

PARADOXES OF DEMOCRACY DIVIDENDS IN NIGERIA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

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Abstract

Transition from an autocratic regime to a democracy is considered by many as ushering a new order that will deliver social and economic benefits across different sections of the society. These are often metaphorically referred to as dividends of democracy. Although the country continues to have a semblance of uninterrupted democracy, existing evidence suggests that the current democratic dispensation has not been able to deliver the expected dividends satisfactorily across all sections of the Nigerian society. While politicians and their associates continue to increase in wealth, absolute poverty has risen from 55% to 61% in the last decade. Despite democratization, Nigeria has the highest level of inequality in Africa and records the greatest disparity in development and economic entitlements between those who control the apparatus of government and the populace. This paper argues that the persistent inability of democracy to deliver expected benefits poses danger to democratic consolidation with the implication of triggering authoritarian

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throwback. Three taxonomies of paradoxes of dividends of democracy are examined including the power paradox and the development paradox. Finally, the paper gives some suggestions towards the consolidation of democratic tradition in Nigeria. It is suggest that there is the need to put in place a legal framework to check the tendencies of former governors from transmuting from governors to senators, and the necessity to review the practice of collecting excessive application fees by political parties.

Keywords: Popular disempowerment, inequality, democratization, economic entitlements.

Introduction

There is a near unanimity among a number of development scholars that democracy is a preferred form of government and the best way to accelerate socio-economic development across sections of society (Fukuyama, 1996; Kleven, 2013; Mbaku, 2005; Moore, 2007; Young, 2007). Although instances abound where some authoritarian regimes recorded spectacular economic achievements, it has been argued that in those countries where such regimes produced a semblance of economic progress, especially in Asia, such as Lee Kua Yew's Singapore, Malaysia and to a lesser degree, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, individual liberties were gravely constrained, if not abused (Harperin, Siegel & Weinstein, 2005; Molutsi, 2004). Thus, democracy has remained more attractive as a preferred form of socio-political organization. This is because of it has a perceived ability to propel the production and spread of progress that encompasses the socio-economic wellbeing and freedom of the people. These attributes are sometimes described metaphorically in social sciences' literature as "dividends of democracy". However, the sociological adoption of the concept of "dividends" derives from its economic usage which denotes desirable benefits and returns from endeavours or investments.

The current democracy in Nigeria which started about twenty years ago was expected to create possibilities for what the nineteenth-century

British philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, referred to as “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” This was particularly expected in terms of the generation of employment for a significant number of the masses, provision of security, access to qualitative education and healthcare, affordable housing, reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights. Indeed, these expectations are in consonance with known pronouncements on democratic principles as propounded by earlier philosophers from John Locke to Jean Jacques Roseau, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith through John Rawls, and a number of others (Kleven, 2013; Samuel, 2007). Therefore, at the return to civil rule in Nigeria in 1999, the emergent civilian administration at the three levels of government – federal, state and local governments – were expected by a citizenry that was already traumatized by years of military misrule to quickly deliver the dividends of democracy and avoid the reversal to authoritarianism (Amucheazi & Ibeanu, 2008). *Alas*, while it might be admitted that the country has managed to transit from one democratic regime to another in elections that, in some cases, were massively characterized by obvious irregularities, it remains to be seen how over two decades of democracy have engendered popular improvement of the human condition of a significant number of Nigerians.

The experiences of the Nigerian masses in the last twenty years of democracy have been testaments to contradictions and paradoxes of dividends of democracy. There are concrete instances of massive unemployment, unprecedented insecurity, seemingly indomitable insurrections against the state by predatory, rampaging, normless terrorists, skyrocketing of prices of commodities prices, dwindling value of the nation’s currency, huge inequality and a general sense of mental impotence symbolized in the increased number of beggars in the streets. Thus, despite the enthronement of democracy and the anticipated spread of prosperities, there has been an apparent inability of the state to perform its constitutionally assigned function of ensuring the improvements of the human condition of the masses. For the majority of the Nigerian population, insecurity (in all its ramifications, be it the feeling of absence of safety in terms of a general apprehension of imminent danger, or anxiety over inability to satisfy their needs) has increased, while the quality of life for many a citizen is yet to improve after more than twenty years of practical democracy.

The concern of the moment is that, for awhile, the idea of “dividends of democracy” has been circulating like a currency in the political marketplace as a measure of achievement of the current democratic dispensation. The term has been recurrent in Nigeria’s political vocabulary appropriated by the political elites and their associates in testaments to their gains in the ongoing inequitable distribution of national resources. By contrast, for the majority of the Nigerian populace, it is a case of paradoxes of dividends. The present paper is an attempt to explore the nature of the paradoxes, highlight their nexus with popular disempowerment and expose their implications for democratic consolidation, social order and authoritarian throwback.

Democracy and Democratic Dividends

The issue here is, whether democracy as a system of socio-political organization is fertile for the reproduction of desirable social and economic needs. A better way of responding to this question is to view the concept from the perspectives of some scholars who have researched into the nexus between democracy and the human condition. However, performing that function inevitably places a demand to unknot the concept of democracy.

For a concept that has been in circulation since the eighteenth century and widely debated, and for which purpose nations had witnessed revolutions and wars, presenting a widely acceptable definition will no doubt pose some challenge. In all events, there is almost no scholarly refutation of democracy as representing a participatory form of government wherein citizens with the suffrage are not only allowed to choose those who govern them, but are free to present themselves for election to public office (Huntington, 1996). Further to that is Kleven’s (2013) observation that a principle of equitable sharing that requires both the negative and positive consequences of social life to be fairly distributed among all sections of the society is fundamental to the notion of democracy. This idea had been espoused in the libertarian philosophy of John Locke, John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism and John Rawls’ egalitarianism. These principles, Kleven (2013) insists, constitute inevitable elements in the democratic project.

Furthermore, in their work *What Democracy is ... and is Not*, Schmitter and Karl (1996:50) offered what might be regarded as organizational and relational orientations of the concept of democracy, and conceived of democracy as “a system of government in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.” Kaplan, on the other hand, had a functional orientation of the concept in mind, and thought of democracy “as a process through which people confer with each other to secure food, shelter, land, water and peace for their mutual benefits” (Kaplan, 2015:1). Though Huntington did not give a straightforward definition of democracy, his preposition on the subject can be deduced from his opinion about how the legitimacy of a democratic government can be damaged. In his words, “sustained inability to provide welfare, prosperity, equity, justice, domestic order, or external security could over time undermine the legitimacy ... of democratic government” (Huntington, 1996:10). Going through the above lines by Huntington attentively, it would not be too difficult to decipher what the author believed should be the central function of democracy wherever it is embraced.

On the link between democracy as a political system and socio-economic improvements of a nation and its population, Molutsi (2004) tried to make the point clearer. This, he does while he acknowledging the complexity in the analysis given the ability of autocratic, totalitarian and other less participatory regimes to economically outperform some major democracies. The author observed that the less than impressive performance of known large democracies such as India and some countries in Latin America, complicates any attempt at making a straight verdict on behalf of the democratic system as a superior agency in the expansion of prosperity in the form envisaged by Kaplan (2015) and Huntington (1996). Nevertheless, Molutsi (2004) notes that evidence from the last three decades demonstrates clearly the inherent weaknesses in the capacity of non-democratic regimes to nurture socio-economic development and sustain economic growth. He observes that the former Soviet Union and most of the Eastern European Socialist regimes, as well as one-party states in Africa, showed this inability. Molutsi (2004) states further that non-democratic regimes have failed to create an economic base relatively au-

onomous from the state. These regimes have generally failed to achieve the goal of equitable distribution of income, and there is the tendency of generating high levels of dependency on the state by all economic actors. On the contrary, many democratic regimes have, in general, succeeded in creating conditions necessary in aiding a relatively autonomous economic base. This is said to have equally reduced the dependency of the general population on state-provided services. The democratic environment had allowed private initiatives to provide alternative services for those who could afford them. In some instances however, some democratic regimes have tended to perform just as poorly on matters of economic growth and fair income distribution. Nonetheless, they tend to show greater resilience in recovering from economic crises than non-democratic regimes. Therefore, the superiority of democracy derives from its ability to adapt and withstand economic crises, as well as its capacity to deal with the important issues of system maintenance at the political and socio-economic levels (Molutsi, 2004).

Furthermore, Harperin et al. (2005) observed in their work *The democratic advantage*, that democracy is a more potent system of social political organization in raising the living standard in poor countries than authoritarian governments. Reference is sometimes made to the experience of Brazil, during the administration of Luiz Lula da Silva, the winner of Brazil's 2002 presidential election who was inaugurated as the President of Brazil on January 1, 2003. Under Lula, Brazil became the eighth largest economy in the world, and more than 20 million people were relieved from chronic poverty. Current report indicates that Brazil is the seventh largest economy in the world and the seventh largest in purchasing power parity (PPP) and a GDP (PPP) per capita of \$15,160 (Population Reference Bureau [PRB], 2018). Though Lula da Silva is now in jail over corruption charges, the socio-economic prosperities recorded in Brazil under Lula is incontrovertible.

The foregoing demonstrates the unanimous opinion of scholars on the relative advantage and capacity of a democratic system to deliver desirable social, economic and political benefits across sections of the society. Nigeria has had about two decades of uninterrupted democracy

since the return to civil rule in 1999, and the political class and their associates have been reveling in the euphoria of democratic dividends by appropriating huge profits emanating from an unjust imbalance of access to state resources. However, for the majority of the Nigerian populace, there are paradoxes of democratic dividends. A few taxonomies of these paradoxes have been selected to drive home this point.

Taxonomies of Paradoxes of Democratic Dividends

There is paradox when people begin to experience the reverses of their expectations. For a concept that has been at the centre of many uprisings against perceived oppression and misgovernance, there is no ambiguity as to the dividends that democracy is expected to propagate. Such dividends include; equitable distribution of societal resources and creating enabling environment for citizens across sections of the society in order to actualize the very essence of their existence in form of access to qualitative education, employment opportunities, clean and safe environment, affordable healthcare services, access to justice and the desire to be heard and recognized (Clark & Fowerave, 2001; Kaplan, 2015). Thus, for democracy to become sustainable and seen as fulfilling its mandate, it must meet the expectations of both the elites and the people. Notwithstanding the forgoing pronouncements, there is hardly any convincing evidence to testify that the envisaged dividends of democracy for the masses have been realized in manners that have impacted positively on the socio-economic and political conditions of the Nigerian masses. Rather, a sociological telescope reveals unpleasant instances of paradoxes of dividends of democracy for a larger segment of the population. An attempt would be made here to look at these paradoxes at different levels of power and socio-economic development.

(i) The Power Paradox: From Majority to Minority

Central to democratic theory is the idea that power belongs to the people. Indeed, democracy literally means rule by the people or “polyarchy”, as Robert Dahl attempted to christen it (see Schmitter & Karl, 1996:49). The notion is responsible for the maxim “power to the people” in democratic conversations and civilization. It should be noted that the power

base of the people comes from their sheer number or numerical preeminence; not necessarily on any formidable criterion. This has been responsible for the widespread misgivings about the potency of *majoritarianism*. This is time in many developing countries, where as a result of widespread illiteracy, uninformed electorates become prone to electoral manipulation by politicians through the mechanism of what has now come to be known as “stomach infrastructure” in Nigeria’s political vocabulary; assuming the votes count. While the debate as to the practicality of *majoritarianism* is on, the matter at issue is that there is a paradox of power when the *majoritarian* force loses its potency after election rituals. This occurs when the majority suddenly realise their minority status soon after elections, as those they elected assume the master’s height. From a strict sociological standpoint, minority as a concept is adopted to measure the relative power or powerlessness of groups in intergroup relations; be it in multicultural, multiethnic/racial, multireligious or social class contexts (Glazer, 1998). From the angle of true democratic tradition, the power ramification of the majority is not supposed to expire at the end of election. The theory of republicanism suggests that the people remain potent and can still exercise their *majoritarian* power to recall erring representatives from parliamentary assemblies. However, in Nigeria, shortly after elections, the majority tend to become powerless and slaves to their elected representatives. This is the case even when those representing their constituencies appropriate disgrace by the ignoble conducts of many; and in some instances, outright defection in violation of the will and political affiliation of the electorates.

Other areas of concern on the paradox of power relate to electoral malpractices that often characterize the country’s electoral processes. There is equally the question of whether the number that determined the emergence of an electoral victor actually constitutes the majority. Take for instance a state of three million people, with about seven hundred thousand registered voters; and in an election, the contender with 29 percent (203,090 votes) of total registered voters, which constitutes seven percent of the total population, emerged the winner. The argument here is that, in Nigeria’s political process, the majority is actually the minority, of both the total population, and of the registered voters. Such a situation

can propagate lack of faith in a democratic system and makes democratic consolidation difficult.

(ii) Development Paradoxes: Socio-Economic and Demographic Perspectives

It has been theorized that the beauty or superiority of democracy over authoritarian regimes derives from its ability to deliver public goods that elude the capacity of authoritarianism and other less participatory forms of government (Young, 2007). Democracy will not be valued by the people unless it is able to address effectively, their social and economic problems as well as achieve a modicum of order and justice.

The socio-economic paradoxes touch on inequality, unemployment and income distribution. What the masses expected on embracing democracy are incontrovertible improvements in the living condition. The promise of democracy is to trigger development in ways that will reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment. Development has to do with reducing deprivation or broadening choices. Here, deprivation represents a polygonal view of poverty including hunger, illiteracy, illness, powerlessness, voicelessness, insecurity, humiliation and lack of access to basic infrastructure (Narayan, 2000; Sen, 1999). According to Prah:

Development can be said to be achieved when both material and non-material needs of individuals and groups have been adequately and progressively put in place so that the quality of life of people experience incremental advancement which enables them to achieve more efficiently, easily and effectively their goals and aspirations, and are able to optimize the employment of their skills and talents in a socially fulfilling and free manner (Prah, 2009:7).

The import of the above proposition is that, there can be no development if there are no noticeable signs of improvements in the living condition of a significant size of the population. An inevitable consequence will be that a large segment of the masses becomes disempowered and subdued in the face of societal challenges that require their active engagement. A few indicators on selected socio-economic variables will suffice

as illustration of instances of paradoxes of democratic dividends at the socio-economic level. For this purpose, let us examine unemployment.

Table 1: Rates of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: 2003 – 2013

Year	Youth Unemployment percent
2003	32.1
2004	28.9
2005	34.2
2006	30.8
2007	30.7
2008	32.4
2009	41.6
2010	35.2
2011	37.7
2012	54.0
2013	38.0

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2014).

Table 1 shows the incidences of youth unemployment in Nigeria from 2003 through 2013. By definition, youth unemployment represents a situation where people (especially youths) are without jobs and even after actively seeking it within the past four weeks (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2007). It is a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. A cross national comparison will reveal the gravity of the situation in Nigeria. For instance, in 2007, the rate of youth unemployment was 30.7 per cent in Nigeria. During the same period, youth unemployment rates in the following countries were: Denmark (7.9%); Netherlands (5.9%); United States of America (USA) (10.5%); United Kingdom (14.4%); Germany (11.7%); Ireland (9.0%); Italy (20.3%); Spain (18.2%); Portugal (16.6%); France (18.9%) and Sweden (18.8%) (Alabi, 2014; Eboraka & Nnorom, 2015; ILO, 2011). More disturbing is the high level of unemployment in the general population, which are 24.5 percent in 2014, and 24.1 percent in the first quarter of 2015. The record shows that Nigeria has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the world (NBS, 2015). Similarly, existing data on some socio-demographic indicators of selected countries sug-

gest adverse outcomes in these indices in Nigeria as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Cross National Data on Life Expectancy at Birth, Infant Mortality

Countries	Life Expectancy at Birth		Infant Mortality Rates	Death Rates
	Male	Female		
Benin	59	62	63	9
Burkina Faso	60	61	57	9
Canada	80	84	4.5	8
Cape Verde	71	72	21	5
Ghana	62	64	37	8
Liberia	62	64	50	8
Mauritius	71	78	11.8	8
Niger	59	61	60	10
Nigeria	53	54	67	12
South Africa	61	67	36	9
South Korea	79	85	2.8	7
Tanzania	64	65	43	7
United Kingdom	79	83	3.9	9
United States	76	81	5.6	9
Zimbabwe	58	52	50	10
Senegal	65	69	42	6

Sources: Population Reference Bureau (PRB, 2018).

Among all the variables under consideration in Table 2, Nigeria has some of the poorest outcomes. For instance, on life expectancy at birth, Nigeria has the lowest (53 and 54 years for males and females respectively). This is even lower than some countries that are thought to be less endowed within the West African sub-region, such as the Republic of Benin and Burkina Faso. On infant mortality, Nigeria has the highest rate (67 per 1,000 live births), and equally leads on death rates with about 12 deaths per 1,000 population. These revelations are not quite different from those of the past few years (PRB, 2014).

Another dimension to the development paradox is the issue of inequality. It has been theorized that democracy tends to open the socio-economic and political space to enable members of the society to participate in their society's development processes by having access to societal resources (Huntington, 1996). By implication, this development is supposed to induce a dramatic reduction of inequality or "vertical inequality", as Badejo (2008:9) prefers to conceptualize the term. However, in Nigeria it is clear that the difference in socio-economic standing between the rich and the poor as a result of skewed or imbalance access to societal resources. In this case, Nigeria has one of the most skewed vertical inequalities in the world (Smith, 2015). The other variant is referred to as horizontal inequality, which is defined as systematic inequalities that coincide with ethnic, religion or geographical cleavages in a country (Ostby, 2007; Sen, 1999).

Over the past decade, the number of millionaires in Nigeria has risen by over 44 percent, while absolute poverty has increased to about 61 percent (Smith, 2015). The huge gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria is captured in the report that children from poor homes receive allowance of about 30 naira per day, whereas the rich pay about three million Naira per term in some private schools. The rich tend to shun Nigeria's public hospitals and schools, preferring to patronize private services overseas; while a significant number of the poor masses (for lack of fund) patronize cheap and dubious traditional healthcare providers. Despite democratization and through the largest oil producer in Africa, the Nigerian society is reported to have the widest instances of inequalities

and have acquired the infamous reputation of being the “headquarter of poverty in the world!” Huge disparities in development, social and economic entitlements mark the society’s landscape.

(iii). The Security Paradox

The seventeenth-century British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) left no one in doubt about the role envisaged of the government (or a political state) when he raised the issue of the “state of nature” where there is “war of all against all” and “life is brutish, nasty and short-lived.” The thinker thus, proposed the idea of a Leviathan capable of taming the nihilistic rage and tendencies of men against their neighbours. In essence, Hobbes was concerned about the provision of security to the citizenry by the government in relation to the notion of social contract. Similar pronouncements on the role of the state on matters of security and social order have been made by another preeminent eighteenth-century thinker of French ancestry, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) as embedded in the concept of social contract. By this concept, the citizens, for submitting their individual sovereignties to the state and performing their various statutory obligations, such as paying taxes and engaging in other national services, are to be shielded by the State against any form of aggression (internal or external) and social cum economic misfortunes (Skyrms, 2014). However, to the bewilderment of the Nigerian populace, there have been puzzling instances of security paradoxes in the last couple of years of democracy, as the State failed to play its role of providing adequate security for the citizenry.

Until relatively recently, Nigerians watched helplessly as ravaging *Boko Haram* insurgents in the northeast liquidated the country’s defence apparatuses. They sacked military barracks, emptied the weaponry and conveniently entered Chibok town in Borno State on 14 April, 2014 and loaded two hundred and seventy six female students of the Government Secondary School into a truck and off to Sambisa Forest, on convoy without any form of restraint whatsoever. These benighted savages who are said to have destroyed over seventeen thousand lives and still hold many in captivity, sacked the nations’ defence and, until recently, occupied large swathes of the Nigerian territory in the northeast and estab-

lished their emirates unchallenged. As if that was not sufficient, on the 19th of February 2018, the same assault was launched on the nation's sensibility when this same group ferried another set of school girls numbering about one hundred and ten in Dapchi, Yobe State, unhindered into an unknown location. Today, the citizenry appears hopeless as armed robbers, terrorists, ritual killers and kidnappers lay siege at every turn across the length and breadth of the nation.

When the incidents of Chibok and Dapchi girls are compared with a similar event at Aboke, northern Uganda, the unserious attitude of the Nigerian governments towards the sanity of the citizens becomes apparent. On October 9, 1996, fighters loyal to the Ugandan rebel leader, Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a cruel guerrilla army, entered Aboke, a community in northern Uganda and abducted one hundred and nine girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen, from St. Mary's College, Aboke. The deputy headmistress of the school, an Italian Reverend Sister, Rachele, could not stand this, and in an act of extraordinary courage, followed the abductors to their destination. She spent days and nights in the bush with these guerilla fighters and eventually secured the release of one hundred and nine of them within days (Temmerman, 2001). In the case of Nigeria, for about two weeks, the government was prevaricating over the abduction of Chibok girls. No attempt was made to go after the abductors by those with close links to the school or the government until pressure was mounted on the government by local and international agencies.

Paradoxes of Democracy Dividends and Invitation to Authoritarian Throwback

A glean on the literature of political history and scholarship on the changing of regimes through unconventional means, such as coup and other forms of unpopular takeover of government around the world, suggests that the interveners usually invoke existing negative socio-economic conditions and the existing regime's inability to meet popular expectations in order to justify their intervention. In many cases, the new regime tended to slide into authoritarianism. The point being made here is that, when there are paradoxes of democracy dividends for a sustained period of

time, it can begin to raise questions on the desirability of democracy in the country and serve as grounds for authoritarian intervention. As a matter of fact, the current practice of democracy in Nigeria is said to be untimely because it is believed that developing countries are premature for democratic government (Lipset, 1999). The idea is that autocratic governments are required to set the foundation for democracy to flourish. In other words, autocracy should precede democracy in developing countries in the early stage of their political development. This is said to be necessary in order to establish the foundation, in form of strong institutions, upon which democracy can rest and propagate economic growth and mitigate the deterioration of social condition (Huntington, 1996). Similarly, Harperin et al. (2005) observes that jumping into democracy will create a situation where democracy can be manipulated by opportunistic leaders who will make populist promises to get elected but use the instrumentality of their offices to tip the balance of the dividends of democracy massively in their favour. These elites are unrestrained and their primary concerns are competition for power and the craving for primitive accumulation, rather than offering alternatives to better the condition of the masses. The situation in Nigeria tends to illustrate this point. The country has experienced instances where state governors who were elected on the basis of their promises to better the condition of their people, used the mechanism of state institutions to create bills, such as Governors and Deputy Governors Pension Bill, designed to serve them and channel state's fund of humongous proportion into their private use, even after their tenure in office; but these same people continue to resist calls for them to review the minimum wage (Eborka, 2015).

However, the view that developing countries will need autocratic regimes in their early stage of political development to spur economic goals necessary for democratic system is not watertight. Many of such regimes in Africa including Zimbabwe, the Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, Burkina Faso and Congo among others, are not only unable to spur economic development to benefit their citizens, but find it difficult to transit to democracy. Eventually, when these regimes are upturned by popular insurrections, there will often be social crises of the kinds currently in Libya and Sudan.

In all events, the inability of a democratic system to meet popular expectations will constitute significant threat to democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation has to do with the process through which democracy as a system of government becomes generally accepted as the best and most legitimate system of government among the generality of the citizens. It involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainties. This normalization requires the expansion of citizens' access to societal resources, reduction of the often appalling levels of poverty, social injustice and inequality. It also lays the basis for sustainable development (Kleven, 2013). Instances of paradoxes of democracy dividends can breed loss of confidence in the system and ultimately inspire legitimacy crisis that could make the people rise against the political system. In other words, if democracy continues to fail to meet people's aspirations, they are likely to become irritated with the idea of democracy to an extent that authoritarian regimes become appealing.

In Nigeria, an experience that clearly illustrates the hypothesis of paradoxes of dividends of democracy as a threat to democratic consolidation that leads to authoritarian throwback was the December 31, 1983 military coup. A combination of official corruption and deteriorating social and economic conditions doomed the government of Shehu Shagari, and led to the ascendance of Major General Muhammadu Buhari, now the current President of Nigeria. The nationwide jubilations that greeted the overthrow of a democratic government were instructive about the disenchantment of the masses towards a defective democracy and the attraction of authoritarianism.

Thus, in order for democracy to become stable, it must meet the economic expectations of both elites and other citizens (Clarke & Fowerave, 2001). This process is achievable and had been attained in a number of established democracies. However, in many emerging and nascent democracies such as Nigeria, there have been persistent breaches of public confidence in terms of the ability on the system to satisfy popular yearnings. This presents a formidable threat to democratic consolidation. The situation can open a gap for the nation to slide towards authoritarian

throwback, sometimes through a military interloper coming with a messianic garb to salvage the system from further decay.

In general, some factors which are said to precede the state of loss of confidence have been noted as major obstacles to democratic consolidation. About seven of them were identified by Huntington (1996), but the six that most command attention here, because of their immediate relevance to many developing countries are as follows:

- (i). the weakness of democratic values among key elite groups and the general public;
- (ii). severe economic setbacks which tend to intensify social conflict and enhance the popularity of remedies that could be imposed only by authoritarian regimes;
- (iii). social and political polarization often produced by leftist governments seeking the rapid introduction of major social and economic reforms;
- (iv). the determination of conservative middle-class and upper-class groups to exclude populist and leftist movements and lower-class groups from political power;
- (v). the breakdown of law and order resulting from the insurrectionary activities of various ethnic and religious-based groups seeking self determination;
- (vi). reverse snowballing triggered by the collapse or overthrow of democratic systems in other countries.

These factors, Huntington (1996) notes, constitute important obstacles to democratic consolidation. By implication, emerging or nascent democracies that do not want to suffer rupture, paradoxes and reversal to authoritarianism must design the apparatuses of their democratic system in ways that can strengthen democratic values, address the problem of chronic poverty among the larger population and expand opportunities for wider political participation across sections of the society.

Concluding Remarks

The present paper is a discourse on paradoxes of democratic dividends and their implications for democratic consolidations and social order in the Nigerian society. Transition to democracy usually inspire a sense of hope in the general belief that democracy represents the most appropriate form of government that can provide the opportunity for members of the society to unfold and cultivate their talents and potentials. A democratic system is expected to lay the foundation for the spread of prosperity, equity, justice, domestic order, provisions of welfare and security. It is also thought to be capable of opening the polity for people to participate and contribute to the processes of socio-economic and political developments of their society without regards to ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. These were the expectations of many Nigerians at the return of democracy over a decade ago. Rather than the expected dividends of democratization, there have been unprecedented levels of insecurity, high crime rate occasioned by pervasive corruption, increasing level of inequality and menacing unemployment. This paper contends that this state of paradoxes constitutes important threats to democratic consolidation, and is likely to wane public confidence in democracy as well as trigger reversal to authoritarianism.

The paper further directed attention to some factors said to constitute important obstacles to democratic consolidation as espoused by Huntington (1996). As a way forward towards the course of democratic consolidation and sustainability, the following suggestions are rendered for consideration.

There should be a reorganization of key national institutions and mechanisms for the formal distribution of competences and national resources with a view to reducing the huge income gap between those at the upper cadre and lower cadre of public services. A system that tilts the resources of the nation in a manner that enables some public officers to be able to buy houses abroad, patronize expensive hospitals and schools oversea, while over 80 percent live below \$1 per day cannot inspire public confidence in the system, no matter how democratic.

Efforts should be directed towards strengthening public institutions, especially the judiciary and anti-corruption institutions, to enable them live up to their mandates and responsibilities in checking corruption.

The nation's democracy has been subjected to so much electoral abuses and malpractices to such an extent that some individuals with genuine intention to serve the public are frustrated from participating in the processes. The institution of *godfatherism*, huge application fees, thuggery and mob actions that tend to characterize the nation's electoral processes should be discouraged through proper education and mass re-orientation intended to inculcate democratic values into both the political elites and the masses.

There should be laws to discourage "professional politics" and what might be referred to as perpetual political opportunism by greedy politicians. Laws should also be put in place to check the tendencies of over-ambitious former governors from transmuting from governors to senators. The driving motive of many of them is not the spirit of service, but an ambition to continue to appropriate national resources that are disproportionately tilted in their favour.

There is also the need for a strong and vibrant civil society. With protection by institutionalized legal order to guarantee the autonomy and freedom of civil society, this realm of organized social life can pressure political actors to toe the line of the rule of law.

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