

Quality and prospects of democracy in nigeria assignment



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FOOLPROOF?? Literature Review How do scholars understand the quality and prospects of Democracy in Nigeria? The fall of the Soviet-Union saw the emergence of democracy becoming the most universally embraced and widely spread form of governance in the world (Sounding, 2010: 204). The question of what makes a country a democracy is much contested by scholars, however, the concept has widely accepted core principles. These principles include, but are not limited to: Justice, freedom, equality, transparency and liberty (Sounding, 2010: 204).

The question in respect to these principles is whether each enigmatic society complies by them, Nigeria being no exception. After close to two decades of military and authoritarian rule, Nigeria returned to a democracy based form of governance in 1999 (Sounding, 2010: 201). Like many ‘ new ‘ democracies, Nigeria has had its fair share of challenges which threaten and hinder the country democracy (Sounding, 2010: 201).

Many scholars have come to question the status of the Insignia’s democracy , many stating that it is not only a failed democracy but also defies the basic slogan of democracy “ the government of the people, by the people or the people” (Sounding, 2010: 204). Though scholars concur on the latter, there is however, some variation in the way they measure the democracy of Nigeria in reaching this conclusion. In the quest to understand democracy in Nigeria, the reviewed scholars focus their view of what qualities a democracy possesses and direct the latter to formulate their conclusion of Nigeria as a failed democracy.

Amatol (2010) utilizes a minimalist perspective of understanding the qualities found in a democracy that is, the perspective that elections form the most basic indicators of democracy (Amatol, 2010: 535). Therefore, for a state to be considered democratic, it has to perform this fundamental function. However, Amatol (2010) states that those elections should be free, fair, participatory, legitimate and competitive in order to achieve true democracy (Amatol, 2010: 537).

Amatol (2010) focuses on the idea of electoral governance which is the regulation, financing and organization of electoral bodies in a manner which satisfies the latter 'qualities'. The ability to provide such elections can then measure the democracy of a country. Amatol (2010) not only connects elections to democracy but accurate elections to DOD governance and development which are the conceptual fruits of democracy. Using this approach, the article argues that democracy in Nigeria is futile and does not exist on the basis of the elections being ineffective at all levels (Amatol, 2010: 537).

This argument is based on the fact that Nigeria is infamous for electoral fraud since its 1999 democratic elections. By looking at the electoral governance of the electoral management body and the Independent National Electoral Commission Amatol (2010) argues they are fundamentally weak and lack independence from political influence. This result to bad governance and the qualities of democracy are swallowed and institutional reform of the electoral bodies is the only way to obtain democracy (Amatol, 2010: 550). This form of approach to democracy is extended by 'dada and Unchanging (2012). Dada and Unchanging (2012) quantitative research <https://assignbuster.com/quality-and-prospects-of-democracy-in-nigeria-assignment/>

extends Amatol (2010) idea of democracy in Nigeria. They state that a government may be considered democratic if the following precepts, parameters, features are met: where people can freely stand for elections to vote; where there is freedom of speech and publication is allowed; where government and its agents there to the rule of law, where majorities rule is maintained; where elections conducted are free, fair and credible; where the succession process is not problematic, where there is individual freedom and where election is competitive (dada and Unchanging, 2012: 50).

Though they state that the classification of democracy is problematic as it has been subjected to immeasurable interpretations, the essence of a democracy includes the above mentioned (dada and Unchanging, 2012: 50). Considering the corruption of Nigeria, the scholars trace how the above mentioned principles have been defied in Nigeria since the necromancy in 1999 (dada and Unchanging, 2012: 50). They therefore consider the classification of Nigeria as democratic unrealistic as Amatol (2010).

Also, as Amatol (2010), the scholars argue that electoral body independence and institutional reform are the only way the essence of democracy can be achieved in Nigeria. However, unlike Amatol (2010) they do recognize the currently commenced reforms and regards them as a step in the right direction (dada and Unchanging, 2012: 53). Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen (2012) provide a broader yet similar view on this school of thought that is, election as a reflection of a amounts democratic status.

Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen (2012) argue that democracy in Nigeria is flawed, difficult and threatened by internal and external factors. They

identify these recurring factors as: * electoral malpractice: that is, election fraud, irregularities and corruption * Institutional corruption: political and institutional corruption and is ranked as having the second most corrupt institutions. * weakness of democratic institutions which not only includes the electoral bodies but the legislative, executive and Judicial arm of government, thus the body in charge of providing reform is fundamentally weak in itself. Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen, 2012: 687-691). The scholars use the same logic as the previous scholars, that democracy at its core is achieved when a government can improve upon these factors and the principles mentioned by 'dada and Unchanging (2012). Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen (2012) however, use a broader method to indicate how democracy in Nigeria?? in terms of the defiance of the core principles is flawed and not a true representative of what a democracy entails.

Again, the link between democracy, elections and good governance emerges. Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen (2012) however do believe that Nigeria has the prospect of creating enabling environment for good governance provided that it: (1) strengthens the democratic institutions by ensuring independence of institutions (2) holding corrupt individuals accountable (3) deepening the principles of democracy which include but are not limited to adherence to the rule of law and protection of human rights (Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen, 2012: 692).

Though Obi (2011) focuses on the quality of elections as a measure of democracy like the previously mentioned scholars, the scholar uses a efferent approach as to what or who causes the electoral corruption and ultimately causes the failure of democracy in Nigeria. Obi (2011), states that <https://assignbuster.com/quality-and-prospects-of-democracy-in-nigeria-assignment/>

the core and essence of democracy is that it serves as a model for the participation of the majority of the population to choose their leaders does not exist in Nigeria.

This is a result of a crisis in electoral democracy , further stating that elections are a vital part of democratic process and need to be analysed in the context on the conditions that underpin political transition (Obi, 2011: 368). Obi (2011) uses the elite theory to explain the continual manipulation of electoral scores in Nigeria. The end of military rule in Nigeria brought about the rise of new political elite (Obi, 2011: 368).

An elite which was ' placed' in positions of power and are able to not only influence public policy in their favor but public institutions as well (Obi, 2011: 369). Obi (2011) argues that Nigeria underwent a political transformation without democratic transformation and thus no real change was achieved. Stating that " Nigerian voters are voting but not choosing, ruled but not represented" (Obi, 2011 : 379) because the elite is instantly pushing their own group interest through the manipulating of political institutions.

Obi (2011) conceptualizes elections not just as a mere political process through which citizens of Nigeria may freely choose their representatives, but as sites of struggle between elites who intend on retaining power. Thus, the democracy in Nigeria according to Obi (2011) is not a true democracy but an elite democracy. This is a link or elite governance to election which leads to a failed democracy. This area of thought is also used by scholars Orwell and Look (2012) to explain their respective on democracy in Nigeria.

Through their content analysis of data gathering, Orwell and Look (2012) state that whether one looks at democracy from a liberal, African or modern perspective it still includes equal opportunity for all; fundamental recognition of popularity sovereignty; representatives; majority rule; minority rights; opportunity to participate in decision making; repudiates authoritarianism; extols the consent of the governed and protects human personality and value.

These qualities sound similar to those of previously mentioned scholars forever, Orwell and Look (2012) argue that considering election does not guarantee democracy, democracy is not wholly centered on elections but requires other aspects such as good governance , public participation and liberal democracy which is, the ability to participate in elections which carry Amadol (2010) election inclusions. They argue that true democracy thus places emphasis on freedom (Orwell and Look, 2012: 2).

Orwell and Look (2012) argue that the electoral violence, manipulation of election results, political participation has resulted in the democracy of Nigeria being weak and has eroded. Though these factors can be traced back to previously mentioned scholars, Orwell and Look (2012) also uses the elite theory to explain why Insignia's democracy is in crises. As Obi (201 1), they argue that the political elite swing public policy in their personal interest. Britton and Lewis (2008) however, use a completely different more statistical approach to understanding democracy in Nigeria.

Britton and Lewis (2008) argue that democracy should rather be measured or understood in terms of development, which is the delivery of public goods

by the government. Public goods include economic benefits which are an individual's perception of personal standards , evaluation of national standards, evaluation of national prosperity and reforms , political goods which include order; civil rights; political rights and good governance (Britton and Lewis , 2008: 6).

Thus, Insignia's failing democracy is a result of the inability to produce public goods which in turn breaks the social contract and thus citizens do not see the government as legitimate governance (Britton and Lewis, 2008: 24).

Britton and Lewis (2008) briefly highlight how colonial history has also played a role in the current allure of Insignia's democracy. That the traits of institutional corruption are those which emerged from colonial times and have gradually traveled from one system of ruling to another (Britton and Lewis, 2008: 30).

Orwell and Look (2012) and Obi (2011) try to deviate from Motto (2010), 'dada and Unchanging (2012) and Sheboygan, Mommas and Deafen (2012) electoral based view of democracy by referring it to being a control of elite power. This however is not a vast difference in the similarity of their approach and findings. It is (Britton and Lewis, 2008: 30) who sees an entirely different view of public goods and historical influence to explain their conclusion. Nevertheless, the prospect of democracy in Nigeria is still the same throughout all six scholar articles.

Though the scholars mentioned in the review seem to have their own approach of defining and measuring democracy in Nigeria, it is evident that all scholars classify the current status quo in Nigeria as undemocratic.

However, when it comes to understanding the characteristics of a democracy one sees the same form of concepts emerging such as good governance, development, redeem, right to fair elections etc. This concludes that though there is no one dimension definition of what exactly democracy is, the concept is generally guided by certain universal principles and norms.

The study or measure of democracy is a problematic study as democracy in itself is an abstract concept; it is therefore difficult to also gather accurate information when writing research papers. Often time's sources may not always be reliable because the field of democracy does not have an exact category but rather guidelines which vary from one scholar to another. As there have been indexes created to measure development, one such index should be researched, created and universally implemented.