

PAINS OF DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY: EKITI STATE IN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the nexus between development and electoral democracy. It assesses the impact of electoral politics on allocation of resources and development. With focus on Ekiti State, it also discusses the “pains” that come with developmental policies, drawing from the perception and reactions of the people.

Keywords: Development, Democracy, Politics, Perception.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most governance structures in Africa are centralized and top down in character. It is imperative to mention that this legacy was inherited from the colonial administration. It was however, retained under the justification that, what was needed in Africa was national unity. While the pursuit for more unified states was necessary, given the divide and rule tactics, and ethnic regionalisation, national unity was narrowly defined to mean pulling all resources at the center under the overbearing control of the Executive and the power elites. This contributed substantially to corruption and inequality because resource allocation was premised on political affiliation. The development in the regions was also stifled and rural urban migration became rife (Owuor, 2011:13).

In most developing societies, the character of social, economic and political institutions and values is a key constraint to sustained, broadly based economic growth and expanded opportunity. While physical resources are frequently required, their effective and efficient use depends fundamentally on the strengths and capacities of local institutions. Inappropriate, inadequate or ineffective institutional practices may be the result of a lack of technical knowledge, but they are also frequently rooted in the political process and a nation's political values. How public issues are debated, the ways in which laws are formulated, and how they are implemented by the state - all have a direct impact on how a society addresses its development problems. For example, armed conflict, suppression of citizens groups, restrictions on the free flow of information and curtailment of public debate will distort how political issues are understood and how options for dealing with them are formulated and resolved. Intolerance of diverse views, unwillingness to accept compromise and a reluctance to accede to the wishes of the majority will exacerbate social conflict and visions.

Restrictive and complicated legal and regulatory structures, and their arbitrary, corrupt or inefficient administration by the state, will divert limited physical and financial resources, constrain the development and employment of human capital and inhibit broadly based and sustained economic development. Conversely, open political systems, respect for basic human rights and an appropriate and efficiently administered legal and regulatory system based on due process of law encourage peaceful resolution of social conflict, stimulate individual initiative, by women as well as men, and thus support economic and social development (USAID, 1991:5).

One of the most important decisions that governments face, both in rich and in emerging countries, is how to geographically allocate the public resources necessary for development, given each country's budget constraints. In contrast to conventional regional development approaches, which have seen public interventions as purely driven by technical socioeconomic considerations, a body of theoretical contributions and empirical studies at the interface between economics and political science has explored in the last two decades how the spatial distribution of public resources and government programmes is driven not only by efficiency and equity, but also by electoral concerns (Luca and Rodríguez-Pose, 2014:4).

Despite its significant natural and human resources and its considerable economic potential, Nigeria's economic performance, human development and overall social advancement do not match its potential. Its size, wealth and diversity generate high expectations but it remains "a rich country with poor people." Its oil wealth and considerable agricultural potential have not translated into better living conditions for most of its people. Over two-thirds of the population lives on less than US \$1 per day- which amount to 112.5 million Nigerians living in poverty (NBS Poverty and Income Distribution Report, 2012; The Punch, 2012:19) The political system still struggles with state coherence, improving government institutional efficiency, internal security, democratic representation and attitudes, enforcement of the rule of law and economic reforms (BTI, 2012:2). Poor investment in the nation's critical infrastructure and under-investment in health care, education, science, and technology are all leading to a "brain drain" in which Nigeria's most talented and educated citizens are leaving the country (CSAT, 2011:vii). This paper examines the nexus between development and electoral democracy. It assesses the impact of electoral politics on allocation of resources and development. With focus on Ekiti State, it also discusses the "pains" that come with developmental policies, drawing from the perception and reactions of the people.

Conceptualising the Interplay of Development, Democracy and Electoral Politics

The broadest concept of development incorporates basic civil and political freedoms and would relate to economic, educational, social, and cultural opportunities and their availability and access, so that they contribute to the general wellbeing of the population at large. This would include some basic civil and political freedoms. Inherent in this idea would be the fact that some kind of democracy would be necessary - and indeed required if the kind of access to opportunity would lead to increasing the general wellbeing of a population at large.

Specifically, as it relates to human development, it is aimed at expanding people's capabilities and choices that enable them to lead long, healthy and creative lives and enable them to participate in decision-making affecting their lives. Its characteristics include people's empowerment, equity of opportunities, sustainability, and human security and freedom. By examining the set of these characteristics, a country's development performance and predictors thereof become clearer. These critical generic characteristics include life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrolment and per capital income (UNDP, 2000). Other characteristics that are critical to human development performance in a society are more difficult to quantify but more revealing. These include access to services; participation in decision making; income disparities; equality of opportunities; level of employment; economic growth by community; health and education indicators; and human security. This is why it is important to disaggregate, wherever possible, human development indicators so that they reveal development disparities along the basis of ethnicity, gender, age or other basis.

A number of multilateral organizations including the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank have reflected on the elements of good governance, and on their relation to development. As the experience of these organizations vary, so too, do their perceptions of what constitutes good governance. In its report, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, the UNDP acknowledges the following as core characteristics of good governance: Participation; Rule of law; Transparency; Responsiveness; Consensus orientation; Equity; Effectiveness and efficiency; Accountability; and Strategic vision (UNDP, 1997).

To the World Bank whose interest in governance stems from its concern with the effectiveness of the development efforts it supports, sound development management, in the broadest sense of the concept, is critical for ensuring adequate returns and efficacy of the programmes and projects financed, and for the World Bank's underlying objectives of helping countries reduce poverty and promoting sustainable growth. Hence, the World Bank's emphasis in recent years has shifted from its own interventions to the overall country context (i.e., the governance climate) within which those interventions take place. In doing so, it has been guided by the nature of its operations and the opportunities for action that these offer.

As explained by Amuwo (2008:16), there are at least three approaches linking democracy and development in the literature. The first approach, popularized by Lipset as early as 1959, posits that there is a correspondence between democracy and higher levels of economic development. It also argues that the likelihood of democratic consolidation is higher in contexts of economic growth and development. This perspective stipulates that democracy and development should be simultaneously pursued. The second approach, whose major intellectual supporter is Samuel Huntington, contends that poor countries that aspire to development and industrialization should hold democracy in abeyance until the goals of economic development and prosperity are attained. The assumption of this approach – summed up as development first, democracy later – is that demands by poor people for unproductive consumption would hurt and derail the process of economic development, in particular savings and investments. The third approach underlines the need, particularly in poor countries, for 'a feasible simultaneity of the processes of democracy, development and poverty reduction' (Solomon 2006, cited in Amuwo, 2008:16). The kernel of this argument is that in the democracy–development nexus, Africa is at a crossroads: it has to pursue the two processes in tandem, to the extent that there is no democracy without development.

At its broadest, politics concerns the production, distribution and use of resources in a society. Politics is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means. This notion was neatly summed up in the title of Harold Lasswell's book, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* (1936). From this perspective, politics is about diversity and conflict, but the essential ingredient is the existence of scarcity: the simple fact that, while human needs and desires are infinite, the resources available to satisfy them are always limited. Politics can, therefore, be seen as a struggle over scarce resources, and power can be seen as the means through which this struggle is conducted.

Rather than confining politics to a particular sphere (the government, the state or the public realm) another perspective sees politics at work in all social activities and in every facet of human existence. In this sense, politics takes place at every level of social interaction; it can be found within families and amongst small groups of friends just as much as amongst nations and on the global stage. It is an intrinsic feature of this view of politics as a universal

and unavoidable process that it is found in families, farms, companies, churches and organizations; as well as in sectors (agriculture, health, education, irrigation) or in issue areas (gender questions, rights questions, child protection issues) and so on. Wherever collective and binding decisions are to be made about resource use and allocation, there is politics (De Waal, 1982).

The Contradictions and Paradox of Pains of Development and Election Outcomes: Lessons from Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Has the creation of Ekiti State translated into socio-economic development 20 years after its creation? If not, what factors are responsible for its state of development? Ekiti State was created on October 1st 1996 by the Abacha Administration after much struggle by the people of Ekiti State for self-determination and development. The Ekiti part of the former Ondo State was not as developed as the non-Ekiti section and this was one of the planks for the demand for Ekiti State. Unlike the usual practice whereby newly created states were given take-off grants by federal government, Ekiti State did not receive any take-off grants because the agitators convinced the Abacha Administration that their states would be viable without such financial support from central government (Adetoye, 2010:96). For example, in Ekiti State, the council in charge of the state creation project submitted a long list of resources-human, mineral, agricultural, land and industrial etc. to demonstrate the viability of the state. However, no sooner the state was created than the reality of economic dependence and crisis became obvious. Ekiti State is noted for its overdependence on allocation from federation account and low internally generated revenue. This, no doubt, continues to hinder the state from impacting positively on the lives of the people. Apart from this, a substantial portion of the resources of the state is committed monthly to the payment of salaries, wages and other personal emoluments of bureaucratic and political office holders.

An appraisal of the state since its creation has revealed that the state has witnessed insignificant development. This is not unconnected with what we referred to somewhere else as “the rapid and multiple turnover of heads of government and administrations” in Ekiti State (Adetoye, 2010:186). From October, 1st 1996-about 19 years ago, Ekiti has had about 13 heads of government and administrations. This level of instability, as demonstrated above could be attributed to the nature of Ekiti people and at the same time accounts for the slow pace of growth and development in the state.

With its high literacy rate, it is assumed that the Ekiti are supposed to appreciate and understand the dynamics and ingredients of governance and development. However, they appear to prefer “Quick wins” and governance deliverables in terms of material substance and concrete and tangible things. We note here that the gains of development take time to manifest because of the process duration and the intricacies involved in the process. But rather than exercise patience and endure the pains and hiccups that accompany development process, the Ekiti would rather settle for instant, though ephemeral gratification. This impatience had manifested in their electoral behaviour and voting pattern. The Ekiti electorate are wont to dismiss any governor who did not offer them palliatives as a non-performer and eventually vote him out at the auspicious time or in the subsequent election. They prefer to vote for candidates who offer them immediate succour or “relief materials”, an action which readily attests to common “refugee mentality”. This explains the “Stomach Infrastructure” policy of the incumbent governor of the state Mr Ayo Fayose. This has also been responsible, majorly, for the rapid regimes turnover in the state.

As a pointer to our observation, we recall a case when the administration of the immediate past governor of the state, Dr Kayode Fayemi, directed that that primary and secondary school teachers in the state be made to write examination with a view to determining their areas of training needs for effective capacity building in order to improve that critical tiers of education in order to save the latter from impending collapse. The teachers and their various unions protested against the exercise claiming it to be an “insult on their integrity” and alleging that the exercise was a deliberate design to witch-hunt and for the purpose of retrenchment. The teachers subsequently refused to cast their votes for the governor when he sought a second term in office. This, according to the teachers, was aimed at punishing the governor for conducting that exercise. The implication of this is no lost on the initiated in respect to development and regime stability.

Another example of development paradox in Ekiti politics was when the government decided to build a dual carriage township road in Ado Ekiti, the state capital. Buildings and other structures had to give way, hence they were demolished. This drew the ire of the owners of these properties and elicited hatred and displeasure from the owners and their sympathizers and relatives even when assured of adequate compensation. The bitterness generated by this incident did not wane and actually determined the voting pattern of the people during subsequent elections. This was affirmed by a post June 21st Gubernatorial Election study carried out by a Research Group in the Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. The study found out that the pent up anger generated by these developmental policies were vented against the source of the policies, that is, the governor, during elections.

Again people tend to view certain governments policies as hostile and deliberately callous, even it is apparent that these policies would be beneficial in future. For instance, when in 2012 the idea of a new tax regime was mooted by the government, the people perceived it as an additional burden and tyrannical, even when the taxes they were paying were no longer relevant to the present reality. They kicked against it, even from unexpected quarters such as the academia. The various labour unions in the state owned university threatened to embark on industrial action if the new tax regime was not reversed. They succeeded in arm-twisting the government to reduce the tax to the amount agreeable to them. One would have assumed that the academic community with its vaunted claim to knowledge and intellect would understand and appreciate the multiplier effect of such tax regime on the economy of the state; a state known to draw the least from federation account among the states that constitute the Nigerian federation. Substantial portion of what accrues to the state is spent on recurrent expenditure as the state’s only industry is civil service.

The implication of the above is that administrations that initiate unfriendly long term developmental policies are not allowed to continue in office to complete and consolidate on them because they are usually voted out at the next elections, ostensibly, because of the temporary discomfort that accompanies or associated with development process. This phenomenon has impacted negatively on the socio-economic lives of the people and the residual consequence of this is lack of growth and development in the state. This situation is not however peculiar to Ekiti State. It is a political behaviour known with Nigerians.

CONCLUSION

The politics of “stomach infrastructure” and its now feared consequences, that is, if not applied, began to have ripple effects on governance philosophy in the country, particularly in

states being controlled by the then opposition party to avoid protest votes at the poll. For instance, over nine hundred teachers, suspended by the Edo State government on charges of certificate and age forgery, who ordinarily should be prosecuted by a competent court, were recalled while their allowances/ salary arrears are being agitated for. Such policy reversal took place in Lagos state in respect of tuition fee (Omilusi, 2015:15). Akinlotan (2014) expresses concern that the south west zone has “begun to roll back their principled and well-considered stand on education, infrastructure and other policies.... enact mass surrender to the short-sighted and even whimsical needs of the electorate”. This trend is surely a worrisome template for governance, not only in the region, but in Nigeria.

The idea of a specified single-term tenure for elected Governors and President would have been an applicable antidote to compromising lofty policies on the basis of next election, but the obvious fact is if the candidate is not seeking a second term in office, his/her party desires it, even more passionately as other party members are also waiting for their turn. In this situation, that is, if the office holder refuses to apply “stomach infrastructure” to appeal to the sometimes superficial demands of the voters, the pressure will come more from within than without. In a country where voters are often swayed by frivolities rather than substance, opposition parties easily catch in on this (Omilusi, 2015:16).

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