Human Security and Nigeria's Democracy in 21st Century

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Abstract: The paper discusses Nigeria's democracy and the state of human security in that country. It is argued that, the deteriorated level of human security in Nigeria is as a result of the practice of prebendal politics; which weakened the country's institutions of democracy. Hence, attempt has been made to establish the nexus between prebendal politics and human security in Nigeria from the conceptual lens of Richard Joseph's prebendalism; using secondary empirical data generated from World Bank Database and other secondary sources. It is discovered that all the dimensions of human security as advanced by the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) are in bad shapes in Nigeria. It is also found that during the democratic rule (1999-2015) Nigeria recorded an average GDP per capita growth rate of 4.8%, as against a lower record during the last military era (1984-1999), which showed a negative indicator of -0.9%. This means that under ideal democratic rule, Nigeria has a better chance of enhancing the level of human security; but, the reverse is the case. Consequently, it is recommended that, severe punitive measures against corruption should be instituted; second, to allow Nigerians to decide the political future of the country through referendum.

Key words: Democracy • Human Security • Nigeria and Prebendal Politics

INTRODUCTION

For a state to achieve a viable democracy, the wheels of some key components of that society have to be oiled sufficiently. Such components include the Socio-economic structure and the institutions of democracy. Nigeria has been experiencing an uninterrupted democratic rule since 1999; yet, with no impressive advancement in human security.

If democracy is "a system of government that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life." And "a system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities" [1]; then, why is Nigeria's democracy not able to ameliorate the state of human security after seventeen years of uninterrupted democratic rule?

Many investigators have provided answers to the above raised question in accordance to their comprehension of the phenomenon. But here, it is argued that, the deteriorated level of human security in Nigeria is as a result of the practice of prebendal politics; which

weakened the country's institutions of democracy and this weakened or failed democracy resulted into poor human security.

According to a human security survey for Nigeria, the country has a very low human development index of 0.47, which indicates an alarming level of human security despite her fair economic flourishment, more especially during the civil rule [2, 3]. Moreover, the level of human security has also not shown encouraging indicators when assessed from the prism of its seven dimensions as advanced by the UNDP, that is, the Economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security dimensions.

Hence, in this chapter attempt will be made to establish and reflect on the nexus between prebendal politics and human security. Finally, some recommendations that could get the country out of the wood are provided.

Democracy and Human Security in Nigeria: The term democracy is derived from the Greek word *kratos,* meaning power, or rule. Democracy as a concept means:

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'rule by the *demos*' (the demos referring to the 'people', although the Greeks originally used this to mean the poor or 'the many') [4].

Some key descriptions of democracy as follows:
- A system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged.
- A form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the need for professional politicians or public officials
- A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy and privilege.

While on the other hand, human security has to do with "how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities and whether they live in conflict or in peace." The phenomenon can be seen from two different angles: "first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life-whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" [5].

The first dimension of human security is economic security. It requires an assured basic income-usually from productive and remunerative work" (UNDP, 1994). GDP growth rate is an indicator of economic growth. Nigeria has recorded impressive GDP growth rates since its return to democratic rule in 1999. The country has an average GDP growth rate of 7.1% throughout its seventeen years under democratic rule [6]. Paradoxically, this economic advancement did not come with a corresponding improvement in the life of the people. Majority of Nigerians are still economically unsecured, the economic atmosphere is full of uncertainties, with a poverty rate of 62.6% [7]. Second is food Security. Which "means that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food…by buying it or by taking advantage of a public food distribution system" [8].

In Nigeria, food insecurity is leading to many calamities such as hunger, malnutrition and so on. It is indicated that, as result of this food insecurity in the country, there is an alarming prevalence of malnutrition, more especial child malnutrition with and index of 0.53 nationwide, of which the Northern part of the country has the worse cases of food insecurity (National Human Development report [NHDR], 2015).

Another important dimension of human security is health. "Health insecurity is measured by the occurrence of infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera and tuberculosis [etc.]) and the child [and maternal] mortality

rate" [9]. The focus of Health security is to ensure an optimum level of protection from diseases, educating on the importance of healthy life style and practices and provision of efficient health care [10].

Life expectancy in Nigeria is 52 years of age. In 2012, 65.6% of the total number deaths are from communicable diseases, maternal and nutrition conditions [11].

Environmental security is another dimension of human security. It deals with the negative consequences of a deteriorated human habitat. The effect could be at the individual, national or international level.

According to the ranking of Yale Centre for Environmental Law and Policy, the level of environmental security of Nigeria is rated to be at 134th place out of 178 countries; while in 2012 the country got a score of 40.1% and occupied the 119th position out of 132 countries [12]. This tells that, the "declining EPI [Environmental Performance Index] of Nigeria is only an indicator of the poor state of environmental status in Nigeria" [13].

Personal security is another dimension of human security that has a direct effect on individuals, because it has to do with physical violence. In today's world, no country is exempted from the threat of unexpected violence against individuals: ranging from kidnapping, random shootings in public places, rapes and other form of physical assaults. The UNDP human development report outlined some seven forms of threats that constitutes personal human insecurity as follow:

Threats from the state (physical torture), Threats from other states (war), Threats from other groups of people, (ethnic tension), Threats from individuals or gangs against other individuals or gangs (crime, street violence), Threats directed against women (rape, domestic violence), Threats directed at children based on their vulnerability and dependence (child abuse), [and] Threats to self (suicide, drug use) [14].

Narrowing down the phenomenon of personal human security to the Nigerian context, available literature from different sources testified the intensity of human insecurity in the country. The *Nigeria Watch* reported that between 2006 and 2015, 298 people lost their lives as a result of kidnapping cases; and 147 women died due to rape incidences. These cases of violence directly inflicted to individuals are not limited to kidnapping and rape cases; it also involves other forms assaults perpetrated against individuals in the country [15].

Next is Community security which is mainly concerned with the "protection against the breakdown of communities (such as clubs, tribes or extended families) that provide members with a reassuring sense of identity and a shared value system." The central theme in community human security discourse is making sure that the community and its inhabitant are "free from fear." [16]. Since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, "the spectra of violence perpetrated by ethnic militias has (sic) been haunting many of Nigeria's urban [and rural] communities.

Indeed, these communities have become huge theatres of violence" [17]. Community instability occur routinely in Nigeria; the recent ones, mostly caused by the Boko Haram insurgency, the farmers-herdsmen clashes and the militancy in the southern part of the country and some epileptic ethno-religious crisis. All these have contributed towards the disintegration of the structure of many communities in Nigeria, leading to severe community insecurity.

Next is Political security, which is about people's basic human rights and the right to live in a society without state repression. One of the most important aspects of political human security is that, people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights [18].

In 1999, the military dictators in Nigeria ceded power to a civilian administration with a multiparty political system. Yet, there still is a long way to go in protecting people against state repression. In many cases, the government uses its law enforcement agencies for torture, the suppression of free press, political exclusion, abuse of the rule of law etc, all in order to coerce its citizens politically [19-21].

Conceptual Framework: In the context of Nigerian politics, the term "prebendalism" is believed to have been first used by Richard Joseph to explain the nature of Nigerian "patron-client" form of politics [22].

Originally, the root word "prebend" refers to the right of a member of a chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral; but Joseph used the term to described how those controlling the apparatus of power in Nigerian political arena feel to have a share in the resources of the country or even sometimes, feel like those resources are their personal belongings to be used for themselves and those aligned to them [23]. It is further explained that in Nigeria, "Elected political officials have come to view state resources as their own personal resources, to be distributed to satisfy their personal needs" [24].

Again, it is also opined that, in Nigeria the motive behind the practice of prebendal politics is due to the fact that, "political dominance translates into control of political offices and better access to jobs, housing and other valued services. Competitions for increased access to such scarce resources favour mobilisation and collective actions along ethnic lines" [25]

Furthermore, in Nigeria, the winner of an election become the supreme decision maker and in most cases perpetuate political and economic deprivation to losers in election. "In the political realm, this meant that only members of the ethnic-based regime controlled the best access to jobs, housing and other valued resources" [26].

Due to the institutionalization of this prebendal politics in Nigeria, the country went off the right trail of democratic development despite its abundant human and material resources. This prebendalism ultimately weakened the institutions of democracy due rampant corruption cases, nepotism, looting of public treasuries and so on. The interplay of these phenomena eventually led to a very poor condition of human security, as affirmed by many bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Transparency International, the World Bank and many others. The relationship among variables within the conceptual base is illustrated below. Summarily, Prebendalism is the independent variable (I.V), weak institutions of democracy as mediating variable (M.V), while human security is the dependent variable (D.V).

Prebendal Politics as an Obstacle to Huamn Security in Nigeria: As clarified earlier, prebendalism is the main cause of Nigeria's failed democracy, thereby leading to poor human security. Therefore, in this section the the said prebendal politics is going to be segmented into themes or avenues through which the act of prebendal politics is being perpetrated, so as to have a clear comprehension of the genesis of the phenomenon; and how it impeded Nigeria's democratic development which resulted into the current state of human insecurity.

Political History: It is asserted that, the snail motion in the democratic development of Nigeria is associated to its political history. He argued that, "since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show any sign to unite." This, according to him leads to political

instability, thus, disruptions in the democratic development of the country [27]. It is further opined that "the inter-ethnic crisis all over Nigeria, coupled with the religious strives are obstacles to democratization" [28].

The political history of Nigeria could be regarded as a reason for the practice of prebendalism in the country. Before the coming of the white people to the present day geography called Nigeria, the inhabitant of the land lived separately and autonomously according to their divergent social identity compositions. However, in 1914, the British colonial masters brought all those heterogeneous people under one nation. This "mistake of 1914" created a country with no sense of nationhood. This resulted into identity politics, where priority is given to one's selfish whims, ethnicity, religion (prebendalism) or any other social identity trait over national priorities.

This point is evident in the timeline of Nigerian political history such as the 1966 bloody coup d'etat led by the Igbos, all under the pretext of getting rid of the Hausas "dominated" Government, which culminated into a civil war; others are the June 12 election annulment and its aftermath; militancy in the Delta region and its effect, etc.

Failure of Leadership: The above political history, translated into many phenomena, one of them is the failure of leadership. "The issue of leadership accounts for the problem of Nigeria… Most Nigerian leaders have shown lack of commitment for true nationhood and allowed personal ambitions and ethnic, regional as well as religious persuasions to override national considerations" [29]. This according to Chimee, led to "visionless policies," which he believed is "the reasons for the country's failures."

Corruption and Impunity: Another notable key aspect of prebendal politics is corruption and impunity [30]. This opinion has also been held by Osimiri, where he said: "corruption has resulted in catastrophic governance in Nigeria" [31].

On same vein, it is argued that, corruption has been institutionalized in Nigeria due to the issue of "impunity" enshrined in the constitution of the country. He further argued that impunity "is a threat to democracy." He therefore suggested that, for Nigeria to succeed in her effort for democratic development and subsequent human security, "the impunity clause must be expunged from the constitution, in order to domesticate the equality of every Nigerian before the law" [32].

Electoral System: Prebendalism immensely contributed to the decayed nature of Nigeria's electoral system which is believed to be one of the key contributors of the country's democratic underdevelopment [33-34]. It is further revealed that, electoral process in Nigeria is being manipulated and abused by the people in power (prebendalism), to make sure they maintain the mantle of leadership [35]. It is Succinctly revealed that, "the wide spread electoral malpractices, which often characterize elections in Nigeria are inimical to the consolidation of democracy" [36].

Insurgency and Militancy: As a matter of fact, prebendal politics created a vacuum that gave room to the rise of Boko Haram insurgents in the North-eastern part of the country and similar militant groups in the South, which tremendously crippled the democratic development of Nigeria. This led to catastrophic human security issues [37-38]. The terrorist activities of the groups have retarded democratic development of the country, especially in the north eastern region, hence leading to disastrous human security mayhem (Odo, 2015).

Comparative Analysis of the Human Security Between the Military Era (1984-1999) and the Civilian Era (1999-2015): Looking at the GDP per capita growth rate of Nigeria during the last military reign (1984-1999), it is evident that the economy of the country was not doing well. The GDP per capita of the country indicated negative figures in nine different years out of the sixteen years spent under the military rule; with the worse indicator of -13.1% in 1987. Even the years with positive indicators were not that much impressive. The year 1990 indicated a positive value of 9.9% as the highest positive indicator. The last military era recorded an average GDP per capita growth of -0.9%

In contrast to the military era, the years Nigeria spent under democratic rule (2000-2015) are more flourishing economically with an average GDP per capita growth of 4.8% against -0.9% during the military. There were no years with negative indicators after the return of democracy except in 2015, with a record of -0.01%, which has to possible be connected to the fall in the price of crude oil globally. During the democratic reign, the year 2004 recorded the highest GDP per capita growth rate of up to 30.3%.

These empirical data have clearly shown that, Nigeria is in a better position to ameliorate the situation of her human security during the democratic rule due to the

buoyancy of the economy if compared to the military era, where the economy did not show good signs. However, prebendal politics became an obstacle.

After the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, four different people with different policies served Nigeria as presidents: Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), Umar Yar'adua (2007 2010), Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) and the incumbent Muhammadu Buhari (2015-date). Each came with policies aimed at improving the life of the people; some came with policies in form of a package while others used random policies.

One of the popular human security packages was the "Seven-point Agenda" by the administration of Umar Yar'adua (2007-2010). Yar'adua's human security package included: Power and energy, Food security and agriculture, Wealth creation and employment, Mass Transportation, Land reform, Security and, Qualitative and functional Education [39]. These human security policies started yielding fruitful results, where a fairly good GDP per capita growth rates were maintained duruing his reign before they were truncated by the death of president Yar'dua in 2010, who died together with his seven-point agenda.

The discontinuation, of this policy might directly or indirectly be connected to the problem of prebendal or identity politics, as there was a new president from the other part of the country, who put a halt to those policies and initiated his random policy strategy. This absence of policy continuation retarded Nigeria's prosperity, not only in the case of Yar'adua to Jonathan, but through the political history of Nigeria.

Many others policies such as: the vision 20: 2020, the Millennium Development Goals MDG's were adopted by Nigeria all in the quest for a better life for the people; but all couldn't see the light of the day due to the political and socio-economic practice of the country guided by prebendalism.

Recommendation: It is evident that, Nigeria has what it takes to improve the state of her human security. Paradoxically, the country is still lagging behind. This means, a remedy is needed for this ailing nation. Hence, the following recommendations are provided:

Since the political history of Nigeria is identified as one of the key reasons for prebendal politics, then the "mistake" of history has to be fixed. This could be achieved through amending the Constitution of Nigeria; where a provision for referendum should be enclosed in the Constitution. This will provide a legality for conducting a national referendum for the people of Nigeria to decide whether they wish to continue living under one nation, despite their social diversity or not.

Although, this idea might not get the popular support of the elites, more especially those benefiting from the union of Nigeria as one nation. However, allowing Nigerians to decide their political future could be the solution to a lasting peace, political tranquility and economic prosperity. A number of countries around the globe and Africa in particular have resolved similar political mayhem through referenda; and yielded fruitful results. Examples are the cases of Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan, Ukraine and Crimea etc.

Second, is to have severe punitive measures (law) against corruption; suggestively, a capital punishment for those found guilty before a competent and impartial court of law. The point is that, by looting the public funds, average citizens of Nigeria are denied the most basic needs to survive; such as: food, shelter, healthcare, security and so on; and in most cases, such act leads to lifetime damages, or even death.

Capital punishment for corruption proved to be very effective in some countries. A good example is China, where they instituted capital punishment for corruption. It is explained that, "[i]n China, the judicial system is mercilessly dealing with corruption, even carrying out capital punishment…" [40]. Going by the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index for China, it is revealed that, in 1995 China was ranked 40th out of the 41 countries surveyed; which means only one country is more corrupt than China in the sample. whereas, in 2016 the Corruption Perception Index of China drastically decreased to 79th position out of 176. It is affirmed that, China shows "…a decline in perception of corruption over the past years." [41].

Although, Nigeria needs general restructuring, but allowing Nigerians to decide the political future of their country on either to remain as one political entity or to split and fight corruption to the barest level could help solve key problems bedeviling Nigerians and of course improve human security.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the institutionalization and practice prebendalism in the political arena of Nigeria led to a failure in the democratic system of the country; and this failure, inevitably led to a very disastrous state of human security. As revealed by some empirical data above, under ideal situation, Nigeria has the potentiality of achieving an

optimum level of human security, more especially during the civil rule. However, prebendal politics became a stumbling block on her way to prosperity.

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