

Democracy and Development: An Appraisal of Nigeria's Position in the Democracy Index

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Abstract

This paper looks at the Nigeria's position on the democratic index with the objective of finding out whether twelve years of democratic rule has qualified Nigeria to be regarded as a democracy in the comity of nations. The method used was the democracy index with a weighted average based on the answers to 60 questions. The questions are grouped into five different categories which are electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture. The five categories as listed in the report are then averaged to find the democracy index for the country. We however found out that, Nigeria is still an authoritarian regime and not yet a democracy as claimed. Even though some formal institutions exist, it has little substance. We therefore recommend that, the citizens should not expect significant developments or dividend of democracy until Nigeria becomes a democracy.

Keywords: *authoritarian, democracy, democratic index, Nigeria*

Section 1: Introduction

Nigeria has experienced an unbroken democratic rule from 1999 to 2011, a period of twelve years and the highest stretch of period that the state has been ruled by non uniform men since the country gained political independence in 1960. Within these years leaders in government talk about democracy dividends and the people yearn and cry for the translation of democracy to development, why have Nigeria's 12 years uninterrupted democracy not translated to development? A large body of literature has shown that countries that have reached the highest level of economic development across generations are all stable democracies (see Torstensson, 1994, Heitger, 2004, and Root, 2005). According to Sharma (2007), one of the most robust findings of some two decades of research on democratisation is that durable democracy is strongly correlated with economic development. The conventional wisdom is that democracies have embedded institutional advantages that support economic development. Theoretical literature believes this is possible because democracies enrich individual lives through the granting of political and civil rights, and do a better job of improving the welfare of the poor, compared to alternative political systems (Sen 2001).

Moreso, democracies are seen to be responsive to the demands and pressures from the citizenry, since the right to rule is derived from popular support manifested. Numerous studies corroborate this. For example, an analysis of forty-four African states by Stasavage (2005) finds strong evidence that democracy helped to increase government spending on education. Similarly, Avelino, Brown, and Hunter (2005) find that democracy is robustly linked to higher spending on health, education, and social services. Third, the open dialogue and debates inherent in open democracies aid in the development of values and priorities, and this “constructive function” of democracy can be very important for equity and justice. Sen (1999) notes that this explains, for example, the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines around the world, ...no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press. Famines have occurred in ancient kingdoms and contemporary authoritarian societies, in tribal communities and in modern technocratic dictatorships, in colonial economies run by imperialists from the north and newly independent countries of the south run by despotic national leaders or by intolerant single parties. But they have never materialized in any country that is independent, that goes to elections regularly, that has opposition parties to voice criticisms, and that permits newspapers to report freely and question the wisdom of governments’ policies without extensive censorship.

Given these scenario more people are recognizing that democracy matters for development—that institutions, rules and political processes play a big role in whether economies grow, whether children go to school, whether human development moves forward or backward. The objective of this study therefore is to examine the democracy index and see whether twelve years of democratic rule has qualified Nigeria to be regarded as a democracy in the comity of nation. This study is divided as follow: following this section is section 2 which looks at the democracy index, section 3 discusses the methodology, section 4 talks about Nigeria and the democratic index and lastly section 5 concludes the paper.

Section Two: The Democracy Index

The democracy index is an index compiled by the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). The EIU’s Index of Democracy is the world’s most comprehensive and reliable measure of democratic practice and provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide. It is published every two years in September for 167 countries of which 166 are sovereign states and 165 are UN member states and two territories. This covers almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the world’s 192 independent states (27 micro-states are excluded). Until now, there have been three editions of this index. The first edition was published in 2006, the second in 2008 and the third edition in 2010.

According to EIU (2007), although almost half of the world’s countries can be considered to be democracies, the number of “full democracies” is relatively low (only 28). Almost twice as many (54) are rated as “flawed democracies”. Of the remaining 85 states, 55 are authoritarian and 30 are considered to be “hybrid regimes”. As could be expected, the developed OECD countries (with the notable exception of Italy) dominate among full democracies, although there are two Latin American, two central European and one African country, which means that the level of development is not a binding constraint. Only one Asian country, Japan, makes the grade. This means that more than half of the world’s population lives in a democracy of some sort, although only some 13% reside in full democracies. Despite the advances in democracy in recent decades, almost 40% of the world’s population still lives under authoritarian rule (with a large share of these being, in China).

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

The democracy index according to its 2007 report is a kind of weighted average based on the answers to 60 questions, each one with either two or three permitted alternative answers. Most answers are "experts' assessments";. Some answers are provided by public-opinion

surveys from the respective countries. In the case of countries for which survey results are missing, survey results for similar countries and expert assessments are used in order to fill in gaps. The questions are grouped into five different categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture.

Each answer is translated to a mark, either 0 or 1, or for the three-answer alternative questions, 0.5. With the exceptions mentioned below, seemingly, the sums are added within each category, multiplied by ten, and divided by the total number of questions within the category. There are a few modifying dependencies, which are explained much more precisely than the main rule procedures. In a few cases, an answer yielding zero for one question voids another question; e.g., if the elections for the national legislature and head of government are not considered free (question 1), then the next question, "*Are elections... fair?*" is not considered, but automatically marked zero. Likewise, there are a few questions considered so important that a low score on them yields a penalty on the total score sum for their respective categories, namely:

1. "Whether national elections are free and fair";
2. "The security of voters";
3. "The influence of foreign powers on government";
4. "The capability of the civil servants to implement policies".

The five category indices, which all are listed in the report, are then averaged to find the democracy index for a given country. Finally, the democracy index, rounded to one decimal, decides the classification of the country, as quoted:

1. Full democracies—scores of 8 to 10.
2. Flawed democracies—scores of 6 to 7.9.
3. Hybrid regimes—scores of 4 to 5.9.
4. Authoritarian regimes—scores below 4.

Section Four: Nigeria and the Democracy Index

In 2010 the Democracy Index score for Nigeria was 3.47, out of the possible 10.0. This shows deterioration in the democracy index over 2008 during which period the country scored 3.53. This is a further deterioration in the index over the 2006 index where Nigeria scored 3.52. In 2006 Nigeria ranked 124 out of 167 countries surveyed. Nigeria maintained the same rank in 2008 but moved up marginally to 123 in 2003 (see Table 4.1). Moreso, in the area of electoral process and participation, Nigeria scored 2.92 out of 10.0 in 2008 which represented deterioration from 2006 index but increased not much significantly in 2010 with a score of 3.83. In the area of functioning of government, Nigeria consistently maintained 3.21 index in 2010 and 2008 respectively. However, this showed an improvement over 2006 with 1.86.

Furthermore, the Democracy Index for Nigeria in term of political participation showed 4.44. This was further deteriorated in 2008 and 2010 with 3.33 in the index respectively. The political culture in Nigeria as described in the index also indicated that, Nigeria was 4.38 in the index both in 2006 and 2008 but dropped in the rating to 3.13 in 2010. Lastly, the civil liberties in index were consistent throughout 2006, 2008 and 2010. This represents a level of stability but still far below required scores that can even classified Nigeria as Hybrid Regimes. What this means is that, Nigeria system of government is still far below what can be refers to as democracy. See table 4.1 (appendix)

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

The EIU's conclusion is that Nigeria is an authoritarian regime and not yet a democracy. In an authoritarian regime political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed. Many countries

in this category are outright dictatorships. Some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair. There is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties. Media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary. Until Nigeria become a democracy, developments and dividends of democracy will continue to be a mirage

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Appendix

Table 4.1 Democracy Index for Nigeria

Year	Rank	Overall Score	Electoral Process and Participation	Functioning of Government	Political Participation	Political Culture	Civil Liberties
2006	124	3.52	3.08	1.86	4.44	4.38	3.82
2008	124	3.53	2.92	3.21	3.33	4.38	3.82
2010	123	3.47	3.83	3.21	3.33	3.13	3.82

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit 2006-2010

Research Journal of Finance and Accounting

www.iiste.org

ISSN 2222-1697 (Paper) ISSN 2222-2847 (Online)

Vol 2, No 2, 2011

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

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