Secondly, it delineates the first time in the history of this country that there was a successful transition of power from civilian to civilian administration without military incursion, even though the elections were seriously criticized for massive irregularities. In an unmistakable tone, we subscribe to the view that "democracy is a government of the people by the people and for the people" as postulated by a renowned former American president, Abraham Lincoln. In this way, democracy can be representative or participatory.

Democracy, however, establishes a social contract between the citizens and the representatives. According to Anyim (2002) democracy is not a self fulfilling system for it contains certain innate limitations, which must be addressed for democracy to have a meaningful and positive impact on

the society. To Anyim (2002), the test of every institution's policy or program. It is therefore; against this background that this paper discuss the meaning of change agenda, democracy and national development. The rest of the paper is arranged into literature review, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

2] LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1] a Replica of the European Union Agenda for Change Adopted in 2011

Nworah (2005) cited Kurt Lewin (1951) described change as a three-stage process. The first stage (Unfreezing) involves overcoming inertia and apathy and tackling the existing 'mind set', the second stage (moving to the new level) is when change actually occurs. At the third stage (Refreezing), the new mind set is stabilised to prevent regression to the old ways. Nworah (2005) concludes that Lewis's model appears too linear and simplistic to be applied in a complex environment like Nigeria

The Nigeria social system has witnessed different types of change or reforms since independence. Previous governments in Nigeria have tried to introduce and implement different reform programmes especially in the areas of social, economic, educational and political sectors of the nation with varying degrees of success. Nworah (2005) opines that reform programmes could neither be described as successes nor failures because a greater percentage of such reforms were abandoned half- way. Some of the factors responsible for this is lack of continuity in leadership, insincerity on the part of the government etc. Some of the notable or landslide reform programmes in the nation's history include the War Against indiscipline (WAI) which was started by the Muhammad Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon-led government in 1984.

The programme despite the hype and euphoria that surrounded its introduction was subsequently cancelled when Ibrahim Babangida took over as military head of state in 1985; his government replaced the WAI campaign with what it called the Mass Mobilization for Self- Reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER) campaign, as part of what it called the social re-engineering process. Babangida's social re-engineering programme also included political and economic reforms. At this period, new phrases were introduced into Nigeria's national life, for example the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - inspired Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the infamous Option A4 political programme. His government also congregated the Constituent Assembly, set up the Peoples Bank, a government bank charged with the responsibility of providing micro-credit to the poor who were not able to provide the collateral security requested by the traditional lenders and banks. The Late Sani Abacha initiated the NOA (National Orientation Agency) to replace MAMSER, and Family Support Programme (FSP) which eventually led to the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare.

Also, Former President Olusegun Obasanjo government continued from where the previous governments stopped, with the introduction of the Child Care Trust, another first lady pet project to replace Myriam Abacha's Family Support Programme. The Obasanjo government however introduced various reform programmes in the area of agriculture and anti-graft campaign. The late Yar 'Ardua also introduced series of reform programmes under the coined name: '7 Point

Agenda'. Notable among the reform programmes of the late Yar 'Adua are the electoral reforms, the Land Use Act, Rule of Law to mention just a few.

The word "**change**" implies country that provides jobs for its young people, reducing unemployment to the lowest of single digits and providing safety nets so that no one is left behind. A Nigeria where entrepreneurship thrives, enterprise flourishes and the government gets out of your way so that you can create value, build the economy and aggressively expand wealth. Gen. Buhari, who explained the change he has envisioned for the nation in a New Year message, pledged to provide mass employment, adequate security, fight corruption, improve infrastructure and good health care.

Every team serious about 'change' starts with a clear identification of the baseline from which it measures deviations/progress. Nigeria has had 16 uninterrupted years of democracy with the PDP controlling the federal government as well as majority of the states. APC is now in charge at both the centre and majority of the states. A minimum standard for measuring 'change' is the extent to which APC government beats the record of the PDP in measurable terms. As the saying goes, if you can't measure it, you can't improve/change it.

When President Muhamadu Buhari first came to power in 1984-85, the nation was as well in crisis. He did so much within the short time especially on anti-corruption and restoration of national discipline. He inherited a command and control economic policy regime and deepened it (capital, exchange, and price controls; import licensing; indiscriminate ban on imports, rationing of essential commodities; government ownership and control of so-called 'commanding heights of the economy'—banks and insurance, telecommunications, airline, refineries, roads and transport, even manufacturing companies, etc). I recall that it was something like a criminal offence then to be in possession of foreign currency. Exchange rate, interest rate, petrol price and several other prices were largely fixed. In the face of continuing shocks especially the fall in oil prices (in the face of huge debt service payments), relative prices were not allowed to adjust to restore internal and external balances. Rather, even more controls were imposed with all the gargantuan distortions in the economy (and industrial capacity utilization was largely below 20%) and as government could not pay salaries, massive retrenchment of workers was undertaken, but the economic crisis worsened and Nigeria was on the brink of bankruptcy. The economy imploded big time. Unemployment and poverty worsened. It did not work. The successor government faced little choice but to liberalize the economy under the structural adjustment programme (SAP) and Nigeria began the journey to a modern market economy. Of course, the journey has been chequered, and naturally is still a work in progress (Charles Soludo, 2015).

Since 1986, Nigerian economy has changed a lot and my reading is that there is a broad consensus on continuing progress towards a competitive (probably also compassionate) market economy framework. From the snippets of policy since the new government came, there is a growing perception of nostalgia, reminiscent of the 'old good days' pre-1986. There seems to be a growing tension between a tendency to return to the past versus a progressive march to the future.

Nigerians the world over on Friday 29 May 2015 welcomed President Muhammadu Buhari as he became the 7th elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with his Vice President Professor Yemi Osinbajo SAN who both emerged from general elections acclaimed to be the freest and fairest in Nigeria's history, and also one characterised by an increased awareness and involvement of the general electorate who are becoming increasingly politically sophisticated. Expectations are indeed high both at home and abroad as expected but one thing I must say is that President Buhari commands uncanny respect across the full spectrum of the country and that in itself is a solid foundation to build upon in a country riddled with corrupt and divisive regional leaders.

President Muhammadu Buhari alluded to this fact in his acceptance speech after Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced his victory when he stated that 'we have voted for a government that will serve and govern, but will never rule over you. **Change** has come and a new day and a new Nigeria is upon us. The victory is yours and the glory is that of our nation, NIGERIA (Thisday, Newspaper).

2.2] The Concept of Democracy

The word democracy is coined from two Greek words: Demos (the people) and Kratos (rule) which simply means people's rule. In its Greek perception means rights of the citizens of the Greek city states to participate directly in an act of governance. Ardo, (2000) added that, there is no universally acceptable definition of the word democracy. In the same vein, Chambers Encyclopedia (1970) also maintained that, there are different conceptions of democracy and no agreement as to its true nature. Dahl (1956) in the same vein maintained that, there is nothing like democracy but there are democracies. Nwokeji went further to conclude that not just is there no universal definition of democracy, but none may emerge. However, Jega (2002) observed that, if there is any consensus about what democracy means, it is perhaps in relation to the understanding that, it is not personal rule, and that, it is different from authoritarian/dictatorial rule. It can also be said that democracy is based on some forms of perception and or representation.

Democracy as a system of government has been adopted universally since the turn of the century and the third world countries are not left out of this, in Nigeria effort at nurturing the nascent democracy has been a recurring debate for a truly consolidated democratic government. A major trend since the end of the cold war has been the enabling environment for enhancing the global propagation of the liberal democratic paradigm (Lawal and Olukayode, 2012). Inculcating the virtues and ethos of democracy in Nigeria will entrench and sustained the system and established the dividend of democracy, but the present democratization process in Nigeria has suffered from problems ranging from the manipulations of the rules to the agencies saddled with the responsibility of keeping the rules. Democracy has been variously defined by various scholars; the views of a few will be adopted for this work: Franceschet (2009) sees democracy as a governmental rule that is non-violent, permitting political participation and control and political equality. According to Kolawole (2004) democracy is not the absence of military rule nor is it necessarily the presence of civilian administrators, but a situation where political actors and institutions of state are oiled in democratic values, norms and ethos. Archibugi and Marchetti (2009) opine that the fundamental democratic principle requires that public decisions have to be

taken after consultation with all individuals who would enjoy or suffer the public consequences of those decisions.

Edigheji (2005) added separation of power, political tolerance, accountability, transparency, rule of law and equality as essential features for democratic government. Samuel (1991) as cited in Edigheji (2005) conceptualized democracy as a form of political system in which the decision makers are selected through fair, honest, periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all adult population is eligible for vote. Democracy therefore involves popular participation in the process of governance, equality among citizens, sovereignty of the people, promotion and protection of human rights and essential freedoms, limited government, supremacy of the rule of law, and separation of powers between the three arms of government (Malan, 2009).

2.2.1] Democracy and Development

Democracy and rule of law are inseparable and interwoven. Without the rule of law, democracy becomes toothless bulldog that barks without biting. Anyaele (2005) stated that the rule of law is the absolute supremacy or predominance of law over everybody, both the rulers and ruled and all decisions taken in a country. The main principles of the rule of law are equality before the law, impartiality and the rights of the individual. The rights of the individual and individual freedom are paramount in any democratic society. Any society that does not guarantee individual freedom in her constitution and not mere expression of it, is very far from democracy.

Democracy to Appadorai (1975) is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them. According to Ununu (2005) democracy is essentially a method of organizing the society politically. He suggested five basic elements without which no community can call itself truly democratic. These elements are equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law and liberty of the individual. To Giddens (1996) democracy is a political system that allows the citizens to participate in political decision making, or to elect representatives to government bodies. What then is democracy as a concept? According to Ntalaja (2005) democracy is a universal form of rule with specific manifestations in time and space.

Indeed, democracy according J.S Mill quoted by Agena and Odoh (2005) is superior to other forms of government because the rights of every person are secure from being disregarded only when the person interested is himself able and habitually disposed to stand up for them; and is more widely diffused, in proportion to the amount and variety of the personal energies enlisted in promoting it. The participation in governmental affairs lifts the individual above the narrow circles of his egoism and broadens his interest.

Democracy is accepted the world over as refined system of government as it places much premium on human personality and rule of law. It is because of the role which democracy plays in development and modernization that scholars and public commentators clamour for its enthronement as the best leadership option to move a society forward. Where it is religiously practised, the representatives and electorates are equal stakeholders. That is why any slightest abuse of power forces the representatives to resign. For instance, the contract scam in the Nigeria House of Representatives against the former speaker Mrs. Patricia Eteeh, forced her to resign on

30 October 2007. Democracy is a veritable tool for national integration, socio-economic cohesion and all other developmental indicators. It should generate property and eliminate corruption. It is in this regard that Enahoro (2005) lamented that when we achieved independence, we began the process of modernization, but so far we have failed to achieve democracy. The need to have a genuine and lasting democracy in Nigeria is a task which must be achieved if Nigeria is to be categorized in the committee of developed nations. Democracy with moral imperatives is a vehicle for genuine development.

Development and its usage in contemporary social science disciplines is not only vague and nebulous, but also polemical. For example, such terms as "growth" "change", and sometimes "industrialization" often used interchangeably with development complicates the problem of providing a generally acceptable definition for the concept. Logically, however, in explaining and defining development we will look at the liberal and Marxist perspectives.

To the liberalists, development means change which results due to maximization of the growth of GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization. Todaro (1979) saw development as the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic conditions have been more static, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP) at rate of 5 or 7%.

2.3] Factors that will Drive Democracy as a Vehicle for Genuine National Development

Taking into consideration the fragile nature of our nascent democracy and perhaps the skewed nature of our federation, in structure and in concept, it is our belief that the greatest challenges of development in our nation are the twin issues of democratization and national unity. Let no individual make mistake about this. The challenges of national unity are very critical to our national progress. The very substance and essence of national unity is that short of national unity, our country stands to disintegrate and when there is no country there cannot be democracy or development. Moreover, in a situation of cosmetic unity, it becomes impossible to achieve a nation-state, national consciousness or patriotism. These we can agree are essential ingredients for setting national goals and the determined pursuit of these goals for the purpose of achieving them in the national interest. The realization of these goals constitutes national development.

In nurturing a federation like ours for development, it is no gain saying that the rule of the game must be anchored on justice, fairness and equity. To actualize these virtues, the rule of law becomes imperative, the promotion and enjoyment of fundamental freedom becomes indispensable; and accountability, transparency and due process must be the guiding principles in the conduct of public affairs. It is our position that no other form of governance can guarantee these virtues except democratic governance.

In May 1999, the 4th republic was born in Nigeria with the echoes of a presidential system of democracy. By this fact our challenges for development is no longer the actualization of democratic system of governance but the sustenance of democracy and the quick pursuit of democratization. May we remind us that democratization does not only imply the creation of the basic institutions of democracy, rather it involves the creating of the right environment for the institutions to thrive.

2.4] Challenges of National Development Strategies

National development refers to the process or a situation where the government of a state is able to utilize the resources abounds in the state to improve the living conditions of the people.

Development of a country does not necessarily mean increase in per capital income but good quality of life of the citizenry, absence of inequality, full employment and wealth creation. The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such plan, which its success lies with the implementers, most of the past development plans failed as a result of implementation problem and lack of committed leadership. Based on this fact, new development policies and strategies were raised as alternative strategies for development, such as Seven Points Agenda in the Yaradu'a's administrations, Vision 2020, the Goodluck Jonathan transformation agenda, the adoptions of the millennium development goal. The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 is a perspective plan; an economic business plan intended to make Nigeria one of the top 20 economies by 2020, with a growth target of not less than \$900 billion in GDP and a per capita of not less than \$4,000 per annum. The three Pillars of the NV 20:2020 are i) guaranteeing the well-being and productivity of the people, ii) optimizing the key sources of economic growth and iii) fostering sustainable social and economic development.

Nigeria Vision 20:2020 is Nigeria's second attempt at driving the attainment of her national aspirations using long term perspective plan. In addition to the first perspective plan (Vision 2010), several strategic planning efforts have been undertaken by the Federal Government in recent years. These efforts include the Poverty Strategy Reduction Papers (PSRPs), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS I & II), Nigeria's Strategy for attaining the Millennium Development Goals, and the Seven Point Agenda. (National planning Commission <http://wikipedia.encyclopedia>). These policies and vision appear to be all embracing but they are not sacrosanct in their totality. But if faithfully implemented, the nation at least will move towards path of development. Nigeria still wallows in abject poverty, high level of unemployment and starvation in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizen and in other to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved with personnel that will religiously and faithfully implement it (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). Adopting spick and span the capitalists models of development has been responsible for the methodological flaws noticeable in African developmental process as against the peasant models. The bureaucratic models postulated by modernization proponent of the likes of WW Rostow states that for Africa to develop it has to pass through the stages laid down in his work and that African has not developed as a result of the fatalistic nature of African society, meaning that until Africa jettison his culture development and security which are regarded as gains of democratizations will elude Africa. Suffice it to say that this work will be corroborating previous work done challenging the authenticity and genuineness of the assertions of the modernization school of thought as regards development.

Mbakogu (2004) assert that an African development should begin with an identification of Africans condition as well as solutions for correcting these conditions, which should be formulated by Africans for Africans, and that as long as Africans remain armchair recipients of western cultures, without learning to do things targeted at their awakening, the development challenge will persistently remain an illusion. Jackson (2009) advocating the enlightenment yearning for universal principles of development is stark.

Development task will be unsuccessful if it does not have root in a people's culture. Culture is the basic assessment of whether a society is either developing slowly or rapidly.

Mbakogu,2004).Government of nations had been encouraged to work at enhancing social and economic development by increasing cultural heritage and tourism potential of country's with the aim of reducing poverty, and to increase employment(<http://www.mdg-f/>accessed July 20, 2013). Seniyi (1998) opined that the various developmental strategies failed because of lack or insufficiency of knowledge and equipment to carryout activities that agriculture as an enterprise demands. But more to this is the commitment to the implementation of the raised developmental strategies, because most of the strategies ever adopted had been the same the major differences are just the change in the name given each strategy. Some of the previous development plans failed because; there was little or no consultation of the general public. Planning is supposed to involve even the peasants in the villages. Nigeria developmental hiccups are the total rejection of the cultural pattern of transformation, that is, a complete rejection of the peasant route for the external bureaucratic (capitalist) route. There is no total adherence to the present chosen route which is the modernization route. The Neo-Marxist dismissed state efforts for developmental purposes by arguing that they were not intended to create broad-based development. To them the primary purpose of development policies was to help the capitalist system survive the periodic crises it created for itself.

3] Conclusion and Recommendation

Change is inevitable in life. The change agenda of President Muhammadu Buhari has said that his administration is building a new Nigeria and that the effort requires the support and participation of its citizens both at home and abroad. Looking at these elements above, there is little doubt that in Nigeria, our politics and politicians have not developed appreciable level of ethics and moral to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil in theory and practice. The Change Agenda should now, while redefining our national priorities, emphasise good democracy and improve national development.

As a nation, Nigeria should adopt the principle of “good governance” in all aspects of our national endeavours, from politics to economics, culture to sports, etc. The ‘Change Agenda’ must initiate and encourage the development of a new value system for the country. A value system is a set of consistent values and measures. “A principle value is a foundation upon which other values and measures of integrity are based.” Values, reflect a person’s sense of right and wrong or what “ought” to be. For example, it is important in Nigeria to restore the dignity of labour, dignity and sanctity of life, honour and integrity. We must restore the cultural values that made our Founding Fathers strong and respectable at home and abroad. In today’s Nigeria, values seem definitely to have changed, affecting the beliefs, and attitudes of the people.

The Buhari Administration’s choice of Anti-Corruption as one of its cardinal agenda is a timely important decision to confront an issue that has dented the image of the country and its citizens world-wide. Corruption in Nigeria is a national tragedy that created a terrible image for the country and all the citizens. Indeed, many people, Nigerian citizens and foreigners alike can’t imagine that Nigeria has some good men and women who can do their jobs in public or private sectors, honestly, honourably and professionally with integrity.

Democracy is among the most popular system of government globally because of the expectation that it facilitate development due to the possession of instruments that support development. However, reality in Nigeria using different indicators revealed that, democracy in the short run did not improve development, rather contradicted our earlier notion that there is causal

relationship between democracy and development. This study also coincided with other previous findings that, though democracy is important for development, but it is not a prerequisite for development. The paper recommends strict adherence to the principles of democracy and good governance.

4] Recommendations

The various strategies adopted had been just a change in the nomenclature, the formulations and the process of implementation is the same, it is believed that we cannot continue doing the same thing repeatedly and expect different result. Therefore, for development to thrive in Nigeria, the attitude and orientation of the implementers of the various strategies must change. Commitment and honesty on the part of the policy makers and implementers remains the only antidote to developmental challenges and the ineffectiveness of the strategies for development.

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