

2019-09-12

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Citación recomendada

Jiboku, J. O., y P.A. Jiboku (2019). Pobreza y la crisis de la democratización en Nigeria: un fracaso del contrato social. *Equidad y Desarrollo*, (34), 35-56. <https://doi.org/10.19052/eq.vol1.iss34.2>

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Poverty and the Democratization Crisis in Nigeria: A Failure of the Social Contract

Joseph O. Jiboku*

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Abstract

From the time of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, it has been made explicit that the state and civil society exist under a mutual-reciprocal relationship. The state exists to serve several purposes in the interest of society, while the civil society is expected to fulfill its obligations to the state for the benefit of all. However, the civil society in Nigeria has not had a good bargain with the state as poverty pervades the land with dire consequences on the entire fabrics of society. The state seems to have failed in promoting the interests of its civil society and most citizens have lost interest in participating in the activities of government. Thus, during most elections, Nigeria has witnessed various forms of electoral malpractices and even post-election violence as experienced in different parts of the country. This paper is a desktop research incorporating secondary data from relevant institutions and agencies. Its concern is to examine how the failure of the social contract has led to poverty, which has affected Nigeria's democratization process. The paper suggests that addressing the issue of poverty will go a long way in ensuring peaceful, free, and fair democratization of political structures that will be of benefit to all, with applause from the international community.

Keywords

Social problem, social contract, poverty, democracy and development

JEL Codes

I38, O20, J18

How to cite this article: Jiboku, J. O., & Jiboku, P. A. (2019). Poverty and the democratization crisis in Nigeria: a failure of the social contract. *Equidad y Desarrollo*, (34), 35-56. <https://doi.org/10.19052/eq.voll.iss34.2>

Received: February 8th, 2019. Accepted: May 15th, 2019.

Online First version: September 11th, 2019. Final Publication: October 15th, 2019

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Pobreza y la crisis de la democratización en Nigeria: un fracaso del contrato social

Resumen

Desde la época de filósofos como Thomas Hobbes, se ha hecho explícito que el Estado y la sociedad civil existen bajo una relación recíproca y mutua. El Estado existe para servir a varios propósitos en interés de la sociedad, mientras que se espera que la sociedad civil cumpla con sus obligaciones con el Estado en beneficio de todos. No obstante, la sociedad civil en Nigeria no ha tenido una buena correspondencia con el Estado, ya que la pobreza invade la tierra con graves consecuencias en todo el tejido de la sociedad. El Estado parece haber fallado en promover los intereses de su sociedad civil y la mayoría de los ciudadanos han perdido interés en participar en las actividades del gobierno. Por lo tanto, durante la mayoría de las elecciones, Nigeria ha sido testigo de diversas formas de malas prácticas electorales e, incluso, de violencia poselectoral, tal como muestra la experiencia en diferentes partes del país. Este artículo es una investigación de escritorio que incorpora datos secundarios de las instituciones y agencias relevantes. Su objetivo es examinar cómo el fracaso del contrato social ha llevado a la pobreza, lo que ha afectado el proceso de democratización en Nigeria. El artículo sugiere que abordar el tema de la pobreza contribuirá en gran medida a garantizar una democratización pacífica, libre y justa de las estructuras políticas, lo cual será de beneficio para todos, con el aplauso de la comunidad internacional.

Palabras clave

Problema social, contrato social, pobreza, democracia y desarrollo

Pobreza e democratização da crise na Nigéria: um fracasso do contrato social

Resumo

Desde a época de filósofos como Thomas Hobbes, ficou explícito que o estado e a sociedade civil existem sob um relacionamento recíproco mútuo. O estado existe para server propósitos múltiplos no interesse da sociedade, enquanto espera-se que a sociedade civil cumpra suas obrigações para com o estado em benefício de todos. No entanto, a sociedade civil na Nigéria não teve uma boa barganha com o Estado, pois a pobreza permeia a terra, com consequências terríveis em todos os tecidos da sociedade. O estado parece ter falhado na promoção dos interesses da sua sociedade civil e a maioria dos cidadãos perdeu o interesse em participar

Palavras chave

Problema social,
contrato social,
pobreza, democracia,
desenvolvimento

das atividades do governo. Assim, durante a maioria das eleições, a Nigéria testemunhou várias formas de más práticas eleitorais e até de violência pós-eleitoral, como experimentado em diferentes partes do país. Este artigo é uma pesquisa de oficina que incorpora dados secundários de instituições e agências relevantes. Sua preocupação é examinar como o fracasso do contrato social levou à pobreza, o que afetou o processo de democratização da Nigéria. O artigo sugere que abordar a questão da pobreza ajudará muito a garantir a democratização pacífica, livre e justa das estruturas políticas que serão benéficas para todos, com aplausos da comunidade internacional.

Introduction

From time immemorial, man has been in a quest for order and peace as a vehicle for the socio-economic transformation of his society. The emergence of the state as an institution for the coordination of the affairs of men for collective benefits and welfare has also helped in strengthening the quest for order.

The enlightenment philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, J.J. Rousseau, Montesquieu and others helped to concretize the relationship between the state and the civil society under the notion of “social contract” (Appadorai, 1975; Laskar, 2013; Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007; Sabine & Thorson, 1973). The social contract theory, as read from the works of Plamenatz (1966), was based on the notion that men had originally created the state by means of a social contract to which each individual had consented. The state, according to the social contract theory, was created by a number of individuals who voluntarily entered into a contract, the terms of which provided a political authority. As a voluntary association, however, it differed from any other because it provided for the exercise of sovereignty, the supreme power to control by coercive means, if need be, the conduct of its members. The political obligation to submit to that authority is binding upon the individuals for the very reason that they voluntarily accepted it (Deng 2010; Laskar, 2013; Nbeta, 2012).

The idea of a “social contract” presupposes a situation whereby the state and the civil society have a “mutual” and “reciprocal” relationship. The civil society submits their individual freedom and liberty to the state, while the state offers

protection. Essentially, as long as the civil society remains committed to the state, the state offers protection from every form of arbitrariness. This mutual respect for the roles of each other helps in sustaining the contract.

38 In modern society, the idea of contractual relationship can be subsumed under the wellbeing of the state and welfare of the citizenry (Nbeté, 2012). Smith (as cited in Appadorai, 1975), identifies three purposes of the state as follows: the duty of protecting society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; the duty of protecting subjects from injustice, that is, the duty of enabling a system of justice; and the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and public institutions (Turan, 2010). Laski (1967) sees the state not as an end itself, but merely as the means to an end. It exists to enable the majority of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. The state is a means to the enrichment of individual personality. It exists to enable men, at least, to realize the best in themselves. According to Laski (1967), therefore, men can be enabled to realize the best in themselves only if the state provides rights, such as the right to work, to education, to basic freedoms –speech, press, association, and religion– to vote, and to stand as candidate for election.

The implication of the assertions above, therefore, is that all states are expected to perform said functions, and to the extent that a state does not effectively carry out the expected functions, that state is seen as having failed in its own part of the social contract. As such, the citizens have a moral right to withdraw their loyalty to the dictates of the social contract. To what extent, therefore, is the social contract valid in Nigeria? Is the Nigerian state not failing in performing its own part of the contract? How has this situation affected the democratization process in Nigeria? Do the Nigerian people even see themselves as part of the state? Do they see the state as their own? These are the questions begging for answers in this paper. Above all, the issue of poverty is viewed by the authors as a fallout of the social contract between state and society and, therefore, constitutes an impediment to Nigeria's democratization project.

In order to achieve the objectives set for this paper, we advance the discourse that democracy is a system of government that exists in line with the dictates of the social contract between state and society. However, we argue that the apparent collapse of the contractual relationship between the state and society in Nigeria is what has led to different vices experienced within the polity, which has impeded the democratization process and these unfavorable tendencies do not promote sustainable development in Nigeria. Addressing the issue of the social contract

between state and society in Nigeria will go a long way in re-enacting the values and demands of the contract in the minds of Nigerians for them to work towards the wellbeing of the state and their own welfare.

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Democracy and the social contract: The synergy

Democracy does not lend itself to a universal definition. It is a broad concept used generally to refer to particular ways in which relations are organized between those who govern and those who are being governed (Diamond, 1990; Schmidt, 2002, p. 147; Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 4). The mark of democratic regimes is “government of the people, by the people (or elected representatives of the people), and for the people” (Lincoln, 1958). Democracy is a system of government that promotes majority rule; one in which citizens determine, through elections, who become their leaders.

Barry (1981) opined that the term democracy has been used in a variety of contexts and this is why people talk about “liberal democracy,” “social democracy,” “totalitarian democracy,” and “industrial democracy” in an attempt to express a favorable attitude towards a political regime or to highlight certain features of that regime, which are considered to be virtuous. One of such important features of democratic rule, which makes it to be considered ideal, is that individuals are allowed to participate in government in the way they contribute to public affairs, hold political offices, criticize government actions, and influence the decision-making process of government. This is why every government wants to be called democratic and countries want to be seen as practicing a democratic system of government. For instance, the adjective “liberal” is added to show the emphasis of democracy on social justice, political liberties, and popular or public participation in governmental affairs (Bollen, 1993; Venter, 2009, p. 28). The elements of liberal democracy can be enumerated, but essentially a liberal democracy does not entail only elections at particular intervals but also the rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, constitutional checks and balances, and transparency and accountability of political officials (Leon, 2010, p. 5).

On the other hand, Omitola (2003) views democracy as a system of government that possesses an internal mechanism through which differences and conflicts among individuals and groups are resolved without degenerating into violent crises. It is argued that in a truly democratic society, government holds power in

confidence for the people (Diamond, 1990). Democracy in Shively's (1997) terms is a two-way traffic. Hence, the citizens must be given the political opportunities to exercise their authority over the government while the government must also be accessible to them through their representatives. This is the situation in a truly democratic state, and a state where this is not obtainable is not truly democratic. For the people to participate meaningfully in a democratic government, they must be well informed or carried along by the government. Instructively, therefore, the ideas enunciated by the social contract theory are implied in democracy (Osaghae, 1998; Osaghae 2006). A common feature of a truly democratic society, as observed from the above explanations, is popular participation of the people in the conduct of public affairs. Such participation ensures that the state is effective and functional, since it evolved from within the society and derives its existence and legitimacy from society (Osaghae, 2006). Social contract connotes a form of "reciprocal" relationship between the state and society (Deng, 2010, pp. 1-7; Steward, 2002, pp. 342-345). Society sees itself as part of the state and this creates in citizens a sense of ownership, belonging, and commitment towards participating in the affairs of the state and contributing to its transformation and development.

The idea of social contract is as old as man. From the account of the biblical Garden of Eden, God had a contractual relationship with man, as Adam and Eve were expected to take care of the garden from where they were fed. However, the contractual relationship broke down as Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit with punitive measures against man (Genesis, chapters 2 and 3, Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, 1971). In a similar vein, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, and others referred to as theorists of the enlightenment, also emphasized in their works that the emergence of the state could be linked to the establishment of the social contract between the state and the people, with duties and obligations bestowed on both parties. This contract was entered into by men who, before this time lived in a state of nature (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007; Nbeta, 2012).

In the state of nature, individuals enjoyed complete liberty, including a natural right to everything even to one another's bodies. The natural laws, considered as treaties of peace, were dictates of reason. Since the first law of nature enjoined individuals to seek peace, the only way to attain it was through a covenant leading to the establishment of a state. Individuals surrendered all their powers through a contract to a third party, who was not a party to the contract but nevertheless received all the powers that were surrendered. Each individual, by consenting to a

set of rules, guaranteed basic equality with every other member, meaning that no one possessed more rights than another. The sovereign must treat all the individuals equally in matters of justice and levying taxes (Appadorai, 1975; Laskar, 2013; Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007; Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

Locke (as cited in Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007), adopting the technique of social contract, explained that legitimate political authority was derived from the consent of the people, which could be withdrawn when the freedom of the individual was violated or curtailed. Describing the characteristics of a good state, Locke said that the state existed for the people who formed it and not vice versa. It had to be based on the consent of the people subject to the constitution and the rule of law. It would be limited, since its powers were derived from the people and were held in trust. The state, by virtue of this social contract, is responsible for the safety and security of its citizens. The state is to promote happy and virtuous life for the citizenry, and if the state fails to provide these values, in line with the social contract, it does not deserve the loyalty and commitment of the people (Laskar, 2013, pp. 6-7). The above scenario presents the social contract as one of mutual respect and reciprocal benefits.

The Nigerian state and the social contract

The ideas of the social contract (as enunciated in the previous section) can be applied in explaining the nature, workings, and problems of the Nigerian state. First, a point of agreement among scholars when discussing issues about the Nigerian state is that the state is a colonial creation, an imported state which did not evolve from civil society (Adefulu, 2001; Ake, 1996; Olaitan, 2001; Osaghae, 1998). It emerged in 1914 with the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by Frederick John Dealtry Lugard. The illegitimate nature of the colonial state did not result from the fact that it did not evolve historically and logically from the civil society on which it foisted, but from the fact that its creation was for the domination of society. There are scholars like Oyovbaire (1984) who is not even sure that there is really a good usage of the concept of the Nigerian state. This scholar is of the view that the concept is one that is yet to be developed and appropriately characterized.

Instructively, different terms used to describe a state in Africa such as Nigeria include: colonial state (Mamdani, 2002, p. 506); soft and ineffective (Osaghae,

2006); illegitimate (Akokpari, 2008, p. 90); facade states (Mehler, 2005, p. 12); weak (Jackson, 2002, p. 38); underdeveloped (Sørensen, 1997, p. 260); imported (Kawabata, 2006, p. 2); failed (Akokpari, 2008, p. 90), among others. These negative words are often used regarding discourses relating to the origin, nature, character, and more importantly, the workings of the state and its political and socio-economic challenges. Osaghae (1998) observes that the very existence of the African state has been questioned, as it is said to be fictitious and more recently, described as failed or collapsed.

The Nigerian state has failed to approximate what Young (1994) refers to as the “behavioral imperatives of a state” such as hegemony, autonomy, security, legitimation, revenue, and accumulation. The 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (which has been subsequently reviewed) in its second chapter –Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy– made it clear that “... sovereignty belongs to the people from who [sic] government derives its powers.” It went further to emphasize that “... the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government and that powers [sic] shall be exercised in the interest and welfare of the majority.” The question to ask however is, to what extent has the welfare of the people been promoted? Despite annual budgetary allocations, education for all people has remained elusive (Leke et al., 2014). Healthcare facilities are out of reach for the majority in terms of cost and availability, and quality housing is a far cry from the desire of many (APRM, 2008, pp. 274-318); there are food shortages and unemployment is prevalent across the nation (Trading Economics, 2015). The culmination of all these factors is poverty, which has become the lot of the vast majority of Nigerians (Jiboku & Jiboku, 2009) despite the country’s vast natural and material resources and its economic growth rates over the years.

Nigeria’s economic growth rate was “8% from 1999 through 2003 and 7% from 2004 to 2009, respectively” (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), & Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting Co. Ltd., 2011, p. 2). Its steady growth rates have not translated into improved socio-economic conditions for the people. The poverty rate in Nigeria, which currently is above 80%, compared to previous rates, shows that poverty reduction has remained a challenge. Table 1 and figure 1 reflect data obtained from a General Household Survey (GHS) and those of the Harmonized Nigerian Living Standard Survey (HNLSS).

Table 1 and figure 1 reveal regional disparities and higher levels of poverty in the north compared to the south. In essence, the contract between the state

Table 1. Poverty rates per capital from GHS Panel Data (percentage of population)

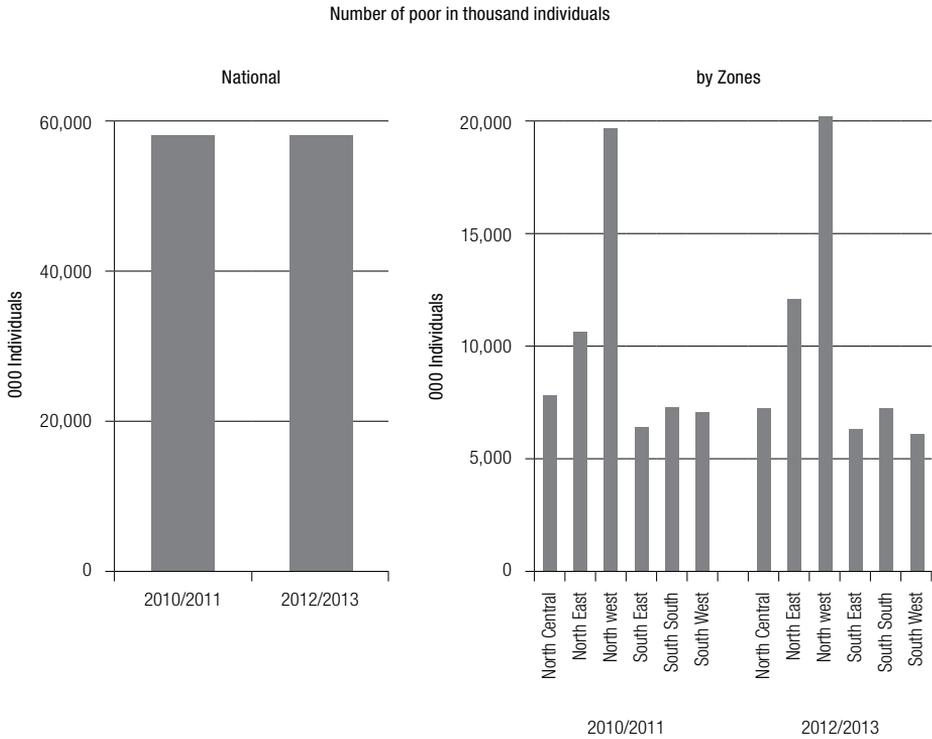
	Poverty headcount		Diff	Poverty gap		Poverty severity		Poverty headcount HNLSS 2009-10*
	GHS 2010-2011	GHS 2012-2013		GHS 2010-2011	GHS 2012-2013	GHS 2010-2011	GHS 2012-2013	
National	35.2	33.1	-2.1	9.2	9.6	3.7	3.9	62.6
Rural	46.3	44.9	-1.4	12.9	13.1	5.2	5.3	69.1
Urban	15.8	12.6	-3.2	2.8	3.6	1.0	1.3	51.2
North Central	33.4	31.1	-2.3	8.9	8.9	4.0	3.5	65.8
North East	47.1	50.2	3.1	15.9	13.0	6.9	5.2	75.4
North West	46.9	45.9	-1.0	12.4	12.4	4.6	4.8	74.2
South East	31.7	28.8	-2.9	8.1	10.3	3.2	4.7	54.9
South South	27.7	24.4	-3.3	6.7	7.7	2.7	3.2	53.3
South West	21.2	16.0	-5.2	3.6	5.4	1.3	2.0	47.9

Source: Adapted from World Bank, IBRD-IDA 2014. Nigeria Economic Report No. 2. July 2014, 14

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and the people has turned out to be an unjust one. While those in governmental authority and power enjoy affluence and have remained indifferent to provision of social amenities, the majority of the people have remained poor with continual deprivation of quality of life. In the main instance, basic needs of life are taken out of reach for most people under the guise of privatization. The effect is the loss of interest by the people in the affairs of the state. The argument in this paper is that poverty is a salient issue that affects the democratization process in Nigeria. It has remained persistent despite different policy measures embarked upon by successive Nigerian governments.

Figure 1. Number of people who live in poverty - Nigeria



Source: Adapted from World Bank, IBRD-IDA 2014. Nigeria Economic Report No. 2. July 2014. 18.

Democracy and poverty in Nigeria: A failure of the social contract?

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The story of democracy in Nigeria is a sad one, as democratic experiments in the first and second republics ended eventually in coup d'états. The attempted third republic equally collapsed under invidious forces that surrounded the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria (Tobi, 2001). Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 with the swearing in of the Olusegun Obasanjo administration after several years of military rule. This act marked the beginning of democratization as people saw the reality of democracy, which had eluded the country for a long time (APRM, 2008). With this newfound freedom, different groups such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC), the Egbesu, Bakassi Boys, Arewa People's Congress, and several groups from the Niger Delta started alleging one form or another of marginalization with a clamor for redress. This cry of marginalization, parochial sentiments, and polemic responses and agitations all stem from the collapse or failure of the social contract with the people and the endemic poverty in the country in the midst of vast resources and wealth. While Nigeria is confronted with the Niger Delta crisis; inequality (the widening gap between the rich and the poor); the issue of providing for the needs of its growing population and addressing socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty; lack of infrastructures, among other issues (APRM, 2008), the argument in this paper is that poverty has affected Nigeria's democratization process.

In Nigeria, the mass poverty of the people, according to Mamman (2002), can be associated with social, economic, political, ecological, and cultural policies and processes all of which have interlinks. Ravellion and Bidani (1994) look at poverty as the inability to have command over basic needs of life such as clothing, food, shelter, among other things. It should be noted that the inability of individuals to access these basic needs has negative consequences on their physical and socio-psychological wellbeing. Jhingan (2002), on his own part, describes poverty with examples. He illustrates his argument with the inability of a boy longing for education but unable to get it because his parents cannot pay for it; the grief of parents who watch a child die of preventable childhood diseases because they cannot afford medical care. The United Nations sees poverty from the perspective of people living on less than one dollar (\$1) per day (UNESCO, 2017). Poverty is a form of powerlessness that touches the social, political, and psychological well-being of individuals. Socially, people who live in poverty lack access to resources than can

“People in conditions of poverty also live in environmentally degraded areas. The consequences of this, is socio-political and economic marginalization with direct consequences for democratization and development”.

empower them for good livelihood; politically, they lack understanding of the political system and thus do not see themselves in the process as a stakeholder; psychologically, the individuals’ self-worth and ability to have standpoint to assess social situations is lost so that they become passive and submissive. People who live in poverty are withdrawn and lack the self-esteem necessary to analyze and evaluate issues (World Development Report, 2000/1). By international standards, more than 50% of Nigerians live in poverty (United Nations Development Programme, 1998) and the situation has degenerated to a precarious level rather than improving as the National Bureau of Statistics computation of human development indices for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Nigeria Human Development Report 2016 indicated that 53.7% of the population live in poverty (NBS, 2018). Nigeria

has been regrettably described as the poverty capital of the world with an estimated population of 87 million people in extreme poverty (Nigeria overtakes India, 2018).

Among several reasons adduced for poverty are an exorbitant cost of living as a result of inflation, high rate of unemployment, government’s failure to provide basic social amenities, ill-health, illiteracy, and low level of education (Abimbola, Orembi & Adekeye, 2005; Ajakaiye & Olomola, 2003; Obadan, 1997; Odumosu et al., 2003). From these explanations, it is instructive that poverty deprives people from the basic needs of life and the results are high level of illiteracy, malnourishment, hunger, poor health, among others. People in conditions of poverty also live in environmentally degraded areas. The consequences of this, is socio-political and economic marginalization with direct consequences for democratization and development, bearing in mind the discourse that about 67 million of Nigeria’s population, as reported in 1996, live below the poverty line (Mamman, 2002). The situation has degenerated to an estimated 87% of the population, making Nigeria the poverty capital of the world (Nigeria overtakes India, 2018). Thus, this paper argues that poverty is one of the main impediments to democratization in Nigeria.

Democracy has been defined in the previous sections of this paper as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Abraham Lincoln, cited

in Ake, 1992). It is a type of government that recognizes that human beings represent the foundation for the development of any society. Then, how can a high proportion of people who live in poverty, socially ill-equipped, politically and economically displaced, be in the forefront of attempts at democratization in Nigeria? The Nigerian state, which ideally should provide the basic facilities for quality of life of its citizens and the enabling environment for the realization of individuals' potentials, is weak in performing its responsibilities. For instance, social security to ameliorate the problems associated with poverty as a result of unemployment is nonexistent (APRM, 2008). Gratuity and pension are not paid to those who have spent active part of their working lives in serving the nation. These people have been frustrated and have retrogressed into penury and need, with some reported dead while on queues to collect such stipends (Adeniji, Akinnusi, Falola & Ohunakin, 2017).

In the face of all these persisting challenges, in 1988, the state nevertheless embarked on the policy of privatization and commercialization of public utilities and companies with an adverse effect on labor, compounding the unemployment problem and poverty (Onuoha 2003, pp. 16-17). The attempt to attain basic livelihood in the face of these daunting problems have led individuals to devise different means for survival. The concern is that people who live in poverty need food, shelter, and clothing, among other things, which have to be procured at the expense of the larger society. Another point, which needs to be stressed, is that the extended family system in Africa increases the dependency ratio. On the average, an employed person is not only responsible for his immediate family; he also has his aged parents and extended family members to cater for from the same salary he receives (National Research Council, 2006). This takes the person to the poverty level. If the state lived up to its task of providing for the welfare of all citizens, the dependency ratio and its multiplier effect on poverty would have been reduced. Therefore, poverty is one of the major retrogressing factors for development in Nigeria.

Considering the situation of the people who live in poverty in Nigeria and the different dimensions of their poverty, the authors argue that these people do not see themselves as part of the democratization process in the country. The social contract that would have given them a sense of belonging in the state has failed. Therefore, how would the democratization process in Nigeria be genuine, free, and fair? Among the reasons cited by Ojofeitimi (1992) for the failure of democracy in Nigeria is the attitudinal disposition of Nigerians, that is, a general lack of commitment and political will to nurture a democratic culture. A synthesis of the

previous reasons clearly explains the rigging of elections, opposition thuggery, corruption, victimization, and other violent acts, which characterized Nigeria's first, second, and third republics. In addition, the dismal performance of the Nigerian economy manifested in the high rate of unemployment, high external debt, high cost of living, and poverty, has not allowed democracy to flourish in Nigeria. The real issue is that democracy cannot thrive in a situation where most citizens lack the basic needs of life.

Ogunsanwo (1994) also identifies the level of political awareness as a major factor explaining the failure of democracy in Nigeria. Low level of political awareness in Nigeria is a product of many variables such as despondency emanating from disillusionment arising from the dismal performance of previous regimes, low literacy level, and poverty. This low level of political awareness in the words of Ogunsanwo (1994) undermines democratic rule as the enthronement of ethnic particularism and chauvinism and the considerations of crass material benefit tend to derail values like accountability, merit, and dedicated hard work on the part

“The dismal performance of the Nigerian economy manifested in the high rate of unemployment, high external debt, high cost of living, and poverty, has not allowed democracy to flourish in Nigeria. The real issue is that democracy cannot thrive in a situation where most citizens lack the basic needs of life”.

of political leaders. These would otherwise have sharpened the democratic ethos. For instance, the polemic responses of some segments of the Nigerian society to the health and death of late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua would not have come up if basic needs were available to all. The issue, about the then vice president Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan could only act “for” and not “as,” (Daily Post Editorial, 13 December, 2011) would have been meaningless if not for poverty and the belief that a president from a particular area would protect the interest of the people better. Likewise, the agitations by different militia groups threatening Nigeria with internal terrorism would not have been experienced if basic needs of life were within the reach of many Nigerians. The post-election violence witnessed in parts of Nigeria, particularly in the northern area, which resulted in the killing of young people and especially of members of the National Youth Service Corps, was partly borne out of the feeling that these youths helped in prolonging

the people's poverty conditions as the winners, particularly for the office of the president did not emerge from within the northern zones. Also, two more noteworthy issues are the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram Sect and the kidnappings in the Niger Delta, especially of expatriates. In the first case, the issue of concern is that if the youth were to be gainfully employed, they would be less prone to taking actions that could destabilize Nigeria's democratization process. In the second case, the people kidnapped work in the oil sector in Nigeria and the demand for ransom has become a big business in the region. This is an indictment on Nigerian democracy within the international community and has negative consequences on the inflow of investments needed for development.

Essentially, it is the poor in the society that are manipulated, induced, and used by the elites for all forms of electoral malpractices and riggings during elections as well as the post-electoral violence witnessed in parts of the country. People who live in poverty become withdrawn and passive and lack the self-esteem necessary to analyze and evaluate issues (UNESCO, 2017). This makes them likely to accept the status-quo and hardly question the position of those in authority. The April 2007 gubernatorial and state houses of assembly elections represent good cases to cite in this direction. Most of the people who live in poverty and are illiterate are easily deceived by politicians. As such, the result is that the wrong candidates who do not have the interests of the masses in mind are elected into public offices and embark on self-centered programs to the detriment of society. In recent time, politicians are rife with involvement in vote-buying allegations among people, who find it difficult to resist being induced with small measures of rice, household utilities, and money because of the high level of poverty. The outcomes of all these is bad governance; corruption; embezzlement of public funds; negation of development programs on education, health, housing; creation of employment that will positively touch the lives of people living in poverty being pursued without vigor, among others. The ideals of democracy are hereafter defeated.

The way forward

Nigeria's democratization process is facing many problems: polemic responses to national issues, ethnic militia, ethno-religious upsurges, land and border crises, kidnappings, and more recently, internal terrorism. These problems are not insurmountable when there is the willpower to tackle them from the roots rather than

beating around the bush. One way to achieve this is to address the issue of poverty. That is, urgently implementing programs and policies aimed at poverty alleviation. Nigeria is not lacking in terms of policy frameworks aimed at eradicating poverty, the challenge lies on the implementation of such policies. For instance, while development programs are formulated, the government fails to demonstrate the necessary political will to commit resources towards implementation (APRM, 2008, pp. 258-259). Thus, the various poverty alleviation measures put in place by successive governments in Nigeria need to be strengthened to tackle the menace of poverty. According to Ajakaiye and Olomola (2003), the Human Development Index (HDI) for Nigeria in 1998 was 0.391, which ranked it 142 out of the 174 countries surveyed. In addition, in the year 2000, the HDI score for Nigeria was 0.439, which ranked the country at 154 out of the 174 countries surveyed. The situation has not significantly changed as the HDI report of 2016 was 0.530 and for 2017, the HDI report was 0.532. Overall, Nigeria's ranking did not change from position 157 out of the 189 countries sampled. In addition, table 1 and figure 1 presented in the previous section show that, as of 2014, the poverty rate in Nigeria had increased to 60% and in 2018, it increased to 87% of the population, thus making Nigeria the poverty capital of the world (Nigeria overtakes India, 2018). These data reveal that rather than abating, poverty is on the increase.

The efforts of successive Nigerian governments aimed at eradicating poverty, which was the goal of the 1995 Copenhagen Denmark World Summit for Social Development and in which Nigeria participated, are commendable especially the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). This was to be pursued through:

- a) Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
 - b) Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
 - c) Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS), and
 - d) Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS)
- a) The YES incorporates manpower training and development of capacity; mandatory internship (industrial training or practical industrial training as part of skill acquisition); and provision of credit lifeline for graduates to take off their businesses. These measures, the program envisages, would propel entrepreneurial development of the youth to be self-employed rather than seeking for jobs (Ewemade & Joy, 2015; McDonald, Iloanya & Okoye-Nebo, 2014; Ugwu, 2012).

- b) The RIDS is designed to tackle rural energy and power supply, portable water and irrigation as well as rural and urban transportation and communication. The idea is that the development of these infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, will reduce the rate of rural-urban migration and make rural areas more attractive (McDonald et al., 2014; Ugwu, 2012).
- c) The SOWESS is intended to facilitate empowerment of farmers and the provision of credit facilities for increased agricultural output and by extension improve the quality of life of farmers and rural dwellers.
- d) The NRDCS is a scheme geared towards harnessing of agricultural, water, and mineral resources as well as conservation of land to make agriculture more result oriented and attractive despite the threat of global warming (Ugwu, 2012).

In the same dimension, the current Administration is also not taking the issue of poverty alleviation with levity, as existing measures on poverty reduction are being remodeled with more financial vigor under the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) such as the N-Power programs. These programs are geared towards skill and vocational trainings of the Nigerian youth. The government is of the view that the youth are the future of the nation. Therefore, their skills and knowledge need to be developed to make them the drivers of economic growth and social development that will be sustainable. Through the N-Power Volunteer Corp, it is projected that unemployment and by extension poverty will be reduced with a massive deployment of 500,000 trained graduates who will assist to improve the inadequacies in public services such as education, health sector, among others.

The non-graduate empowerment aspect of N-Power includes N-Build, which is meant to train artisans for three months in different aspects of vocational work which includes building services, construction, built environment services, utilities, and automotive. With the acquisition of such skills, those trained could become self-employed and also train others under the form of the apprenticeship system. It is anticipated that the N-Power build of accelerated skill acquisition and certification will provide employment for 75,000 youth.

In addition to the N-Power initiative, the micro-credit scheme known as Trader-Moni is also another avenue for alleviating poverty through the provision of credits to petty traders through their associations without collateral. It is projected that two million small-scale traders will be empowered through the scheme and it also allows for increases in the credit accessible to each trader on established

proof of profitable use of the money demonstrated by regular re-payment (Federal Government of Nigeria, n.d.).

52 These policy measures along with the Amnesty Program, through which youth from the Niger Delta are being empowered with relevant skills in order to stop vandalism of oil facilities and installations in the area, should be re-invigorated with more funding to help ensure the objective of poverty eradication. With sincere efforts at poverty alleviation and empowerment of the youth, there will be a reduced number of people available for use to foment trouble and create crises within the polity body. Tackling head on the issue of poverty will go a long way in re-enacting the validity of the social contract in the minds of men, thereby making the democratization process an institution for all devoid of skepticism, doubts, and the mutual suspicion that hitherto have devastated the state and civil society relationship. Thus, the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy will lead to establishment of institutions and structures that are sustainable and devoid of crises.

Conclusion

From the different dimensions of poverty has been defined through, we see it is a vicious circle that keeps people living in such condition in a state of destitution and disillusionment. Poverty affects many aspects of human conditions, which definitely include individuals' participation and contribution to governance and democratization in any polity. The western world has been able to make so much advancement in economic, social, and political terms because poverty has been ameliorated to a very low level as a result of the adoption of several policies, which are non-existent in most developing countries, particularly Nigeria. The precarious situation in Nigeria calls for concerted efforts aimed at redressing this detrimental trend. The previous efforts of government at poverty alleviation, as enumerated earlier, are commendable and should be strengthened. In addition to the various programs put in place, the government should target the implementation of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals regarding poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Examining the various issues discussed in this paper, it is possible to identify that events that are possible in a political system explain the character of that system. Many of the unfavorable trends occurring in Nigeria's body polity are the result of the failure of the social contract between the state and society. It is therefore possible to make inferences about the future of the Nigerian state, which

is failing to function adequately as a modern state and not implementing policies that are in line with the needs of its citizenry. Despite its “illegitimate” nature, successive Nigerian governments have not yet been able to bridge the wide gap between the state and society and achieve national integration. Rather, the state has been indifferent to social welfare and rights of the citizenry. The citizens, in the face of all these issues, have withdrawn their loyalty to the state and this has adversely affected the democratization process in Nigeria.

There is a need to pay serious attention to the issue of nation building and re-conceptualizing the role of the civil society towards achieving this objective. The political leadership should be committed to the implementation of policies, especially as it affects the well-being of the majority of the people. On the other hand, the citizenry should be responsive and there should be conscious change in attitudes. These will go a long way towards enhancing democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

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