

Original Paper

Transitional Democracy in Emerging Societies, A Comparative Analysis between Taiwan and Nigeria

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Abstract

It has been a quarter-century since when both Taiwan and Nigeria achieve civilian rule in 1996 and 1999 respectively. Nigeria experienced a setback by men in uniform amidst a beautiful beginning of its existence, and lasted for tens of years. Perhaps, the story is not much different from the rest of the African nations. Similarly, for decades, Taiwan encountered serious political turmoil, in fact, a crisis under a dominant overarching power of one party system. My research investigates democratic transition in Taiwan and Nigeria on a comparative basis. Nevertheless, the study proposes to examine some of the major factors that caused and brought about the transition as a living experience in these two different economies. This study will however, try to compare the political transitional process in these nations and its effects to the lives of their respective citizens and to the region they belong to. Egregious political legitimacy of absolutism in both Taiwan and Nigeria in pre-1990s generates direct reflection of democratization in these two emerging economies. The study concludes that the revolutionary wave that opens a new beginning in the European history, followed by the fall of Berlin Wall, lifting the Iron Curtain only to record the end of the Cold War, ousting communist regimes across Eastern Europe were among other forces that propelled democratic transition to replace tyranny with democratically elected leaderships in many parts of the world including in Taiwan and Nigeria.

Keyword

Taiwan, democracy, dictatorship, governance, Nigerian politics

1. Introduction

During the 19th through the 21st century, the forces of political expansionism and revolutionary democracy converted large numbers of undemocratic countries to democracy. In contrast, democracy is opposite to authoritarian or dictatorial government. Samuel Huntington (1991) classified non-democratic

authoritarian regimes into various types. Authoritarian is viewed in form of monarchy. The line of kinship always determines this system. Regime can be one party system, like Taiwan in the late 1950s through the early 1990s. Such regimes in most of the cases come through various reasons: revolution, foreign influence and external imposing.

The military regimes come to power by toppling the existent regimes to replace them with military dictatorships as the case in Nigeria. Personal dictatorship is a leader who centralizes authority and power very limited to his person. Countries such as India, Portugal, and Romania have undergone similar leaderships somewhere in their histories (Huntington, 1991). Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe did not largely welcome democracy until 1989. In the 1991, the total number of new democracies rose to twenty-one countries. This move followed by the fall of Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the United Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR).

From the early 1990s to 2000s, several countries in Africa including Nigeria embraced democratic style through a peacefully political transition. Benin Republic and South Africa for instance, transformed system of their governments in 1991 and 1994 respectively. On 29th May 1999, Nigerians elected Olusegun Obasanjo to become a new civilian president. That election opened a new page of hope shaped by the Nigeria's transition after the death of the then military leader, General Sani Abacha in June 1998. Perhaps, this has finally ended the prolongation of military interruption in the country for the first time in nearly thirty-year interval (Di, 1990).

On Taiwan, the United Nations Resolution 2758 served as an extraordinary force that accelerated transitional democracy superseding superannuated authoritarian system, which has been embolden by the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist party. Since then, Taiwan manages democratization and transformation gradually until the 1996 when the country held the first and historic presidential polls that had happened ever in modern day Taiwan. That election was seen by many experts like Diamond as the first incremental attempt of democratization process in the island. Though holding regular elections or multiplying party organizations alone does not necessarily, grant stable state of democracy; democratic institutions must get supported.

Regime can be one party like Taiwan in the late 1950s through the early 1990s. Such regime in most of the cases comes through various reasons: revolution, foreign influence and external imposing. The military regimes come to power by toppling the existent regimes to replace them with military dictatorships. Personal dictatorship is a leader who centralizes authority and power very limited to his person. Countries such as India, Portugal, and Romania have undergone similar leaderships somewhere in their histories (Huntington, 1991).

This study brings about a new phase of political transformations in Taiwan and Nigeria in a comparative analogue of democratization. However, the causes and implications of these transformations will be part of the major considerations of this article. It nevertheless, gives more emphasis on the current political scenario in Sub-Saharan Africa at large, especially the post-dictatorial elections. As it however, focuses on consideration the upcoming presidential elections of 2024 in

Taiwan and 2023 in Nigeria and their contributions towards democratic process in these countries. Outcomes and expected results of the political transitions and democratizations in both Taiwan and Nigeria would be at the concluding remarks of this study.

There is no or a very little literature on comparative study that seeks to investigate democratization processes between Taiwan and Nigeria. Perhaps, peoples have less concern on such analysis simply because many theories hypothesize that Islam, which remains a dominant in northern Nigeria, is by nature, anti-liberalism, and democracy, and it comprises principles that depress economic growth. Secondly, in terms of religion and life style, Taiwanese and Nigerian peoples are very much different. In fact, people see no point of making comparison between the two communities as differences are clear. In turn, I argue that in spite of having very less to compare between the two societies, quest for democracy, liberty, peace and economic prosperity seeking common ground, which remains the central thesis of this study, bring them together.

2. Methodology

Various books, journals and research reports on democratization in Taiwan and Nigeria were consulted. Current political events in both nations, together with other important countries in Asia and Africa like South Africa, Ethiopia, Senegal or Mali in Africa; mainland China, Japan or South Korea in East Asia were followed in various websites and the data collected were however examined, clarified and analyzed theme by theme. However, I consulted some Taiwanese professors in the University (National Taiwan Normal University, Academia Sinica) who helped much in developing the second half of the research, which studied democratic transitional process in Taiwan in the past decades. This has quietly made the data relatively rich, especially the one on comparative democratization between the two societies.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

While carrying out this study, the research aims to examine – in comparative perspective – the nature of transition in Taiwan and Nigeria. It also measures the state of economy, security and political stability in the post-dictatorial governments in both Taiwan and Nigeria compared to that of pre-democratic transition. It aims at exploring the level of compatibility between Taiwanese and Nigerian societies. The research also wants to highlight some changes brought about by the transition in the political, social and economic lives of the ordinary persons especially in Taiwan. It also checks the prospects of this transition in Nigeria, too. Structure and cultural differences between Taiwan and Nigeria is examined.

2.2 Statement of the Problem

On this ground, the study seeks to provide background analysis on democratic transitional processes of two disparate societies: Taiwan and Nigeria on a comparative study. The factual reality is that both of Taiwan and Nigeria are being subject to harsh and hardest realities throughout the process that demanded reformations and changes across the branches of the governments.

Significantly, typically, this study investigates the influences and effects of the political polarization in Taiwan, and domestic forces leading to transition in Nigeria. The bipolarity splits Taiwan's domestic politics into two main divisions: Pan-KMT and Pan-DPP. These groups favour unification and independence/status quo respectively. Simultaneously, in the first decade of the 21st century-democratic Taiwan, many issues including cross-strait connection; antagonism and reconciliation between the parties in domestic confrontation; multiple ups and downs in Taiwan-U.S. relations; economic growth and stagnation, etc. have been under consideration (Lee, 2010).

Nevertheless, the double experiences that the KMT party developed, serves as guideline in making conducive atmosphere for political democratization in the island after coming back to the office. This research proves that Taiwan has become a democracy with regular, free, and fair elections shaped by political pluralism.

Continuously, it makes a forensic check on the Nigeria's side arguing that the transition brings the country into a near brink of disintegration. People who exercise the government power today are those who won the majority votes of the Taiwan citizens. The historical dictatorship and monopoly feature of the KMT has gone forever (Della, 2013).

3. Transitional Democracy

Samuel P. Huntington (1991) and Frank Hendriks (2010) argue that the most important global political development of the late twentieth century was the transition of some thirty countries from nondemocratic to democratic political systems. It is an effort to explain why, how, and with what immediate consequences this wave of democratization occurred between 1974 and 1990.

In political democratization different people with different interests and objectives made the decisions about how to structure society. In other words, both Nigeria and Taiwan had different politics that got its way out of the experience and expectations of the people. Politics is the process by which a society chooses the rules that will govern it. Politics surrounds institutions for the simple reason that while inclusive institutions may be good for the economic prosperity of a nation, some people or groups. More or so, it will be much better off by setting up institutions that are extractive (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

More or so, the modern day societies are characterized by pluralisms of language, religion, culture, ethnicity, and so on, which will find distinctive expression in a freely organized public sphere (Beetham, 2009).

According to Acemoglu and Robinson, when there is conflict over institutions, what happens depends on which people or group wins out in the game of politics—that can get more support, obtain additional resources, and form more effective alliances. In short, who wins depends on the distribution of political power in society. The political institutions of a society are a key determinant of the outcome of this game. They are the rules that govern incentives in politics. They determine how the government is chosen and which part of the government has the right to do what. Political institutions determine who

has power in society and to what ends that power can be used. If the distribution of power is narrow and unconstrained, then the political institutions are absolutist, as exemplified by the absolutist monarchies reigning throughout the world during much of history (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Russell J. Dalton (2004), Linz and Stepan (1978) on the other side demonstrate that regime support refers to public attitudes toward the constitutional order of a nation, distinguished between different elements of the regime. Regime principles define the broad parameters within which the political system should function. At the broadest level, this involves choices about whether political relationships should be organized as a democratic, authoritarian, or other political form. A shared consensus on such values would seem to be a prerequisite for a stable political order, and history has sadly shown what can occur when the democratic consensus fails. A second major component of the regime consists of the norms of behaviour, which Easton called the operating rules or the rules of the game.

These involve the specific rules or norms governing political action. For instance, communism as a principle varied in its application from its Marxist roots, to democratic centralism, to Stalinist authoritarianism, to Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika (Campbell, 2019). Similarly, democracy can take multiple forms that involve different assumptions about the role of the citizen, the political rights of individuals, the acceptance of dissent and political conflict, and other features of the political process. Finally, the category of regime support also includes orientations towards political institutions, such as evaluations of parliament, political parties, the courts, and other institutional actors. The public must accept the institutions of governance as legitimate, and accept the decisions made by those who control these institutions (Della, 1995).

TAIWAN TRANSITION FROM CHAOS TO LIBERAL ORDER OF THE DAY

Dafydd Fell (2004) identified that during the 1990s Taiwan was praised as a good model of democratic transition and the first Chinese liberal democracy across the history. The first re-election of the parliaments and direct presidential election meant that less than ten years after lifting martial law, all major offices were subject to democratic elections. The quality of Taiwan sample of democracy appeared promising in the 1990s. The on-party dominant system that occupied political system of the country for many decades was replaced by a highly competitive system of institutionalized political parties.

Kan, Shirley (2010) stressed that partly stemming from the shock and shame of the killing of Henry Liu in the United States, President Chiang Ching-kuo began in 1985 to plan to implement political reforms. In addition to sustaining U.S. support for Taiwan's security, Chiang likely had other considerations that included providing for the KMT's political legitimacy. In 1986, opposition forces could hold rallies against martial law in Taipei. The security forces did not crack down on at least one political meeting in Taipei at which banned books about Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo were sold, and some Taiwanese demanded that politicians speak in the majority, local Taiwanese language (not Mandarin). President Chiang has allowed formation of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) on

September 28, 1986, even before he ended the martial law in July 1987. More milestones on the road of democratization included the following events. In 1991, the DPP amended its party platform to state its objective of establishing a “Republic of Taiwan” and the use of a referendum on Taiwan’s future status (Berg-Schlosser, 2008). The KMT government did not crack down on the DPP. In December 1992, Taiwan’s people elected a new Legislative Yuan, without the KMT returning the same old members who had run for election on mainland China in the 1940s and stayed in the legislature without elections for decades. In March 1996, the government held the first direct, democratic election for the presidency.

The KMT’s Lee Teng-hui, who had succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo when he died in January 1988, won the election to continue as president. That election took place just after the PRC’s military threats and President Clinton’s response by deploying two aircraft carrier battle groups near Taiwan (Halbeisen, 2003).

Yun-han Chu and Yutzung Chang (2004) identified that the universality of democratic legitimacy is not to be taken for granted, as the third wave of democratization is not a significant trend in East Asia. The successful promotion of economic development combined with nationalism has led some leaders of non-democratic countries in East Asia to challenge the Western notion of basic human rights and question whether further democratization is necessary or desirable. Thus, they advocate “Asian values,” or neo-authoritarianism, resisting the liberal democratic ideas of Western society.

Publicly, East Asian political leaders claim that it is not necessary for developing countries to follow the model of Western development; on the contrary, there is an alternative Asian model of political economic development. Add to this East-West contrast Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis that post-Cold war conflict will increasingly be the result of different cultures instead of ideologically or economically derived, and it is clear that the conflict over development and democratization affects the peace and order of the future international community.

Many proponents of democracy remain quite optimistic about the future of democracy in East Asia. Marc Plattner suggests although the essentials of liberal thought in the East Asian third-wave democracies are explicitly weak, liberalism will continue to strengthen as the third wave expands. In contrast, the anti-liberal cultural tradition will wane. In a similar vein, Gerald Curtis argues that civic culture in traditional East Asian society is not solid, as democratization proceeds in this region; it will rapidly cultivate a civic culture that will benefit democratic stability in East Asia.

4. Democratization Process, A Nigerian Experience

Between 1992 and 1998 Nigeria came across a period of uncertain situation. It was during this time the country witnessed a brainteaser as the elections that brought about civilians governors into power across Nigerian States were dissolved after which however, the presidential election was annulled in 1993. These elections were the first ones held in the country since 1979. Military interruption is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian administration. At tender age, the country fallen a victim to the first wave

of coup in 1966, just six years after the independence. This incident enlarges the already existing gap between the two major north and southern regions and between the two dominant Islamic and Christian religions in the country.

A richer theory of democratization stands to define transition to democracy. More generally, it can be viewed as a proposing some changes in political institutions emerges as a way of regulating the future allocation of political power. The citizens demand and perhaps obtain democracy so that they can have more political say and political power tomorrow (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006)

Religious, tribal and semi-tribal loyalties remain the most important determinant factors in shaping the future Nigeria, politically, economically and socially. Thus, peaceful transition and or sustainable democratization have to do with them. Religion plays a vital role in Nigeria's political atmosphere as tribal lineage does.

Since independence in the 1960, apart from nation building that tops (suppose) any other probity, regardless of any different facets, Nigeria has been facing number of tough challenges including who should govern affairs of the country, and how to govern those affairs for better Nigeria, and what should be the nature of this assiduous task (governing)? These, together with other inconsequential questions started to shape the future Nigeria. Simultaneously, the multicultural nature that heavily concentrates on language, region and religion assimilates politics, economic and social consciousness of the people. The identities and not national objectives, determine the popularly great-three aspects (Abubakar, 2020).

However, populism never champion Nigeria's political democracy. The multicultural nature of the country plays a significant contribution, especially in the northern corner where people engage in politics to balance with the other parts of the country, rather than sincere commitment on what could bolster nation-building tools and strategies. This idea resorts to brinkmanship, as it also furthers different experiences to the Nigeria's peculiar transition to democracy, which is, according to (Momoh, 2003) being privatized depending on the personality in power, and thus not often based on the provisions of the party system that ideally ought to get the fertile ground of its existence through general and common interest of the people (Abubakar, 2020).

More or so, the deviant nature of the Nigerian leaderships – both military regime and democratically elected civilians – contribute with no progressive burgeon in terms of social well-being of the citizens, economic boosting or even the fracas over the prolonging rampant corruption and other malpractices. Hence, there are no significant differences that have so far been recorded throughout Nigeria's post-independence history. The country is, therefore, never produced neither leadership nor system that was unanimously welcomed by the generic populace as there were also, no commitments by the few in power to ensure social welfare, security and equity between amongst different social classes that the nation contains (Abubakar, 2020).

On this ground, there is need for a system that can – on a democratic style – cater the burden of inequality in a society. Thus, democracy becomes unsurpassed than any other system to govern a

modern society on the planet, simply because is a set of apparatus that tries to imply the respect for the rule of law and justice. This considerable paramount part of democracy is proved absent in contemporary Nigerian political democratization, and in exchange, corruption takes over. Corruption has negative implication on democracy and causes sluggish progress in terms of conducting free and fair votes. This is why free-floating elections seem seldom in Nigeria. Hence, rigging behaviour becomes tradition among political parties, collation officers and other stake holders. Nevertheless, the ongoing malfeasance leads to bad governance and failure in leadership.

To contest for the election as far as the Nigeria's electoral act (2010) is concerned one needs to be a full registered member of one of the registered political groups. The section 87 (1), (2), and (3) of the Act, provides that nominating a candidate by a political group should be based on primary; directly or indirectly, should the party has more than aspirant. And thus, a candidate can't nominate him/her self against any elective position across levels.

Consequently, contestant should, conditionally, be nominated by the party. Apropos what is provided in the electoral act (2010), lobbying hard in persuading politician and functionary so they can pave the way for you in order for your talent and capacity get publicised is rather de trop.

In modern day Nigeria, politics that leads to forming government through competitive elections by a freely choice of the masses becomes stuffs of bourgeoisies. A clique of little affluent creditworthiness possesses the political ascendancy, and thus, controls decision-making even when they seem out of the circle. To climb into political position, one must win legalization that recognises their legitimacy. In other words, political organizations are sponsored by those wealthiest individuals, and party's interests always are built in coalescing with the real objectives of the same wealthiest or god-fathers. Regrettably, this tragedy opened up Pandora's Box of domestic political instability including insurgency, kidnapping and banditry that consume lives of thousands of people, combine.

Shehu hypothesizes that meaningful development is always hampered by political corruption on the account that the bribes are taken by the top ranking officials in government (Shehu, 2015). This justifies multiple facets to the current perilous state of the country. Frankly, since independence, Nigerian politics is being seen as a type of modern capital investment where rights of the people, welfare and infrastructures are snatched by the politicians. Quest for bread of the day makes it easy for them to divide and rule in a form of subjugating attitude over the people that – as far as theological teaching and democratic value are concerned –supposed to be taking care of.

5. Conclusion

Demanding for freedom, liberty and social equality are not limited to a specific location, region, religion or traditional way of life of a particular society. They are equally shared among between the entire global societies. This similarity equips both Nigerians and Taiwanese people quest for a democratic transition that can bring an end to tyranny and chaos. This transition whether successful or not, was not a work of a day, but was a struggle lasted for tens of years.

In the both cases, bitter experience was among the contributing factors that pave the way for democratization stepping the next level. In Nigeria for example, dictatorship that tried to seize the opportunities and minimize chances of the people to attain better life through the means of monopoly of power make changes enforce themselves into the administration after the sudden death of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998. Whereupon the Republic of China's (Taiwan) had for more than fifty years, suffered from undemocratic system mixed-off with Martial Law and Communism.

Nigeria's transition can so far, be assessed as non-successful one as it come across number of challenges that turn to be failure in itself. The widespread acts of insecurity and other insurgencies appear to be the biggest threat against human lives and properties throughout the Sahel. Political stability, economic development and social well-being are convulsed by domestic violence and corruption. Tribalism and regional sentimentalism shape the future Nigeria since 1960s, and therefore, play an important role in the success or failure of its transition now.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) transition is all grist to the mills because it allows economic growth to take place transforming from agrarian based economy to modern industrialized nations of the mainly western countries. Taiwan learns from experience. The prolonging authoritarian regime was terminated and replaced with newly democratically elected civilian in 1996. This promotes confidence in the minds of Taiwanese, even though the island was de-recognized by the International Community since 1970s, and thus faces diplomatic isolation therein by almost the entire world sovereign states.

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