The Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in the Nigerian Fourth Republic: A Comment

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Abstract – Nigeria returned to civil rule on 29th May, 1999 and Nigerians were hopeful that their lots would be improved but twenty-one years after, the country is faced with numerous challenges among which are insecurity, poverty, banditry, leadership failure, corruption, electoral malpractice, among others. All these have affected democratic consolidation in the country. This essay examines the challenges of consolidating democracy in the Nigerian Fourth Republic and suggests ways by which such challenges can be addressed. The paper adopts a historical and descriptive method. Put differently, it is a desk research and relies on secondary data such as books, journals, and internet materials and analyzed using content analysis. The paper argues that the country has not fared better in the last twenty-one years of democratic rule in the country as cases of corruption, insecurity, banditry, and many other social vices have been on the rise. For democracy to be consolidated, there is a need for attitudinal change on the part of the rulers and ruled and adherence to democratic tenets.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Nigeria, Fourth Republic

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the restoration of a democratic rule on May 29, 2020, political pundits, civil society groups, and scholars have paid serious attention to the practice of democracy in the country and are interested in its consolidation (Iboi, 2017; Oche, 2017; Obioha, 2016; Olasunkanmi, 2016; Oluwole, 2014; Dode, 2010). Twenty-one years after the return to civil rule, Nigeria is still finding it difficult to consolidate her democracy. Before May 39, 1999, Nigeria was under military autocracy and absolutism (Ojo & Adebayo, 2009). Moreover, Nigeria’s history has been characterized by a frequent military incursion into politics, inconclusive and contested elections, political violence, and the crisis of legitimacy (Osaghae, 2002). Nigerians were hopeful that the new democratic order would address the numerous problems confronting the nation such as insecurity, ethnoreligious conflict, bad governance, economy, and many others. By the same token, Adejumobi (2010), contended that the return of the country to civil rule in 1999 ushered in a renewed hope that things would be better after lost opportunities by successive military administrations in the country. In a like manner, Adagbabiri (2015), noted that Nigerians embraced democracy with the hope that it would produce good dividends and socio-economic development but the people hope have been dashed as the country’s body politics has been characterized by election malpractice, majority tyranny over the minority, bad governance, political party indiscipline, abuse of power and these challenges are affecting the consolidation of democracy in the country. Similarly, Farayibi (2017), maintained that the citizens see democracy as solving problems such as inequality, marginalization, and discontentment but twenty-one years after, the country had to contend with Boko Haram insurgency, religious violence, marginalization and nepotism, and the re-group of secessionist movements such as IPOB, MASSOB, etc.

It is against this background that this paper examines the challenges confronting the consolidation of democracy in the Nigerian fourth republic. The paper is structured into six sections of which this introduction is a part and is closely followed by the discussion of key concepts germane to the study. The third segment analyses a historical review of the Nigerian democratic or civil rule before 1999 and the fourth examines the present democratic dispensation from inception to date. This is followed by the discussion of the challenges
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Discourse

This section of the paper is devoted to explaining some basic concepts that are germane to a deep understanding of the paper’s subject matter. These concepts are democracy and democratic consolidation.

Democracy

Democracy has received tremendous attention from social scientists especially political scientists. Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from two Greek words: demos meaning the people, and Kratos meaning rule. Thus, democracy is the rule of the people as a whole. According to Ajayi (n.d), it is a system of government where the opportunity to participate in authoritative decision-making is opened to all who are willing and interested to share. Similarly, Cohen (cited in Baminsaye & Awofeso, 2011) defines democracy as a system of government in which majority member of the community participate or may participate directly in making a decision which affects them all. By the same token, Giddens (1996) sees democracy as a political system that allows the citizens to participate in public opinion making, or to elect representatives to government bodies. In a like manner, Appadorai (1975) sees democracy as the system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them. For Garuba and Ameen (2020), democracy means a form of rules exercise by the people for the benefit of the people and the betterment of the state. It is a way through which people partakes in the decisions that affect the way their community is being administered by the ruling actors.

From the foregoing, democracy is a political system in which the majority of people participate in decision-making either through the election of their leaders or by deciding the important policy of government through a referendum. Democracy is characterized by several features which include free and competitive politics and elections; pluralism and multi-partyism; popular participation in the political process; respect for human rights and the ‘rules of the game and respect for the rule of law (Agbu, 2016).

Democratic Consolidation

Scholars are divided on the meaning of democratic consolidation. While some regard it as an illusory concept that fails to offer any new insight into the process of democratization (O’Donnell 1996, pp.34 – 51), others see it as being descriptive of an identifiable phase in the process of transition from authoritarian to democratic systems that is critical to the establishment of a stable, institutionalized and lasting democracy (Clinz & Stepan 1996, pp. 4 – 33). However, a scholar like Diamond (1999) sees democratic consolidation as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation such that all significant political actors believe that popular rule is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. It may also be referred to as the act of reducing the probability of the breakdown of the system to the point where democracy can be said that it will persist. Similarly, Ojo (2008), describes democratic consolidation as the process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down. By the same token, Asiwaaju (2000) cited in Olasunkanmi (2016, p.129) defines democratic consolidation as the “internationalization of democratic culture and the institutionalization of democratic “best practices” by a polity that has successfully embarked on a democratic transition.” In a like manner, Yagboyaju (2013), sees democratic consolidation as a consistent and sustained practice of democratic principles.

Oluwole (2014) described democratic consolidation as an identifiable phase in the transition from authoritarian rule to civil rule and by extension, democratic systems that are germane and fundamental to the establishment and entrenchment of a stable, institutional and enduring democracy. Essentially, arriving at a consolidated democracy requires nurturing democratic values and ethos, principles, and institutions in a matured sense that prevents a reversal to a hitherto authoritarian regime. It also rests upon a strong and dynamic civil society whose responsibility it is to check repeated abuses of power hold public officials accountable for their actions and inactions in the management of public resources and serves to mitigate political conflicts (Diamond 1999). In a similar vein, Ademola (2011) described democratic consolidation as an identification phase in the process of transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system that is critical to the establishment of a stable institutional and lasting democracy. For, Ouyang (2004), democratic
consolidation is a deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is broadly legitimatized among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down. Similarly, Iboi (2017), sees democratic consolidation as one that cannot come to an end abruptly through unconstitutional acts such as military coups. He maintained that a consolidated democratic system would enhance economic development, a stable party system, and developed political culture, among others.

Pre-1999 Democratic or Civil Rule in Nigeria: An overview

Nigeria achieved political independence on 1st October, 1960 and practiced the West Minister model of parliamentary system of government. This period was referred to as the First Republic. However, the democratic experience only lasted for less than six years as the military intervened in Nigeria politics on 15th January, 1966. After thirteen years (1966-1979) of military rule, democracy was restored in 1979 and Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari became the first Executive President of Nigeria and this marked the Second Republic. The Second Republic collapsed on 31st December, 1983 when the military-led by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari ousted the democratically elected government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Several factors have been adduced for the fall of the Second Republic and these include widespread political corruption, politically motivated violence, ineptitude on the part of the political leadership, electoral malpractice, and identity-based politics (Omodia & Aliu, 2013; Olaitan, 2005; Ogundiya, 2009).

The Buhari-Idiagbon administration lasted for twenty months and was toppled in a palace coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida. The Babangida’s administration embarked upon an endless transition to a civil rule program which instead of producing a civilian president ended up in a contraption called Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

As already indicated above, the Babangida's administration instituted a transition to a civil rule program, which would have led to the end of his regime and power being transferred to civilian government. However, a presidential election conducted on June 12, 1993, between Chief Moshood Abiola of Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Alhaji Bashir Othman Tofa of the National Republican Convention was annulled on June 23, 1993. The election was adjudged by Nigerians, national and international observers as the fairest and freest election ever conducted in Nigeria and was believed to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola. This was a major setback for democratic governance in Nigeria and this contributed to the truncation of democratic governance in the third republic.

The confusion that followed the annulment polarised the country along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. And this forced the self-styled military president, General Ibrahim Babangida to step aside on August 26, 1993, leaving behind a contraption called Interim National Government. The ING was headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, who hailed from the state and town with the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993, Presidential Chief MKO Abiola. The ING was in office for only 82 days when a judicial court in Lagos presided over by Justice Akinsanya declared its existence illegal. On November 17, 1993, the most senior military officer and Minister for Defence. General Sani Abacha took over the leadership of the country as head of state in what was believed to be a palace military coup against the ING (Akinsanya, 2005).

According to Omodia and Aliu (2013), the unpopular policies of the Interim National Government and those of the military administrations of Sani Abacha and Abdulsalam Abubakar, in the wake of the legitimacy crisis, political upheaval, and instability that followed the annulment of June 12, 1993, Presidential Election partly contributed to the loss of faith in the state by people and the demand for restoration of democratic rule.

Democratic rule in Nigeria 1999-2020

The 1990s witnessed a wind of democratic change across the African continent and many attributed this to a combination of internal and external pressures. The end of the Cold War changed donor priorities, and countries dependent on aid found themselves bound by new conditions for assistance. Protests and demonstrations by students, civil society organizations, and labor organizations contributed to the decision to transition away from the autocratic rule (Burchard, 2014).

As indicated above, the Second Republic was terminated on 31st December, 1983 and for another sixteen years, the military was in the driver seat. The prolonged military rule in the country had serious socio-economic and political implications. According to Olaniyoun (2009), the military did more damage to our national unity and the nurturing of other national institutions than anybody can imagine (cited in Asogwa,
2018). Besides, it destroyed the economy of the country. Hence, Nigeria is classified as one of the poorest nations in the world with the vast majority of its citizens living below the poverty level (Oche, 2017). This probably accounts for why military disengagement in 1999 automatically heralded expectations of progress and a deepening of democratic development in Nigeria. As Maduekwe (2008) cited in Asogwa (2018) rightly noted:

Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, after many years of military rule with a renewed determination to not only deepen democracy, but also promote the culture of rule-keeping, protection of our citizens' rights in any part of the world, confront corruption, and reform various state institutions for better performance, and to deliver on expectations of democracy (cited in Asogwa, 2018).

Yagboyaju (2011), noted that Nigeria’s present democratization, which culminated in the country’s Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, started amidst great hope and expectations. In a like manner, Olasunkanmi (2016), maintained that with decades of oppression under successive military administrations, Nigerians celebrated the return to civil rule with high expectations. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as Nigeria's second elected executive president (the first being Alhaji Shehu Shagari), following the successful transition program of General Abdulsalami Abubakar. This hand-over marked the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Olurode and Anifowoshe, 2004). This is the longest republic since the attainment of independence in 1960.

Since the inception of the present democratic dispensation, four administrations namely: Obasanjo, Yar’adua, Jonathan, and Buhari have been witnessed and as earlier alluded to, this is the longest democratic regime in the annals of Nigeria history. When Obasanjo came on board in May 1999, he promised to make significant changes within a year of his administration (cited in Oyovbaire, 2007). He identified some of the challenges of governance to include:

- “The fire of leadership insensitivity”
- “Executive arrogance”
- “Institutional lawlessness”
- “Perceived imbalance and lopsided composition of public institutions and appointment of public officers to reflect true federal character”
- “The over-concentration of powers at the center”
- “Repudiation of tyranny or dictatorship of the political class”
- “Eradication of pessimism muffled optimism and crisis of confidence”
- Reconstruction of Nigeria such as to erect “in the next four years strong bridges that will bind our greatness and diversity”
- “Nigerians to be assured, in the next four years at least, of the necessities of life”
- “Reversal of the decay in infrastructure”, especially in “NEPA, NITEL, roads, railways, education, petroleum products, housing, other social services which our country have experienced in its past darkest periods”
- “Reversal of the crisis in the oil-producing areas (Oyovbaire, 2007).

Nothing seems to have changed in Nigeria in terms of governance despite the new regime in town. Nigerians have witnessed some developments in the areas of the economic, political, and socio-cultural life of the country and some of these include: increase in the price of petroleum, prolonged conflicts between the legislature and executive arms of government controversy over resource control; the resurgence of ethnic nationalism as well as intra-ethnic conflicts, the impeachment of two Senate Presidents and removal of the Speaker House of Representatives (Ifeanyi, Alu & Ozigbo, 2011). Though, things have stabilized in terms of the relationship between the legislature and executive in the second tenure of Buhari’s administration. The segment that followed examines the challenges of consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

3. METHOD

The paper adopts a historical and descriptive method. In other words, it is a desk research and relies on secondary data such as books, journals, and internet materials and analyzed using content analysis.
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Nigeria

I. Leadership failure

Leadership failure is the greatest problem confronting Nigeria’s democracy and development. Nigeria is grappling with how to produce the right kind of leadership that will move the country from its present state to one in which the virtues of justice, peace, and equity will be firmly entrenched in the country (Pogoson, 2011). Leadership failure has been attributed to the root of all problems in the country (Okafor, 2016; Oputa, 1995; Achebe, 1983). As Achebe (1983), rightly noted:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (p.1).

The leadership failure in Nigeria has been premised on the inability of Nigerian leaders since independence to deliver on the promises and challenges of independence, economic development appropriates political culture, national cohesion and, good governance (Osagahe, 2010). According to Onoge (1995), the leadership problem which is confronting Nigeria is that of political leadership. Achebe (1983) enumerated qualities of a good leader to include: exemplary leadership, ability to treat every group equally, capacity for a just rule, patriotism, mental or intellectual rigor, meritocracy, and incorruptibility. A cursory examination of Nigerian leaders shows that they lack all these attributes. In Nigeria, the primary aim of assuming a leadership position is self-enrichment. A large number of political leaders in the country lack the character, passion, and vision to effectively address the problems confronting the country. In the words of Olu-Adeyemi (2012), “they do not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, as some of them are insensitive to the people’s sufferings.” Similarly, Mukoro (2018), once a leader gets into office in Nigeria, he becomes a demi-god, all-knowing, untouchable, and above the law. There is no doubt that Nigeria’s political leaders have paid lip service to the needs of the generality of the people and some of them lack the requisite skills and knowledge to pilot the affairs of the nation.

II. Corruption

Corruption has been defined as an act of “requesting, offering, giving or accepting directly or indirectly a bribe or any other undue advantage or the prospect thereof, which distorts the proper performance of any duty or behavior required of the recipient of the bribe, the undue advantage of the prospect thereof” (Kofele-Kale 2006 cited in Olu-Adeyemi, 2012). Corruption permeates every sector of the Nigerian society, ”from millions of scam e-mail messages sent each year by people claiming to be Nigerian officials seeking help with transferring large sums of money out of the country, to the police officers who routinely set up roadblocks, sometimes every few hundred yards, to extract bribes of 20 Naira, about 15 cents, from drivers” (Polgreen 2005). Corruption is another challenge confronting Nigeria’s democracy and is also one of the problems militating against the development of Nigeria. Corruption has continued to maintain its prime place since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999. The table below shows how the country has fared in Transparency International Organisation’s Corruption Perception Index in the last twenty years.

**Nigeria’s Corruption Perception Index 1999-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/NO</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>RANK</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>179</td>
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</table>
As the table above has shown, Nigeria has consistently remained a corrupt nation. On five different occasions, she has occupied second to the last positions (1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004). While in 2000, she came last. Though her position has improved over the years she remains a corrupt nation. The country has not fared better under Buhari’s administration whose mantra is the eradication of corrupt practices in the country. Nigeria was ranked 136 in 2015 and 2016 but in 2017, she was ranked 148 highest since 2005 and in 2018, the country dropped to 144 position. The Corruption Perception Index for 2019 which was released in January 2020 showed that Nigeria is the 146 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries and scored 26 points out of 100. According to Badmus (2017) corruption is a major cause of several socio-economic and political misfortunes that has be fallen Nigeria since the First Republic. It has destroyed Nigeria’s values system.

III. Poverty

Nigeria is a paradox, a country blessed with abundant human and natural resources, and yet its people are poor. With over 200 million people, she accounts for 47% of the West Africa population. According to Badmus (2020), 70% of the population live on $1.25 or even lesser per day. Poverty constitutes great challenges to consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

According to Afolabi (2015) despite the country’s richness in human and natural resources, she remains the economically poorest nation in the world. More than half of its people live in abject poverty and was rank among the poorest nations. An examination of an incident of poverty in the country since 1999 has shown that there is no significant improvement in the general welfare and condition of the people. Poverty has eaten deep into the fabric of society. The incidence of poverty and inequality is rampant and highly depicted by low Human Development Index (HDI), high illiteracy rate, low enrolment rate, and low life expectancy, and deteriorating social indicators. Poverty has a negative impact on the democratic process as well as efforts to consolidate democracy in the country as it shatters the dreams, aspirations, and hope of the people (Kareem & Lawal, 2017).

IV. Insecurity

Security is among the indicators for measuring development. Since the restoration of civil rule in 1999, the security situation in the country has worsened. Hardly a day passes without a news report of kidnapping, banditry and killing of innocent Nigerians and yet the government has been unable to find a lasting solution to these problems According to Mijah (2009) the failure of democratic governance and the growing insecurity it produces, led to violent reactions that threaten internal security and consolidation of democracy. The insecurity challenge has not only threatened the corporate existence of the country but also affected direct foreign investment. Besides, the image of the country has been battered by the inclusion of the country among failed states. Dauda and Avidime (2007), contended that the security situation in the country is a major impediment to the consolidation of democracy. According to them, “the tense security situation in all parts of the country makes nonsense of whatever efforts has been made to justify the sustenance of our democratic experiment since the environment is unconducive for foreign investments and endangered by bad governance and political instability”.

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>2019</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Compiled by the Author from Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index Reports 1999-2019.
V. Electoral Malpractice

Ezeani (2005) sees electoral malpractice as ‘illegalities committed by the government, officials responsible for the conduct of elections, political parties, groups or individuals with sinister intention to influence an election in favor of a candidate(s)’ (Ezeani 2005, p. 41). By the same token, Aluaigba (2016), defines electoral malpractice as “an instance where acceptable norms and principles that confer credibility on elections are desecrated; and in their place duplicity, falsehood, manipulation, and cheating by any means are deployed to sway the outcome of elections.” (p. 140). Election provides an avenue or platform through which different interest groups in a country can resolve their claims to power through peaceful means and also determines how political change occurs in a state (Agu, 2016). According to Ibrahim (cited in Obi, 2011, p.366), Nigeria electoral history has been characterized by ‘electoral fraud and competitive rigging.’ Since the restoration of civil rule in 1999, six General Elections (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2014, and 2019) have been conducted and none of these elections have been devoid of malpractice. According to Aluaigba (2016), all the elections conducted from 1999-2015 were marred by varying degrees and calibers of malpractice. Elections in Nigeria are manipulated and hijacked by politicians who used foul means in order to perpetuate themselves in office. Hence, elections in the country are nothing but sham stage-managed to perpetuate the political elite reign of impunity (Edet, Bassey, & Effiong, 2019). In the words of Osaghae (2019):

…elections in the country are stage-managed and outcomes are not determined by how people vote but are rather manipulated, cooked up, even predetermined, suggesting that elections may be bogus and far from what they are supposed to be (p.1).

Nigeria’s problem of conducting free and fair elections has serious implications for the consolidation of democracy in the country. Burchard (2014), in his insightful analysis of the democratic trend in Sub-Saharan Africa, noted that elections were not always held under fair or democratic processes and this may undermine democratic progress. Where an election is held under a conducive atmosphere, it enhances the confidence of electorates in democratization and renews the prospect of consolidating democratic institutions, particularly in democratizing states (Aluaigba, 2016).

VI. Economy

Economic development is necessary for the survival of democracy. According to Lipset (1960, p.31), ‘democracy is related to the state of economic development. The better to do a nation, the greater the chances it will sustain democracy. This means that inequality in terms of income and extreme poverty are detrimental to the sustenance of democracy’ (Usman &Avidime, 2016). Similarly, Ojo and Adebayo (2009) noted that economic prosperity sustains democracy while widespread poverty and ignorance undermine it. In a like manner, Soludo (cited in Ojo & Adebayo, 2009) contended that democracy has not to be endured in Nigeria because the economic ingredient is lacking. Indeed, democracy must deliver tangible economic benefits to the people for it to be credible and sustainable. In Nigeria, democracy has not delivered the desired dividend. Put differently, the economic fortunes of Nigerians have worsened since the restoration of civil rule. As Maier (2000) rightly observed, Nigerians are worse off now than they were at independence. For the downtrodden Nigerians, twenty-one years of democracy have been in the words of Femi Falana “unmitigated pains and agony because of the excruciating economic policies of the federal and state governments.” (Falana, 2020).

VII. Party Defection

Another challenge to consolidating democracy in Nigeria is party defection (the practice of decamping from one political party to another). Aspirants who fail to clinch their political parties’ tickets or fallout of favor with their political parties are often denied their parties tickets. Thus, they join rival parties that are ready to allow them to contest an election on their platforms. For example, former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar, when he was denied a ticket by his party in 2007, he defected to Action Congress of Nigeria to contest the 2007 Presidential Election. Also, in 2015, the former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar with five governors decamped from the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) to join All Progressive Congress (APC). Ahead of the 2019 General Elections, Atiku Abubakar, Aminu Tambuwa, Rabiu Musa Kwankoso, and others defected from APC to PDP. In 2018 also, 15 APC Senators and 37 Members of the House of Representatives decamped to PDP (Daily Post, 2018). The Edo State governor, Godwin Obaseki decamped from APC to join PDP because he fallout of favor with his political godfather. The implication of political defection is that political parties
become a mere forum for the nomination of candidates rather than the formulation of programs that can deepen democratic development in the country (Garba & Shaapera, 2018).

VIII. Godfatherism Syndrome

Godfatherism is a frightening phenomenon in Nigerian politics because it has contributed to what Asogwa (2017) calls it criminalization of politics in the country. As Omotola (2007) rightly noted, godfatherism is distributive. Godfathers are those who sponsored political office holders to various political offices such as the President, Governors, Senators, members of the House of Representatives, members of the State House of Assembly, Ministers/Commissioners, Local Government Chairmen, Councilors, etc. Godfathers have the financial wherewithal, local network, and secure connections to plot and determine the success or failure of their godsons. Godfatherism serves as a hindrance to democratic consolidation because it is the cause of political violence and corruption in the country. Many elected and appointed public officials are indebted to their political godfathers because of the role they played in their rise to power and are expected to repay their debts while in office through the appointment of nominees of their godfathers as commissioners and award of contracts to their godfathers or sharing of state resources especially the security votes. The consequence of godfatherism in Nigeria is that it drains the resources of the state which could have been used to provide social amenities to the people. Moreover, it affects the democratic process in that it retards the selection of credible leaders, thereby jeopardizing democratic consolidation in the country (Ogundiya, 2009).

IX. Unfulfilled Electoral Promises

Nigerian politicians when seeking offices make unrealistic promises in order to win an election and they do little or nothing to fulfill their electoral promises to the people when they win. Instead, they promote hatred and discord among the people resulting in the killing and destruction of properties. According to Ebegbulem (2005), democracy in Nigeria is not centered on the people. In his words:

Democracy, as it is practiced in Nigeria today, has no agenda for the people. People’s rights are not protected, neither are their wishes carried out by the government. We see a “democratic” Nigeria where the purpose of the government is the good and welfare of the ruler and his party members instead of the ruled (p. 12).

The above caption indicates the insensitivity of the leaders in Nigeria to the yearning and aspiration of the people. By the same token, Akinboye (2003) posited that the political class collaborated with greedy and self-serving politicians to subvert political processes and at the same time undermine values and norms.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As the foregoing analysis has shown, there is a number of challenges confronting democratic consolidation in Nigeria and for the country to move forward, the challenges need to be addressed. These challenges include Leadership failure, corruption, poverty, insecurity, electoral malpractice, economy, party defection, godfatherism, and unfulfilled electoral promises. There is no doubt these challenges affected efforts at consolidating democracy in the country. How do we need to address these challenges? This forms the recommendations of the paper.

a) On leadership failure, there is a need for Nigerians to be extra vigilant in the choice of leadership. They should vote into office those they feel are competent, have required leadership skills and also knowledgeable about the country’s problems, and have what it takes to address them.

b) Corruption should be tackled head-long and any person found to have enriched himself through proceeds of corruption should be dealt with according to the law of the land. The relevant agencies saddled with the responsibility of fighting corruption should discharge their work without fear or favor.

c) For democracy to be consolidated in Nigeria, there is a need to address poverty. Nigeria is home to some 87 million Nigerians who live in dire poverty (Brookings Institute, 2018). All hands must be on deck to get these Nigerians out of extreme poverty. One way of doing this is for all levels of government to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. By doing so, many people would be employed.

d) Insecurity should be addressed for Nigeria to consolidate her democracy. The government should provide funds for the purchase of modern equipment for the armed forces in order for them to prosecute the limited war they are waging against the fundamentalists. In addition, the government should tap
from the wealthy experience of those countries that have undergone similar experiences through sharing of intelligence and collaboration. More, importantly, those in the frontline should be motivated by paying them their allowances promptly and should also be promoted when due.

e) Electoral malpractice needs to be addressed. People should have confidence that their votes count. This would give legitimacy to those in power and also consolidate our democracy. Therefore, all stakeholders must come together and proffer solutions on how we can reform our electoral system. Besides, there is a need to revisit the Uwais Report on electoral reform in Nigeria to serve as a guide to future electoral form in the country.

f) The economy should be diversified. Nigeria’s economy depends solely on oil and so there is a need for government to intensify its efforts in diversifying the economy from oil to non-oil sector especially agriculture. The present administration deserves a pat on the back in its effort to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production and also boosting agriculture in the country through the provision of credit facilities.

g) The issue of party defection should be seriously addressed. The National Assembly should enact a law that will outlaw party defection and such law should be written in the constitution.

h) Godfatherism is one of the banes of Nigerian politics and there is a need for government and stakeholders to dialogue on the way forward. Any politician sponsor by godfather should be rejected at the poll by the people. Besides, the amount of money to be spent by a candidate during the election should be reduced, so as to guide against politicians being sponsored by money-bag. This will encourage those who are willing to serve but without money to stand for elections.

i) The politicians owed it a duty to fulfill their electoral promises. Nigerians should assess promises made by politicians before casting their vote. In the event of voting for a particular candidate and he fails to fulfill his electoral promises, such a candidate should be voted out of office in the next election.

These recommendations if implemented will go a long way in consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

REFERENCES


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