

GOOD GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian state, some sixteen years after returning to democratic governance, has been facing a plethora of problems. These range from ethno-religious conflicts to ethnic-militia violence. It also includes kidnapping, corruption, poverty, and a cyclical legitimacy crisis. The Nigerian people, of over 170 million, are constantly being manipulated by the political gladiators and because of pervasive corruption and profligacy, have become pauperized and poverty-stricken. This invariably led to bad governance, political instability and lack of the real dividends of democratic rule. These issues of bad governance and political instability are directly related to the migration of many Nigerians to Europe, North America and Asia in search of greener pastures. Nigeria, like any other country has had its fair share of this mass movement of people. There is no reliable statistics to show the total population of Nigerians Diaspora, though, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives an estimate of about 20 million Nigerians resident in Europe and North America (Mohan, 2002). This implies that the country is the largest recipient of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Nigerian Diaspora, which in 1999 remitted over \$1.3million US dollars, could be veritable agents of poverty reduction, good governance and political stability for the country. This paper highlights the critical roles that the Nigerian Diaspora could play in Nigeria's quest for socio-economic and political development. In addition, it looks at how the Federal government can create an enabling environment for the Diaspora.

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KEYWORDS: good governance, political stability, sustainable development, diaspora

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world with a population of almost 170 million and she therefore represents a stabilizing factor in not only African socio-economic and political affairs but also, in world affairs at large. The implication of this is that whatever happens to Nigeria is always of strategic importance to the entire human race. Years of military dictatorship with its attendant economic mismanagement and bad standard of living for the entire citizenry resulted in the dispersal of many Nigerians to politically and economically stable western countries for greener pastures. Many decades of draconic military rule in Nigeria have brought about political instability while corruption have continued to pervade the socio-economic and political terrain of Nigeria even after the well-fought for democratic rule, the status - quo has remained and this greatly contributed to the migration of many Nigerians especially, the professionals to foreign countries. According to Ogbegbulu (2012), in the United Kingdom alone, there is a large Nigerian community estimated to be between 800,000 and 3 million. As a matter of fact, the UK has become a second home to Nigerians, more than any other western countries (including USA), may be as a result of colonial history. There is also a large presence of Nigerians in the United States of America.

The inability of the political class to provide the so - much needed 'dividends of democracy', which should have translated into socio-economic and political progress has always been a constraint on the aspiration of the Nigerian nation to be recognized, as the 'giant' of Africa and this has been a resultant effect of bad leadership over the past fifty years of the country's independence. The advanced countries of today became self reliant because they put all hands on deck and faced the issue of 'National interest' squarely by embracing sustainable peace, security, and infrastructural development. In Nigeria, and indeed other parts of African continent, the majority of citizens have not been able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy qualitative standard of living because of bad leadership (Adeyemo, 2010).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The maxim, 'Rome was not built in a day' serves as a reminder of the challenges of nation building but in this era of globalization, governance and leadership in Nigeria are replete with tales of woes when considered in the ambit of development. Even though, getting a country up and running requires years and many resources, including large sums of money from the international community but when the leadership is inefficient and grossly corrupt, the resultant effect is underdevelopment and poverty (Iheriohanma and Oguoma, 2010).

From a historical point of view, the first major part of this article accounts for the dispersal of Nigerians to other parts of the world starting from the colonial era. The paper will also analyze the prospects, problems and challenges facing the Nigeria Diaspora. The various aspects of identity formation among the Nigerian Diaspora are also discussed. Furthermore, the paper articulates the connections between the Diaspora and socio-economic and political development of the country.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to a World Bank's report (2012), the Nigerian Diaspora contributed more to the nation's economy than thirty-four (34) states of the federation apart from Lagos and Rivers states respectively. A total of 21 U.S dollars was remitted back home during course of 2012. This in essence means that if properly integrated into the socio-economic and political settings of the country, the Nigerian Diaspora can be made use of in refocusing the country. This study is significant because it will make policy makers that they can be harnessed to contribute their wealth of experience and wealth to the socio-economic development of the country.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This work is limited in scope because it is more of a descriptive and interpretative study than an empirical study, therefore, works and studies of other researchers were used in the carrying out this study.

THE CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Adeyemo (2010) cited Chinua Achebe (1983) saying, "Whenever two Nigerians or more meet, their conversation will sooner than later slide into a litany of 'our' national deficiencies." He went further to say that "our national deficiency as a sovereign nation from 1960 to date is centered on bad leadership. The Nigerian state has never had it good when it comes to the question of national leadership." In Nigeria, and indeed other parts of African continent, the majority of citizens have not been able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy qualitative standard of living because of bad leadership.

The concept of governance is not new. It is as old as civilization itself. It is the process of decision making and decision implementation. According to UNESCAP (2013), "governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, national governance, international governance and local governance". Government is one of the actors in governance but the activities of non – state actors in global politics, according to Shettima (1999), have received a sustained interest especially since the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government under discussion. They include Multi-National Corporations (MNCs), Civil Societies/Organizations, international donors and

International Finance institutions to mention a few. Their roles possess both theoretical and practical challenges to socio-economic and political development and also, international politics. All these afore-mentioned are grouped together as part of the 'Civil Society'.

According to Adeyemo (2013), "Nigeria today, more than ever before is ravaged by a pandemic problem of insecurity of lives and properties which can be attributed to a plethora of reasons among which is bad governance." Ayodele and Olu-Adeyemi (2006) assert, "Like most other countries in the African continent, the search for development has been hampered by failure of the leadership to effectively and efficiently provide the much needed dividends of democracy in their countries."

Good governance can therefore be defined as a process of decision-making and implementation that is participatory, all-encompassing, transparent, accountable, responsive, and equitable. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of the minorities are taken into consideration and that the voice of the vulnerable in the society are heard in decision-making, while at the same time responsive to the present and future needs of the society (UNESCAP, 2013). The present Nigerian government in its quest to deliver the dividends of democracy to teeming Nigerian populace aims at, amongst others, improving the Power and Energy sector of the economy which will serve as a launch pad for the socio-economic transformation of the country. In addition, such issues as food security, wealth and employment creation, Mass transportation, land reforms, internal security and qualitative and functional education are of paramount importance to the Nigerian government. However, the insecurity question and the decadence in infrastructures have continued to be the cog in the wheel of progress of Nigeria and these have continued to play a major role in the decision of many Nigerians to search for greener pastures outside the country.

HISTORY OF NIGERIANS' DISPERSAL TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Nigeria has become increasingly involved in international migration worldwide and this international migration can be dated back to the colonial days when large scale labour migration required for plantations, mines and public administration from Nigeria to such countries as Cameroon, Sierra – Leone, Ghana, Guinea and a host of other African countries (Adepoju, 2004). Much later, Nigerians started migrating first, to United Kingdom and later to United States to further their studies. Some of these migrants decided to stay back and the population of Nigerians in the UK and in the USA started growing. According to Adepoju (2004), some highly skilled Nigerian migrants have even found their ways into the booming economy of South

Africa, which is seen by many, as a convenient alternative to Europe and America.

In recent times Nigeria has been plagued by numerous problems which include socio-economic, cultural, political instability and ethno-religious problems. These have continued to put a restriction on foreign investments in the country. As a matter of fact, such Multi-National Companies as Lever Brothers, Nestle, and many others are finding Nigeria's socio-economic and political climate unstable and are therefore leaving the country for more politically stable West African countries. Lack of social infrastructures, especially, electricity, has been a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the country. According to Adeyemo (2004), "corruption and political instability, coupled with ethno-religious conflicts and militancy have all contributed in no small measure to the abysmal condition the country finds itself today". This and other reasons led to the migration of Nigerian skilled workers, professionals, and semi-skilled out of Nigeria to the western countries for greener pastures abroad.

WHAT IS DIASPORA?

The word 'Diaspora' is defined as populations of migrant origin who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which there develop multifarious links involving flows and exchange of people and resources between the homeland and destination countries. Currently, much more than in the past, Diasporas include complex mixes of people who have arrived at different times, through different channels, through different means, and with very different legal statutes in their various destinations (Ogbegbulu, 2012).

As a matter of fact the term Diaspora now shares meaning with dispersal, immigration, expatriate, refuge, exile and so on. There is no doubt that all these are more or less part of the intrinsic dynamics of a Diasporan community. According to Viswanathan, as cited by Akinrinade and Olukoya (2011), "in recent times, the rapid multiplications of the meanings and understandings of Diaspora could be traced to the lightning speed at which international migrations of people take place given the stupendous advances in information and communication technology."

Meanwhile it has been noted and asserted by such scholars as Mohan (2002) and Nworah (2005) that migration can have both positive and negative impact on development. So, in the Nigerian context, the Nigerian Diaspora can contribute meaningfully to poverty reduction, economic development, democratic consolidation and socio-political engineering in Nigeria (Akinrinade and Olukoya, 2011). Many of them especially in the United Kingdom and the United States of America have become economic giants in the hostlands, hence, they

can be of immense benefits to the socio-economic and political re-engineering of their homeland – Nigeria, thus, their impact in socio-economic and political development cannot be underestimated as these include conflict prevention, conflict reduction, and post conflict reconstruction which are all central to political stability.

Nigerian government under the present democratic dispensation has recognized and welcome the potentials of Nigerian citizens abroad through the Private – Public Economic Partnership of the Goodluck Jonathan government, though, Nigeria Diaspora argues that incentives for migrant Nigerians to participate in the socio-economic and political development of the country needs to be addressed.

Nigeria as a nation has suffered from the loss of thousands of highly educated professionals through the 'Brain Drain' syndrome. The concept of 'brain drain' first emerged in the 1960s when it was used to describe the migration of British intellectuals and scientists to the United States. According to Babawale (2008), "Strategies earmarked for stemming this brain drain then, could be divided into two. The first approach sees the drain as a loss and therefore emigration must be made difficult and less attractive. The second strategy is the Diaspora option. This represents a different approach to the brain drain. It takes a fundamentally different stance to traditional perspectives on the brain drain in that it sees the brain drain syndrome not as a loss but as a potential benefits to the sending country." This Diaspora option is driven by the networks of highly skilled expatriates who are referred to as expatriate knowledge networks. Thus, the main feature of the Diaspora option is that it tries to set up connections/linkages between these highly skilled expatriates and their countries of origin. For instance, the Nigeria Diaspora provides a substantial contribution, especially by way of remittances, to the Nigerian economy. Nigeria is one of the top twenty (20) developing countries that received remittances estimated at over 1.2 billion dollars in 1999 (World Bank, 2000). In addition, to these transfers, there are several other ways in which members of the Nigerian Diasporas, contribute to poverty reduction and socio-economic development in their homeland. Adebayo (2010) cites an example of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife, receiving books and cash donations from her alumni residing in South Africa, UK, and the United States, while they also assisted junior academics to be trained abroad. Butler (2001) therefore asserts, "Membership of a contemporary Diaspora now implies potential empowerment based on the ability to exert socio-economic and political influence in both the homeland and the hostland." This implies that intellectual remittances form an integral part of social remittances.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008), “each year some 2,000 Nigerians trained outside the shores of the country returned home to seek employment or business opportunities. These junior academics were assisted in their training in the UK, the USA and other western countries by the Nigerian academia in such countries. This is called ‘Diaspora tapping’. Such ‘Diaspora-tapping’ also provides the rationale for the TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriates Networks) programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008). The setting up of expatriate networks affords expatriates the opportunity to transfer their expertise and skills to their homelands without necessarily returning back home. In this way, the country of origin has access not only to the knowledge and expertise of the expatriate, but also the knowledge networks that he belongs to in the host country.

Relationship between Nigeria and the Nigerian Diaspora

According to Babawale (2008), “in the past, the debates on the effects of international migration on developments in Africa have tended to be largely dominated by the negative impact of the loss of Africa’s skilled manpower to the developed world, however, growing evidence would seem to suggest that international migrations from the continent have been having some positive developmental effects on socio – economic and political developments in Africa”. As a matter of fact, emotional attachment to the homeland is a general characteristic shared by all Diasporas (Akinrinade and Olukoya, 2011). The Diasporas have been assisting their families and relatives back home in setting up businesses, and thus, promoting trade and enterprise as well as the sustenance of democratic principles (UNDP, 2008).

Babawale (2008) asserts, “The country receives nearly 65 per cent of officially recorded remittance flows to the African region and 2 per cent of the global flows. In fact, as far back as 1999, Nigerians living abroad remitted the sum of US 1.3 billion dollars”. Interestingly, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) right from 2002 started collating data on remittances from Nigerian Diaspora and it was reported that an approximate of US 2.26 billion was remitted back home in 2004. In 2005, the figure stood at US 6.5 billion dollars and this almost doubled in 2007 when US 17.9 billion dollars was recorded from US 10.5 billion dollars in 2006 and US 18.2 billion dollars in 2009 (Oboh, 2011). Such monies are spent on food, education, and health needs of the senders’ relatives; as well as on investment in real estate, stock market, and the transport sector to mention a few.

Given the huge population of Nigerians living abroad and the fact that Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa, it appears that

there is no better country to assess the nature and impact of the contributions of African immigrants in the Diaspora to Africa’s development than Nigeria. Nigerian Diaspora have become seriously involved in transnational activities that are capable of effectively integrating Nigeria with their host countries. This in essence means that in addition to poverty reduction, the Nigerian Diaspora is also assisting in the process of socio – economic and political transformation and development of Nigeria.

The establishment of the organization, Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization (NIDO) by the Nigerian government allows the government to focus not only on individuals abroad to invest in Nigeria, but allowing NIDO in Europe and North America to co-ordinate and sustain development projects in Nigeria. NIDO, according to Akinrinade and Olukoya (2011) has set up a network of branches in Nigerian embassies abroad in which all Nigerians living abroad are encouraged to organize themselves and link up with NIDO branches in their respective host countries. The creation of NIDO has started yielding dividends as many Nigerian professionals who have made their marks in their chosen fields are now returning home to contribute their quotas to the socio – economic development of their homeland. One of such is Professor Peter Nwangwu, a renowned Pharmacologist in the world, who ranked among the first ten best in the profession (Babawale, 2008; 44), who has relocated back to Nigeria in order to assist the Nigerian Pharmaceutical industry with his expertise and technical know-how.

Meanwhile in 2010, about 400 Nigerian professionals and businessmen based abroad visited the country under the auspices of NIDO to explore investment opportunities and help in reversing the brain drain (Oboh, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The world over, there is increasing recognition that citizen involvement is critical for enhancing democratic governance, improving service delivery, and fostering empowerment. More than ever before there has been an increase in the demand for good governance, which refers to the ability of the citizens, civil society organizations, and other non – state actors, to make the state accountable and responsive to their needs.

This paper thus examines the Nigerian Diaspora against the background of how they can contribute their wealth of experience and wealth to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. The study therefore advocates for good governance and political stability as panacea for this to be realizable. It is also the view of this paper that conducive atmosphere and an enabling environment must be created by the Nigerian government to encourage the Diaspora to come back and invest in the country.

Finally, in the words of Bakewell (2008) “in terms of the prevailing Diaspora – homeland mantra, the eventual impact of remittances will depend on the use to which such remittances are deployed. This implies that no matter how remunerative migration might be, it cannot solve the problem of Nigeria’s underdevelopment except the structural problems of bad leadership and political instability are stemmed. This paper therefore advocates for a sustained and active engagement by the Nigerian government with the Diaspora.

States and federal governments should create enabling environment – politically and economically – to allow Nigerians living abroad to participate effectively and efficiently. There is a school of thought among Nigerians abroad that participation in the political–socio–economic reconstruction of Nigeria depends on the extent to which Nigerians abroad feel they have been encouraged and allowed to have stakes in their home country as well as in the countries that host them.

Nigerians in Diaspora, despite their remittances needs to be fully recognized and welcome to participate in the development of Nigeria. Presently, Diaspora cannot vote during elections and at home. The constitution should be amended to allow Nigerian Diaspora to vote as all Nigerians abroad cannot be full time politicians but would still love to perform their civic responsibility in their respective abode to choose their leaders.

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