

FOREIGN DEMOCRATIC ASSISTANCE TO NIGERIA (1999-2015): THE NEXUS BETWEEN STRATEGY AND ELECTION RESULT

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined “Foreign Democratic Assistance to Nigeria 1999-2015: The Nexus Between Strategy and Election Results. The study employed survey method. This method enable the authors to gather data from representative of sampled institutions: civil societies, political parties, election umpire (INEC), security institutions, Donor Agencies and opinion leaders 252 respondents were drawn from these institutions. Data were obtained using interview instrument (participants’ perspective). The realistic theory of change by Anderson, a modification of carol (1972) change model theory was used as the framework of analysis. Analysis of data gathered shows the following results. (1) That Nigeria received democratic assistance between 1999-2015 from US, UK, EU and other major international partners engaging in democratic promotion. (2) That Nigerians need such gesture to strengthening her democracy. (3) That Donor’s emphasis on civil society have little influence on state institutions that control electoral process in Nigeria. (4) Donor’s impact is not felt in the area of party primary – selection of party candidates. Lastly the result shows that Nigeria’s democracy exists within the context of particular mode of production that link set of values preferred by the political elite. This provides the context for electoral misbehavior. Thus, election violence, rigging, manipulation and imposition of candidates that characterized Nigerian elections do not in any way relate or correlate with foreign democratic assistance objectives. Based on these, the study suggests modification of Donor’s strategy (inclusive strategy) that will not only strengthen civil society but also regulate the excessive use of state power by power mongers to cause electoral fraud and violence just to remain in power.*

KEYWORDS: Foreign Democratic Assistance and Elections.

INTRODUCTION

The inevitable growth of super territorial relations between peoples and nation states brought about by globalization has created multiplicity of linkage and interconnection: and thus shifting governance to a level above the nation states into the jurisdiction of the global governance institutions that consistently advocate the adoption and practice of democratic governance. The exist of cold war, gave birth to a consensus in the global setting that democracy is an integral part of development efforts of African states. Thus, foreign democratic assistance relating to the promotion of democracy increased sharply in the past two decades. As democratization process spread through Latin America and parts of Asia in the 1980s, Western donors began to consider how they might widen their assistance portfolios to support this trend. Some donors began to carry out assistance programmes considered as pro-democratic, particularly relating to elections and human rights (Thomas, 2004). The 1990s saw the rapid growth of democracy

promotion as bilateral and multilateral donors reformulated their priority for assistance. With the end of cold war, threat to US and its allies disappeared, security consideration, and need for strategic alliances in Africa lost their relevance (Thomas,2004). By the mid 1990s, most major Western donors became more closely involved in the domestic matters of weaker states. New guidelines and policy statement from the Americans, British, and Canadians, Dutch, French Germans and others stipulated that funding allocation would take into account political liberalization. The change of focus at the time also made the European community as it was known then, to changed it rules to enable it to take into account “a country” political system when determining aid level.

As pointed out by Thomas (1997), two basic reasons or objectives characterized Western donors efforts toward democratic promotion. First, they are based primarily on the idea of promoting democracy for its own sake, as a political good that will improve the lives of citizens by bringing more freedom, political representation and governmental accountability.

Second, foreign democracy-related assistance is primarily anchored on the notion that democracy is a valuable goal of external assistance because it will enhance inclusive political and economic institutions. In such a view, democracy according to Thomas (1997) is less an end in itself than one component of an overall strategy to achieving sustainable development. This fact rightly captured the African setting where the overall normative status of democracy is relatively rooted in extractive approach, where economic issues are paramount due to disconnect and virtually absence of inclusive political institution. The two cardinal objectives stated above however emphasized the institutional perspective that centre on democratic institutions being incentives to government to increase spending on welfare outcomes and the normative approach which focuses on civil and political rights for human freedom.

From 1999 democratization process to date, donors have assisted Nigeria with hundred billions of dollars and with other non-monetary measures, yet, very little research explores the causal mechanisms linking the assistance and the result obtained. This study therefore examined the nexus between democratic assistance strategy and election result in Nigeria.

1. Democracy – defined.

Democracy as a working concept in this study is concerned in three dimensions.

- i. As a value, it involves moral imperatives or fundamental needs that make a political system more inclusive in manner that give people freedom to realized their potentials, invest in people, and mobilize the talents and skills of a large number of individuals to economic growth
- ii. As a social process, democracy is the process by which a society chooses the rules that will govern it. It is more or less a system subject to social engineering promoting development and ensures durable peace. In this process, power flows from the people through their representatives. Thus, democratic institutions of a society are key determinant of the outcome of the system. This explains why Lipset (1963) defined democracy as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contender for political office.

The position of Lipset is rooted in liberal democratic credentials. These credentials include

- i. An efficient electoral system with unbiased umpire that bring people into office and which gets people out of office (credible election).
- ii. The principle of representative government

A good observer of Nigeria's democratic trends would certainly notice problems inherent in its practical political activity. Oyvbaire (1987) pointed out basic democratic problems that revolves around how to forge a developmental process which is simultaneously participatory for individual citizens, sensitive to and protective of individual rights, freedom and liberties, accommodative of multiple and competing loyalties and generative of economic growth and distributive justice.

In the 1990s, the major Western donor's demands for elections and minimal procedural reforms converged around Election Day, with little alteration to democratic consolidation. Today democratic assistance is largely similar everywhere. The assistance programming is based on a set list of institutions and processes. In this study, we concentrated on three categories.

- i. The electoral arena.
- ii. Governmental institution
- iii. Civil society.

The Election Arena:

The main Emphasis here is usually the holding of election with the goal of being free, fair and credible. The democratic assistance in this category consists of technical assistance to electoral commissions to improve the administration of elections, support for voter's education and election monitoring by international delegation. Peaceful and credible elections are essential to Nigerians development. And as the largest economy in sub-Sahara Africa, Nigeria's stability is crucial to the security and economic prosperity of its neighbours. Western donors especially the US have been assisting Nigeria's leaders and its people in their efforts to build a multi-party democracy in order to addresses the aspirations of all Nigerians.

The US government through the US Agency for international Development (USAID) assisted Nigeria's electoral process since 1999 when she returned to democratic rule to 2015 general election (US Factsheet 2015) USIAD in partnership with DFID provided 868.8 millions of assistance to improve performance of election management institution. Other key areas of assistance include:

Diplomatic Engagement major western donors have always engaged the highest levels with Nigerian candidates, political parity leadership, civil society, business leaders and Prominent individuals with the hope so promoting peaceful and credible elections US, EU, UK and China employed diplomatic engagement strategy in the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections in Nigeria (US FACTSHEET,2015). Such engagements were done through phone calls, private meetings e.g. Obama and Jonathan for 2015 Elections, where president Jonathan promised President Obama in September, 2013 that he would build on Nigeria's democratic process to make the election in 2015 free, fair and credible.

John Kerry meeting with both Jonathan and Buhari, Vice President Biden's talked with Nigeria's leaders and Linda Thomas Green field visits to Nigeria's leaders best explained

donors diplomatic approach of democratic assistance. (US Diplomatic mission to Nigeria, 2015).

Support to the INEC.

Western donors in a bid to strengthening democracy in Nigeria co-funded projects aim at improving the quality of the elections and the competence of INEC. The support here includes technical assistance and training of electoral officers in the areas of election management and deployment of election materials.

Civil and Voter Education.

This include finding for the production and dissemination of non-partisan voter education materials and campaigns. In this regard, the empowerment of civil society project was launched to embark on get-out the-vote and man-violence campaign for 2015. The project includes an emphasis on youth participation.

International Observers.

Western donors also supported domestic and foreign observers missions in Nigeria during general elections. The donor also supported security of election materials.

All above analyzed strategies are part of the efforts to address the problems of development and democratization process and progressively move towards democratic consolidation. Democracy promotion and credible election are often linked together such that it is difficult to separate the two. While democracy promotions support increases, the chances of conducting credible elections, free and fair election on the other hand, is centered to democratic consolidation.

In recent times, financial and technical support dominated and became the most popular and generally accepted form of foreign democratic assistance. Studies revealed that more than 90% of foreign democratic assistance are provided through financial and technical support to improve the quality of electoral process. This may not be unconnected with the fact that it is a more moderate and acceptable approach than the military option. More importantly, it is reciprocal as it has socio-economic and political benefits to both the donors and recipient countries (Rankner, 2007, Ranker 2008) Santiso, 2001.

Between 1998 and 1999, the European Union (EU) supported Nigeria in the area of human rights and democracy promotion with the sum of Eur 7million (EU- NIP, 2001-2007).

USIAD's democratic Assistance to Nigeria breakdown is as follows:

In 2009, 17.552 US dollar was provided, 2008, 13.448 million dollars, 2009, 18.790 millions. The US government also assisted with 74m US dollar to strengthen democracy 5m US dollar spent for training of poll workers in 1999 elections. 2 million US dollar spent for training of 10,300 elected officials in the area of accountability and transparency. EU also spent 925m between 2012 – 2013, to promote democracy in Nigeria, DFID made valuable 810.9m, while CIDA expended 83m, UNDP 812.6m and LOLCA 8230,000, given a total of 864,230,000 spent on civil society activities geared towards promoting democracy in Nigeria.

In this sense, the assistance is considered important because, as Thomas (1997) put it, well organized and practice democracy is one aspect of institution making. The underlying belief is

that if each of the socio-political institution are inter related in an effective productive manner, the society will become more democratic and development would be guarantee.

METHOD AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we employed survey approach. The basic feature of this strategy is that the researchers gather data from sample respondents, which in this study were selected from civil societies with focus on democratic network and the larger informed population. This method is justified because; we are interested in finding out correlational relationship between foreign democratic assistance (financial and technical) and the result of the election process in Nigeria. We just want to connect the underlying belief of democratic assistance objectives with outcome of election process through empirical analysis. For this reason, the study is conducted in a natural setting where we gathered data, analyzes the data inductively and describes the strategy of assistance in an expressive and persuasive manner. In doing this, the study uses the opinion and assessment of peoples engaging in the problem at hand as the basis for analysis (participants' perspective).

This paper adopts as its framework of analysis the theory of change. This theory is simply and elegantly theory of how and why an initiative works. Building on this, Anderson (2005) defined a theory of change approach to evaluation as a systematic study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative. This suggest that the first step toward evaluating an initiative is to determine its intended outcomes, the activities it expects to implement to achieve those outcomes, and the contextual factors that may have an effect on the implementation of activities and their potential to bring about desired outcome. In the broadest sense, major western donors stressed governance in their relations with developing countries including Nigeria. They belief that "progress in the protection of human rights, good governance and democratization are fundamental for poverty reduction and sustainable development" (Diamond,1995).

Thus, democratic assistance is directed at achieving an objective (credible election) to bring about the desired outcome (development through good governance and democracy). As an objective – oriented model of evaluation, this study primarily involves determining whether the donor objective achieves outcome. This study is based on interviews with representatives from political leaders, civil society organizations, Academic, diplomatic officers and women-based organization. Electoral institutions as well as secondary materials have been used to complete the study.

The interviews were conducted with 80 sampled interviewees at their various institutions premises where the gate keepers identified participants in advance. Interview began with the traditional greetings and foundational questions about the wellbeing of the respondents and their families. Purpose and the nature of the study were clarified for each respondent. A written consent was administered prior to each interview. Sensitivity to the emotional issues involved in electoral process was demonstrated. Respondents were protected by eliminating any identifying information. Strict confidentiality of interviews was maintained during and after interview. The accuracy and authenticity of respondent's expressions were maintained by preserving the meanings conveyed. To control bias, and errors, respondents were given the opportunity to review the interview and respondents scripts for confirmation of the content and accuracy. The interview centered amends two fundamental questions:

- i. Does the outcomes of Nigeria's elections a reflection of major western democratic assistance's objectives.
- ii. Does the financial and technical assistance offer for the promotion of democracy in Nigeria achieve intended objective
- iii. Apart from financial and technical assistance, what could major donors like US and EU realistically do to strengthen their stance on Nigeria's democracy?
- iv. Does Nigeria really need democratic assistance?

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The political ecology of elections in Nigeria have always been characterized by electoral violence. Electoral violence have always been associated with elite manipulation of power relations process. The study stressed on identifying the relationship between democratic assistance and election result. The results of the study are as follows:

Nigeria Needs Foreign Democratic Assistance.

Respondents/Institutions	SA	A	SD	D	Total
Civil society	14	16	09	03	42
Party leaders	06	08	21	08	43
INEC officers	17	04	09	12	42
Security officers	06	19	15	09	40
Donor agencies	19	11	06	05	41
Opinion leaders	04	12	19	09	44
Total	66 (26%)	62 (24%)	79 (31%)	46 (19%)	252

Source: Field Survey 2016

The result obtained in table 1 above show that Nigeria needs foreign democratic assistance. The table depicts that almost 50% of the respondents accepted that Nigeria needs assistance in her democratization process. The data also reflects upon the fact that electoral inadequacies occurred due to lack of certain basic democratic credentials.

Table 2. Foreign Democratic Assistance Reflects Election Result in Nigeria?

Respondents	SA	A	SD	D	Total
Civil society	13	-	79	-	92
Party leaders	22	-	82	-	104
INEC officials	14	-	53	-	67
Security leaders	18	-	70	-	88
Donors agencies	20	-	54	-	74
Opinion leaders	32	-	59	-	91
Total	199 (231%)	-	397 (769%)	-	516

Source; field study, 2016

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study reveals that majority of the respondents strongly disagree with the view expressed that “Foreign Democratic Assistance Reflects Election Results in Nigeria. The high percentage of strongly disagree (76.9%) relatively to strongly agreed 23.1% clearly reveals that there is no correlation between the objectives of Democratic Assistance and Election Result in Nigeria. Various evidenced have reflected upon the fact that elections results are not only manipulated but also do not represent the wishes of the electorates who suffer the burden of extractive electoral practice in Nigeria. The study keeping in purviews the economic driven electoral fraud of the Nigeria state further emphasis lack of inclusive governance as the Nigeria democracy is not liberal democracy in the real sense. It is an abuse democracy that has no place in the lexicon of politics. A former American Ambassador in Nigeria, in responses to a question on Nigerian election in 1993 states. What you do in Nigeria is not what we do in America. In America, politics revolves around issues. In Nigeria politics is nothing but expression of selfish and tribalitics ambitions that go against the principles and ideals of democracy as obtained in advanced democratic nations.

Apart from financial and technical assistance, what could major donors like US and EU realistically do to strengthen their stance on Nigeria’s democracy? Responses to the this question reveals that, majority of the respondents indicates that at the programme level, major donors like US and EU should improve their funding mechanisms. . As reported by Anna (2007), donors’ funding is less than what a state governorship aspirant spent on campaign in Nigeria. This suggests that the funding strategy is not capable of improving Nigeria’s democratic expectations. Respondents also mentioned the need to put emphasis on state institutions rather than NGOs, a discussion on the right balance between the two shows that most donors funding goes to NGOs with little influence on state institutions. Today international democracy promotion is viewed with skepticism in Nigeria because election result do not reflects donors’ objectives.

Besides the poor strategy of emphasizing NGOs with little influence on state institution, the stakeholders especially the political elite is another factor that hinder effective utilization of foreign democratic assistance for free fair and credible election. Prebendal politics has taken the center stage in the Nigerian democracy. Politicians struggle for possession of a place in state office with the aim of procuring direct material benefits to themselves and their acknowledged commercial and other social group. Ake (1981) assessed the situation correctly when he said: *There is not much change in Nigeria political behaviour. The politics is still the same tendency not to take the decision of the governed seriously it is not likely to change. We are not addressing the relevant issues. Have you heard any thing about what national purpose is, what we are going to achieve We have developed a unique kind of politics, something that in political science we never encouraged. The future of Nigeria is not on the table, the kind of policy changes, what we have is just a struggle for power and all the riggings and other electoral frauds are an extension of the politics that is just reduced to power struggle.*

As argued by Daron (2012), extractive economic institution naturally accompany extractive political institutions, thus electoral malpractice and politically motivated killings inherently occurred not for the sake of inclusive governance, but to put in place extractive political

institutions for their survival. Credible elections vesting power broadly would tend to uproot and deny narrow elite access to power vis a vis state resources. This, explains the ecology of election in Nigeria, and clearly shows the synergistic relationship between extractive economic interest and electoral inadequacy in Nigeria. Electoral corruption enables the elite access political power in order to achieve economic interest without constraints or opposing forces. Access to state wealth; in turn enable the elite to structure future political institutions, making them to consolidate their political dominance. There is obviously a close connection between electoral fraud and economic interest of the elite. Thus, election malpractice is the root of discontent because the people suffer from the corrupt system. Peaceful and credible elections are essential to Nigeria's development. And as the largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria's stability is crucial to the security and economic prosperity of its neighbours. Yet, Nigeria is an obvious country for any one aiming to eradicate the ills of inadequate governance in Africa. It is infamous for its electoral corruption, which has fueled other governance related problems such as poorly administered system of justice, lack of state transparency and widespread human right abuses.

From the analysis the study discovered two major findings:

1. The strategy of foreign democratic assistance is faulty and one sided, as the assistance focus greatly on NGOs or civil society with little influence on state institutions that control electoral process.
2. Foreign democratic assistance has its root in liberal democracy with pure democratic credentials practice in advanced countries which is alien to what obtain in Nigeria. In Nigeria, our democracy exists within the context of particular mode of production that link set of values preferred by the political elite. This provides the context for electoral misbehavior. This finds support in Albert (2002) who earlier observed that political crisis in Nigeria lies in the deeper socio-political and economic structures of the country coupled with poor election management. The combination of the foregoing often makes the political class to rely on and use any means to emerge victorious in electoral contest. The Fourth Republic in the country witnessed electoral violence occasioned by the perceived compromised of the electoral process. The period has seen the use of armed youth employed by the political class to engage in election malpractices that led to loss of lives (Human Right Watch, 2014). The violence that followed the 2011 presidential election in the country led to the death of over 800 persons and massive loss of property worth billions of naira. The violence coupled with the Boko Haram insurgency created tensions and insecurity in the country. The divisive campaigns that precede the 2011 election as regards the office of the president further polarized the country along ethnic, religion and regional lines (Albert 2012; Ugbudian 2015). The violence indicator that culminated in the 2011 post-election violence reached unprecedented height following the nomination of presidential candidates by 14 political parties. President Goodluck Jonathan of PDP and General Muhammadu Buhari were the leading candidates in the election and also heightened violence orchestrated by their supporters using hate messages along religious, regional, cultural, ethnic and personal lines. The hate messages that created fear, tension and insecurity in the political space made Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, a former Minister of External Affairs and elder statesman to use his good office as a third party to mediate between parties and write an open letter to the leading candidates requesting for a truce and stoppage of the hate campaigns (Alabi, 2015).). In Nigeria, electoral violence has contributed to political instability. Since

independence whenever violence in election cycle happens, it usually creates instability in the polity. For instance, the Western region electoral crisis culminated in the January 15, 1966 military coup. The same can be said of the electoral violence that happened in 1984 governorship elections in parts of the country which also led to political instability. The Fourth Republic has also witnessed one of the worst electoral violence into country especially the 2011 postelection that somewhat questions the continued existence of the country. The benefit of democratic assistance is yet realized because of undemocratic practices such as God-fatherism, inter and intra party conflict among others. God-fatherism has become a dominant feature of the party system in Nigeria today. Godfather politics typically ensures that results are declared even when there is no evidence that voting actually took place, it typically plays electoral politics with little or no respect for the established rule of conduct governing the process, and does display nay sense of moral restraint in its appreciation of what is not surprising therefore that elections results, whether at the intra-party level or at the level of general elections are always disputed by those who are declared losers.

Parties in Nigeria have not been able to attain the expected degree of institutionalization especially in the areas of internal cohesion and discipline. This deficiency has also contributed to the decline of their conflict management capacities at both intra and inter-party relations levels. The level of crisis at both levels of party relations is worrisome. It is such that none of the parties have been able to hold together without sever conflict that most times threaten their very hearts (Simbine, 2013).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper examines foreign democratic assistance to Nigeria towards credible elections. The paper identified technical and financial forms of democracy promotion and explains their relationship with credible election in Nigeria. Similarly, the paper identified some of major challenges affecting utilization of international support towards credible election in Nigeria. In view of the foregoing, this paper recommends strengthening state electoral institutions. This will greatly enhance or influence credible election in Nigeria. The paper also recommends close collaboration with the media to report support provided to Nigeria as a strategy for eliminating corruption in relation to effective utilization. Similarly, it is recommended that those involved in electoral malfeasance be sanctioned to serve as deterrence to those who often connived with politicians to commit all sort of electoral malpractices. In addition, there is also the need for proper coordination of international support in order to eliminate duplication and ensure that the assistance trickle down to the grass root where electoral malpractices are more visible. Moreover, international development partners should be encourage to develop an instrument of evaluation and tracking of support utilization as well as closely monitor the management of support at intervals in order to ensure proper conduct by the beneficiary . This will not only help in ensuring democratic consolidation but also build citizens confidence on democratic governance in Nigeria.

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