

Democracy and National Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract

Democracy is a form of government that creates an avenue for massive participation in government, while national development is said to have been achieved when the government offers meaningful services to its citizens in terms of quality education, economic well-being, political, social, as well as advancement of nation. This paper therefore examined democracy and national development in Nigeria. First of all, the paper gave a background of the topic, and then went on to define the main concepts; democracy and national development. Also, the paper discussed the nexus between democracy and national development, need for innovation in education, state of education innovation in Nigeria, challenges of democracy for national development in Nigeria, and way forward. Based on the challenges highlighted the paper concluded that the reality in Nigeria democracy using different indicators revealed that, democracy have not improve development, in spite of the fact that virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented. Hence, it was suggested among others that democratic leaders in Nigeria should include those who possess substantive political will and creative mind. Also, godfatherism, vote buying, ethno-religious crisis, and corruption in political process must be extricated.

Keywords: *Democracy, Development, National Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Each individual inside a country has the ability to contribute to the decision-making process, either directly or indirectly. However, the exercise of this capacity is only feasible when the country operates under a democratic system. The distinctive characteristic of democracy fosters inclusivity and instills a sense of belonging among the citizens. As a result, scholars have approached the concept of democracy from many theoretical perspectives, leading to its widespread usage worldwide. However, there are differences in how democracy is practiced (Bühlmann, Merkel, Muller & Wessels, 2008; Schmidt, 2006). Todaro (2004) provides a concise definition of democracy as the concept in which individuals possess the authority to decide the individuals who will hold positions of power over them. Typically, they choose the ruling authorities and ensure

that they are responsible for their acts. Nevertheless, The concept of democracy refers to a political system that nations choose in order to effectively govern state affairs.

Despite the increased focus on democratic government systems, particularly in the 21st century, driven by a strong desire for freedom, justice, and human rights, there are debates around the relationship between democracy and national growth. This problem has prompted inquiries such as whether democracy is fundamentally advantageous. Do democratic institutions promote economic development? The examination of the extent of progress observed in countries such as Nigeria, India, and other developing nations, where democracy is implemented, may have prompted these inquiries. Ogai (2003) argues that national development is a progressive demonstration of favourable transformations in a country's economic, industrial, political, social, cultural, and administrative spheres. He added that while assessing a country's progress, the concept of "national development" should be seen as a comprehensive system rather than just economic growth. It requires the combination of superior quality and substantial quantity of productive resources, along with effectiveness in their utilisation. When discussing national development, we focus on enhancing the quality of different aspects of our country's existence, including politics, ethics, socio-psychology, and the economy. These factors work together to establish and ensure a high-quality and productive life for the citizens of a nation.

Given this premise, the anticipation for the progress of Nigeria's national development increased when the country transitioned to democracy in 1999, following a prolonged military regime. Many people hoped that their involvement in the nation's politics would directly result in effective governance, the implementation of policies that prioritise the well-being of the population, and adherence to the principles of the legal system. These were the factors that led individuals to establish organisations in order to make significant contributions, either in the shape of political parties or pressure groups. These groups exerted influence on the political system through electoral processes, public opinion polls, and representations. However, despite all of these circumstances, it seems that the implementation of democracy has not yielded significant benefits to Nigerians over the past two decades. The nation continues to have challenges with the institutions that are meant to be its driving force. Instead, political parties and their candidates secure electoral victory through the endorsement of violence, bribery, intimidation, and vote buying. Once in office, they implement policies that prioritise the interests of the privileged few over the general population. They allocate more resources to public recurrent expenditure rather than capital investments, and privatise state-owned enterprises by favouring their associates and supporters, rather than making such transactions transparent in the stock exchange market for public participation. Furthermore, they establish a flawed constitution that renders the judiciary subservient to the executive branch of the government. However, both factions that have the pleasure of governing the nation have failed to provide solutions to the challenges related with Nigeria.

As a result, the outcome of democracy in Nigeria is significantly different from that of Western nations such as Britain, the United States of America, Canada, and various European countries. In these Western nations, there is a strong emphasis on upholding the rule of law, protecting people's rights, conducting peaceful elections, respecting the authority of the Judiciary, and preventing government officials from embezzling state funds and evading punishment. This paper therefore

focuses on democracy and national development in Nigeria: challenges and way forward.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Concept of Democracy

The term democracy originates from the combination of two Greek words: Demos (referring to the populace) and Kratos (meaning governance), signifying the rule of the people. In the context of ancient Greece, the term "perception" refers to the rights of residents of Greek city-states to directly participate in the process of governing. According to Ardo (2000), there is no universally agreed-upon meaning of the term democracy. Similarly, Chambers Encyclopaedia (2021) asserts that there exist various interpretations of democracy, and there is a lack of consensus regarding its precise essence. Dahl (1956), as referenced by Idris (2013), also argued that while there is no singular concept of democracy, there exist various forms of democratic systems. Nwokeji further asserted that not only is there no universally accepted definition of democracy, but it is also unlikely that one would ever be established.

Nevertheless, certain scholarly research examines the varied conceptual approaches to framing democracy, as explicitly discussed by academic academics (Bühlmann, Merkel, Muller & Wessels, 2008; Schmidt, 2006). For instance, Todaro (2004) provides a definition of democracy wherein it is characterised as a system in which the populace possesses the authority to choose their governing body. Typically, they choose the main governing officials and ensure that they are responsible for their acts. Democracy establishes legal constraints on the government's power by ensuring specific rights and liberties for its population. Furthermore, according to Konrad (2011), democracy is characterised as a political system where authority and civic duty are practiced by all mature individuals, either directly or indirectly through their duly chosen representatives. According to Dahl (2000:11), democracy is a form of government where elected representatives operate within a legal framework. In this system, the most influential groups in the population participate in the political process and have access to effective representation in decision-making, particularly in the allocation of limited resources.

Democracy can be defined as a form of governance in which the people directly or indirectly exercise their governing authority, either by direct participation or by electing representatives at regular intervals. Nyewusira and Nweke (2012) define democracy as a system that encompasses the ideals of inclusivity, diversity, transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. Democracy, defined as "government by the people," is a system of governance that places importance on the active involvement of citizens and the principle of popular sovereignty. Political involvement is a fundamental characteristic of democracy and is therefore seen as the legitimate entitlement of individuals in any democratic system (Ikpe, 2000).

Based on the preceding information, it can be inferred that in almost all democratic nations worldwide, the rulers govern with the consent of the people. The underlying suggestion is that for the governance of a nation to be successful, active involvement of its citizens is vital. Political engagement can be defined as the lawful actions undertaken by individuals to directly or indirectly

influence the selection of government officials and/or their subsequent actions. Ntalaja (2005) perceives democracy as a universally applicable system of governance that takes on distinct expressions within different temporal and spatial contexts. The fundamental concept of a government entails a system in which the people have a say in decision-making, and a society that supports and maintains this principle (Nguyen, 2014). In contemporary nation-states, democracy predominantly operates in a representative manner, when adult citizens exercise their right to elect representatives through local and national elections (Mathe, 2016). The democratic institutions and practices establish the political arena where we, as citizens, shape our identities and exercise our rights.

In addition, it can also be said that democracy is based on some forms of perception and or representation. Powell (1992) as cited in Idris (2013) opined that, democratic governments have the following characteristics.

The legitimacy of the government rests on a claim to represent the desires of its citizens; That is the claim of government assertion to be doing what the people want it to do; The organization arrangement that regulates this bargain of legitimacy is the competitive political election; Leaders are elected at regular intervals, and voters can choose among alternative candidates in practice, at least two political parties that have a chance of winning are needed to make such choices meaning full; Most adults can participate in the electoral process, both as voters and candidate for important political offices; Citizens and leaders enjoy basic freedom of speech, press, assembly and organization; Both established parties and new ones can work to gain members and whenever democracy exists, political disagreements subsist. p.86

It is evident from the aforementioned that a democratic state necessitates a legitimate administration, free and fair elections, the presence of multiple political parties, and the protection of fundamental human rights. According to Edigheji (2005), separation of power, political tolerance, accountability, transparency, rule of law, and equality are crucial components of a democratic administration. According to Samuel (1991) as cited in Edigheji (2005), democracy is a political system where decision makers are chosen through regular, fair, and transparent elections. In this system, candidates freely compete for votes and almost all adults are eligible to vote. Democracy encompasses the active involvement of the general public in the governance process, equal treatment of all citizens, the authority of the people, the advancement and safeguarding of human rights and fundamental freedoms, a government with limited powers, the primacy of the rule of law, and the division of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government (Malan, 2009).

Types of Democracy

The broadest differentiation that scholars make between democracies is based on the nature of representative government. There are two broad categories of democracy: direct democracy and representative democracy. We can detect examples of both in the world today.

- **Direct Democracy**

Each member participates to the decision-making process by offering their own judgement in accordance with the state's agenda. Through active participation, individuals get a higher level of political knowledge, enabling them to comprehend societal concerns and make well-informed decisions. There are no middlemen. Every individual is regarded as having equal status, and every individual is had the opportunity to directly impact the process of formulating policies. Implementing this approach in practice poses significant challenges (Saylor Foundation, 2015). Unlike Indirect Democracy, where individuals exercise their voting rights through representatives at regular intervals, others argue that this time span is excessive, leading to a sense of apathy (Nelson, 2008).

The primary justification for direct democracy is that it ensures the closest alignment between the desires of the citizens and the political choices made. This is achieved by allowing citizens to directly participate in decision-making through voting on different proposals (referendum) or by initiating proposals themselves to be voted upon (initiative) (Bjørklund, 2005). In order to ensure that political decisions align completely with the desires of the population, it is imperative to guarantee that these desires be conveyed directly, without any mediation or interpretation. A fundamental democratic tenet is that governmental decisions ought to align with the desires of the populace.

Representative Democracy

In a representational democracy, constituencies are represented indirectly in the policy making process through their elected representatives. Representatives play a crucial role in ensuring that public policies accurately align with the interests of the people they represent. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that the significance of a representative would be most evident in relation to policies that allocate advantages to particular groups of people, such as focused government payments. An indirect democracy, as defined by Urbinati and Warren (2008), is a form of democratic governance wherein voters elect representatives to legislate on their behalf. Indirect democracy is a frequently used term that is synonymous with representational democracy. Hobson (2008) stated that the first individuals to openly connect representation and democracy were Thomas Paine and Maximilien Robespierre, who played significant roles in the French revolution. Prior to these writings, democracy was commonly perceived as a component of a mixed government, serving primarily as a supplement to aristocracy and monarchy. Paine, on the other hand, drew a distinction between a republic characterised by 'governance via election and representation' and a monarchy or aristocracy governed by 'inheritance-based succession'. For him, the concept of a republic was not merely a form of government, but rather a guiding philosophy. He believed that the most suitable way to actualize the republic and promote the common good

was through a representative system. Representation would separate democracy from being a mere "simple democracy", and a representative system would be more logical and feasible than a simple democracy.

The contrast between direct or participatory (ancient) democracy and indirect liberal (representative) democracy is well acknowledged (Keane, 2009). Proponents of 'direct' or 'participatory' democracy advocate for direct involvement of individuals in decision-making, while 'indirect' or 'representative' democracy involves individuals selecting representatives to make decisions on their behalf (Keane, 2009). Representative democracy establishes a clear distinction between legal power and those who wield it through the process of elections. This creates a principal-agent dynamic between geographically defined constituencies and their elected representatives (Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Furthermore, it is only when individuals are acknowledged as being represented by their own governments that it becomes feasible to assert that in systems with representative governments, the people hold authority (Brito & Runciman, 2008). Electoral systems ensure that elected officials and political parties are responsive to the people (Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

Elements of Democracy

1. Political Pluralism

2. The concept of pluralism, which refers to the coexistence of diverse viewpoints and interests, is a fundamental aspect of various forms of democracy. It holds significant importance in both the theoretical and practical aspects of political science. The significance of the issue has been more important due to the political development and democratisation that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries (Konrad, 2011). As to his statement, the more comprehensive interpretation of pluralism entails a belief in or a dedication to diversity or multiplicity. Pluralism, as a descriptive term, can refer to the presence of political party competition, a multitude of ethical ideals, or a diversity of cultural standards. In a democratic society, the government is just one component among many diverse public and private institutions, legal forums, political parties, organisations, and associations. Pluralism refers to the existence of various organised groups in a democratic society that do not rely on the government for their existence, legitimacy, or power. Democratic societies often consist of several private organisations, ranging from local to national in scope (Konrad, 2011). In a pluralist culture such as Nigeria, there is a politically diverse environment with multiple parties. Some parties have a nationwide presence, while others are limited to a certain state or region (Enskat, Mitra & Singh, 2001). In Nigeria, there are now two prominent political parties that have a nationwide influence: the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

According to Konrad (2009), political pluralism involves two fundamental elements: firstly, political leaders, such as local government chairpersons and councillors, are elected based on their affiliation with a political party. This means that many political parties can have representation in a local government council. The second feature is the active participation of several stakeholders, including councillors, civil servants, and civil society, in the decision-making process. Pluralism

in local governance also entails taking into account the perspectives and addressing the interests of specific groups, including women, children, youth, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and business associations, among others.

3. Democratic Participation

Grigsby (2005) defines participation as an integral aspect of democracy, encompassing the actions taken by individuals to engage with the government and attain self-governance. In Konrad's (2011) perspective, democratic participation is understood as taking place in two distinct manners: Firstly, individuals can engage in participation by utilising the existing frameworks of established democratic systems. Secondly, they can also participate via means of civil associations. In democratic systems, the selection of leaders must adhere to principles of liberty and impartiality. Within certain societies, a referendum serves as a means to determine the outcome of significant contemporary matters. By doing so, citizens are included into the process of making decisions and governing. Furthermore, active involvement in these associations and groups eradicates personal seclusion and fortifies the populace's influence in mobilising leaders to address their own concerns as well as those of the community at large. The absence of people's engagement in voluntary organisations poses the danger that, due to the challenging nature of exerting pressure on the government to address people's demands, the lack of success in individual endeavours can result in personal despondency and dissatisfaction. Consequently, this may cause individuals to disengage from the pursuit of democracy.

According to Konrad (2011), involvement can manifest in various forms and levels, including all aspects of life and the entire political system. According to Mathe (2016), citizen engagement involves integrating a wide array of knowledge and background into the decision-making process, which may include viewpoints that reflect future generations. These "lay experts" possess personal knowledge that is not inherent to professionals. Experts working in solitude are unable to access this type of experiential knowledge. It can be valuable in evaluating the strength and relevance of facts and questioning expert assertions.

4. Democratic Representation

According to Bishin (2010), there are varying viewpoints regarding the influence of a certain portion of the general public on the decision-making process of representatives. He additionally expressed his belief that any policy matter faced by the government is prone to garner attention and evoke strong emotions among a certain portion of the public. Undoubtedly, representatives prioritise their donors and supporters in order to secure their election, perhaps serving as a fourth source of influence. The donors and supporters referred to here encompass three distinct groups: the re-election constituency (individuals who have or may vote for the representative in a general election), the primary constituency (individuals who have or may vote for the representative in the primary), and the personal constituency (individuals who directly contribute to the legislator's election campaign) (Smith 2007; Volden & Wiseman, 2014). The role of parties in securing enough votes to pass legislation is stated by scholars such as Cox & McCubbins (2005), Harbridge (2015), Hartog & Monroe (2011), and Lawrence, Maltzman & Smith (2006). Jenkins & Monroe (2012) also highlight this aspect.

Democracy in Nigeria

Brief Historical background

The process of Nigeria's transition to democracy started in 1960 when the country gained independence and established democratic institutions inspired by the British Westminster parliamentary system. In this system, the prime minister, who led the party with the most members in parliament, held the actual position of Head of government at the centre (Federal), while the President had a purely symbolic role. Since gaining independence, Nigeria has been working to establish a strong culture of democracy in administration, as outlined in the Independence constitution of 1960 and the Republican constitution of 1963. These constitutions mandated the implementation of the British-modeled Westminster parliamentary system in the country. Following independence, the newly established political leaders were responsible for both establishing the democratic process as a formal institution and cultivating a political culture that would support the existing institutions inherited from the British colonial government. Consequently, there were great expectations upon Nigeria's independence that it would become a fruitful and expansive ground for the development of democracy and effective governance throughout Africa.

Nevertheless, by the conclusion of 1965, it became evident that the prospects for democracy and effective governance in the nation had significantly diminished. In January 1966, the military forcefully terminated the nascent democratic endeavour through a violent coup d'état. The military maintained control for over 33 years following the 1966 coup, with brief periods of civilian authority occurring between 1979 and 1983. In 1979, Nigeria embraced the Presidential style of governance, which was patterned after the American system, instead of the British parliamentary system. According to Elaigwu (2011), Nigeria's short-lived democratic experiment after independence could be attributed to the following factors among others:

1. Breakdown of the rules of the game of politics, which profusely polluted the political stadium and made politics as dangerous for players as well as spectators;
2. Gross misuse of political power among public officers including impudent political and economic decisions in allocation of scarce resources;
3. Erosion of the rights of individuals;
4. Disenfranchisement of the Nigerian populace through blatant rigging of elections;
5. Conspicuous consumption of politicians amidst the abject poverty of the masses; and
6. Excessively powerful regional governments, which threatened the relatively weak federal center with wanton abandon.

The problems posed significant obstacles for the inaugural democratic administration in Nigeria led by Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to establish a robust democratic culture and effective governance. Undoubtedly, considering that the country gained independence without a robust economic foundation and had a weak democratic culture, it was anticipated that both the military and the political elite would exercise greater caution during this era of acquiring democratic skills. This was the era in which it was anticipated that democratic institutions would be formed and that state actors and civil society as a whole would embrace and internalise

democratic values. According to Mohammed (2008) as described in Yio (2011), during this phase, the achievement of objectives and goals relies on the speed at which leaders and society can adapt to and implement democratic ideas and practices. Regrettably, in Nigeria, politics was not motivated by a sense of national unity and awareness of social classes, but rather by primitive emotions rooted in ethnicity, religion, regionalism, and so on. As a result, this has exacerbated poverty and hindered the country's progress and advancement. The Second Republic (1979 – 1983) and the Third Republic (1993) did not witness significant progress in democratic politics and decent government. However, since May 29, 1999, when the Fourth Republic began, politicians in power have consistently employed the term "dividends of democracy" to denote the tangible benefits provided to the populace, including infrastructure such as roads, rural electrification, access to clean water, enhanced educational and healthcare facilities, and housing, among other things. Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge that the attainment of democracy and good governance in Nigeria and other parts of the world cannot be accomplished solely by offering material benefits such as infrastructure, employment, sustenance, electricity, education, healthcare, and other amenities, as these can be easily provided even in an authoritarian regime.

The Concept of National Development

The significance of national development cannot be overstated. Understanding the history of development strategies and growth models in relation to a specific country's history is crucial and requires careful consideration. Therefore, prior to examining the notion of national development, it is crucial to comprehend the definition of development. The concept of "development" gains clarity when one comprehends the notion of "economic growth". Economists typically define economic growth as the gradual rise in a nation's real production per person over a period of time. While many methods exist, the most accessible way to assess output is through the gross national product (GNP). Consequently, economic growth is quantified by the rise in a nation's per capita Gross National Product (GNP). Economic growth refers to a continuous increase in the productive capacity of an economy, as indicated by the rise in real GDP during a specific time frame. Persistent and substantial economic expansion can effectively elevate an impoverished country to a prosperous state, as exemplified by the cases of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian economies (Bade and Parkin, 2002 as referenced in Agala, 2021).

Malizia and Feser (2000) argue that growth and development are mutually reinforcing, as each enables the other. Additionally, these are sequential processes that alternate. Growth refers to the expansion of output, while development entails a fundamental alteration, such as technological advancements or changes in legislative frameworks. Economic growth stimulates the expansion of the economy, whereas development necessitates achieving a more equitable distribution of income and wealth. According to Friedman (1957) as cited in Abubakar (2003), development is defined as a creative process that results in the fundamental changes to the social structure. Abrupt and spontaneous alteration in the steady state that permanently modifies and displaces the previously existing equilibrium state.

According to Charles, Kindleberger, and Bruce (1958) as cited in Agala (2021), development is typically defined as the enhancement of material well-being, particularly for individuals with the

lowest incomes. It also involves the elimination of widespread poverty, disease, and premature death. Additionally, development encompasses changes in the inputs and outputs of an economy, often involving a shift from agricultural to industrial activities. According to them, it refers to the arrangement of the economy in a manner that ensures most people of working age have access to productive employment, rather than just a privileged few. It also involves involving a wide range of groups in making decisions about how to improve their well-being.

Development encompasses much more than simply measuring actual per capita GNP or national wealth. The sustenance of its growth throughout time relies on the consistent growth in both per capita and productivity. The question at hand is to the beneficiaries of economic growth: whether it is the bulk of the people or only a select portion, namely the high-middle-income group. Development include transformations in social, political, and institutional frameworks within the economy, which are manifested in the behaviour of individuals and the achievement of improved quality of life for the majority of the population in a given society. Development could also encompass diversification throughout several areas of the economy. Development stakeholders must contribute to effective economic management, good governance, sustainable development, and poverty reduction, as these are all essential aims (Sako, 2002). Hence, economic development, in relation to this work, encompasses a wide range of transformations in a nation's physical and social structures, as well as its methods of operation, with the aim of enhancing the well-being of its population (Agala, 2021).

As to the Longman dictionary of contemporary English, national development refers to the comprehensive progress of an entire nation. This implies that the matters pertaining to national development can be analysed via the lens of structural-functionalism. Thus, it can be defined as the comprehensive progress or the combined socio-economic, political, and religious growth of a country or nation. Development planning refers to the government's strategic collection of initiatives aimed at achieving the best outcomes for the country. The United Nations (2013) asserts that country development encompasses both growth and transformation, encompassing social, cultural, economic, and quantitative aspects. Ogai (2003) defines national development as the progressive emergence of favourable transformations in a country's economic, industrial, political, social, cultural, and administrative spheres. Additionally, he asserted that while assessing a country's advancement, the concept of national development encompasses more aspects than only economic growth. It requires abundant and superior producing resources, together with optimal use.

When discussing national development, we focus on enhancing the quality of different aspects of our country's existence, including politics, ethics, socio-psychology, and the economy. These factors collectively contribute to ensuring a high-quality and productive life for the citizens of a nation. It refers to the rapid and favourable transformations in the economy, administration, society, politics, culture, and industry that aim to promote the advancement of civilization. The key factor in the progress of a nation is the continuous and collaborative endeavour of its citizens to utilise the power of nature and human capabilities for their own material prosperity.

Nexus between Democracy and National Development

The correlation between democracy and national development is well acknowledged. This is due to the fact that democracy plays a pivotal and indispensable role in facilitating effective governance and nurturing the progress of a nation. The defining characteristic of democratic government is its focus on enhancing the socio-economic well-being of the populace, which is associated with the concept of national progress (Lysias, 2015). Democracy is an effective instrument for promoting national progress and unity, socio-economic harmony, and various other measures of development. It produces goods and services and eradicates corruption. Democracy is a concept that encompasses the progress of a nation. Enahoro (2005) expressed regret that although we initiated the modernising process upon gaining independence, we have yet to successfully attain democracy. Establishing a true and enduring democracy in Nigeria is an imperative that must be accomplished for Nigeria to be classified among developed nations.

A democracy that incorporates moral imperatives serves as a means for authentic national progress. The reason academicians and public commentators advocate for the establishment of democracy as the most effective leadership option for societal progress is due to its significant role in development and modernization. The correlation between democracy and national development facilitates the progress of a nation by leveraging innovative contributions from the broader public, made possible through both direct and indirect involvement in governance. In democratic systems, citizens are considered significant stakeholders as they have the ability to engage in the creation, approval, and execution of laws and policies that impact them, either by direct involvement or by means of elected representatives. People engagement is an essential component of the connection between the people and the government in democratic societies (Roberts 2004; Jacobs, 2009; Bryson, 2013).

Stakeholders refer to individuals, groups, or entities that have the potential to influence or be impacted by policy decisions (Freeman 2010), and have the right to demand attention, resources, or outputs from an organisation or other body. Public involvement allows stakeholders to engage with government agencies, political leaders, nonprofit organisations, and commercial organisations involved in the creation and implementation of public policies and programmes. Participation in governance can take the form of specific actions, such as attending a town hall meeting or filling out a citizen survey. It can also involve a range of behaviours, such as organising public hearings or conducting consultation sessions. Overall, participation refers to the active engagement in the government process. The Nigerian political landscape since 1999 has demonstrated the core principles of democracy, both directly and indirectly. Currently, there are eighteen officially registered political parties (INEC, 2022), each with an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. Leadership positions are determined through elections.

Moreover, the correlation between democracy and national growth is also evident in the establishment of an accountability framework to monitor public officials. Vital (2001) asserts that accountability is upheld through the mechanism of elections, resulting in the removal of individuals who fail to fulfil their responsibilities. Accountability refers to the establishment of a system of checks and balances inside an institution to prevent any form of excessive behaviour or

misuse (Osakwe, 2011). Public service encompasses the activities of government at various levels, involving politicians, elected and appointed officials, elite leadership, intellectuals, armed forces, law enforcement agencies, as well as civil service and parastatals (Aminu, 2002).

Regrettably, this principle appears to be a mirage in Nigeria, unlike in Western and American nations where it is diligently observed. Dismissing an underperforming individual is quite difficult due to the incumbent's utilisation of every conceivable and inconceivable method to solidify their position. In addition, there is the novel political procedure of selection or nomination. The outcome of the discovered political cleverness is a scenario in which election results are prearranged or where the voting pattern during elections does not align with the final scores. The absence of responsibility is seen in several forms, such as unfinished projects. The Nigerian physical landscape is characterised by several abandoned projects, some of which date back to the first republic, as well as nonoperational industrial establishments. This could potentially elucidate the reason behind Nigeria's inability to meet domestic demands for petroleum products, despite being the 6th largest global oil producer and having four underperforming refineries. The steel industry has also seen significant setbacks due to political irresponsibility. A nation possessing two prominent iron and steel sectors and four internal rolling mills is unable of meeting 10% of its domestic iron requirements (Osakwe, 2011). Nigeria possesses the second greatest reserves of bitumen globally, as confirmed by the Ministry of Mines and Steel in 2018. However, despite this fact, no extraction activities had begun until 2010, as reported by Osakwe in 2011. Nigeria expends billions of dollars yearly on the importation of bitumen.

The relationship between democracy and national development is evident in the allocation of resources among the key components of the nation. The management and distribution of resources and revenue, particularly oil, are of utmost importance under Nigeria's federal system. They have been manipulated as instruments in the political and economic power struggle, with every level of government participating in it from a strategic standpoint, as argued by Akpata (2000). He further asserts that many of these disputes, protests, and demands are primarily driven by self-interest, with some seeking control over oil resources and others exploiting the issue of indigeneity versus settler status. An ongoing problematic topic in Nigeria is the outcry against marginalisation by minority groups involved in oil production, who are seeking to address this through resource management. In addition, the politics and controversies surrounding the Nigerian economy are further complicated by the fact that the oil, which is vital to the country's sustenance, is now solely extracted from the territory inhabited by the minority tribe, specifically the Niger Delta region (Onuoha & Nwanegbo, 2017). An evident reality in Nigeria's politics of resource control and allocation, specifically regarding the derivation principle, is that it involves a significant change in revenue distribution from the previously dominant and influential majority regions/groups to the less powerful minority groups and states. This shift allows for a redistribution of revenue in favour of the oil-rich states that belong to the minority. Nigeria's reliance on oil is evident in the low employment rate, limited presence of industries in the economy, and the prevalence of rent-seeking elites and politicians.

Challenges of Democracy for National Development in Nigeria

While democracy is a universally recognised idea, its implementation varies from one location to another in terms of power acquisition and disposal, as well as institutional arrangements. Nowhere in the world does democracy exist as a republic where all individuals are considered equal. Hence, socio-economic and political disparity is a notable and enduring characteristic of democracy, especially in Nigeria, where democracy has exacerbated the divide between individuals who possess authority and public resources, and those who do not. Democracy is commonly seen as the most appropriate form of government for ensuring the fulfilment of Ronald's "political goods" since it is based on the principle of governing by and for the people (Ajayi & Ojo, 2014). It is widely accepted that the primary focus of democracy, wherever it is practiced, is the well-being of the majority of the population. While this may be true in certain democracies, the opposite is true in others: while democracy is associated with comprehensive development and collective progress in some regions; it represents betrayal and cruel deprivation in others.

Nigeria is likely the epitome of the latter. While certain countries strive for and successfully implement democracy for the socio-economic advancement of the majority of their population, or at least as many people as possible, others, such as Nigeria, adopt a unique form of democracy characterised by a government controlled by a select few, serving the socio-economic interests of only a privileged few. Undoubtedly, the most remarkable characteristic of Nigerian democracy is the astonishing and inexcusable squandering of public revenues on the luxury of a select few Nigerians. The governance system in Nigeria, known as the democracy of waste, prioritises the well-being of officials over the allocation of resources for the benefit of the people and infrastructure (Ajayi & Ojo, 2014). According to Lysias (2015), the primary obstacles to democracy and national progress in Nigeria are the interconnected problems of electoral malpractices and corruption. While there may be additional obstacles, these particular ones are nonetheless of utmost importance. Electoral malpractices, as defined by him, encompass illicit and deceitful actions during the execution of elections. The range of electoral malpractices includes ballot box theft, falsification of election results, imposition of candidates by political parties, victimisation and bribery of voters, arson, kidnapping, and assassination of political opponents, as well as the unjust disqualification of aspirants and candidates by both political parties and the electoral commission. When these violations are translated, they are considered electoral malpractices according to the law.

Ake (1978) noted, as referenced in Lysias (2015), that political competition is marked by the presence of violence. This violence is employed to gain control over the state and to wield political power for the benefit of a specific social class and for personal accumulation. State powers are seen as a tool for establishing and maintaining economic dominance by this class. All of these factors pose significant obstacles to the establishment of a robust democratic system, resulting in a lack of effective governance and hindering national growth. Furthermore, Lysias (2015) identifies corruption and indiscipline as significant obstacles to democracy and national growth. Corruption is typically the main obstacle to Nigeria's progress. The Nigerian state is corrupt due to the presence of corrupt politicians that prioritise personal capital growth over the welfare of the populace, hence neglecting their interests. An excellently devised strategy overseen by an entirely

corrupt government is unlikely to effectively accomplish its objectives (Mimiko 1998 as referenced in Lysias 2015). Corruption is diametrically opposed to democracy and the progress of a nation. Democracy and national progress are incompatible with the presence of corruption, resulting in significant harm to both.

In addition, some other challenges of democracy and development in Nigeria include:

- **Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics**

- The issue of godfatherism is currently a significant political obstacle in Nigeria's democracy. Political godfatherism is a contemporary phenomenon characterised by a strong mentor-protégé connection, primarily driven by financial transactions. The activities of important persons within a democratic system impede the capacity of citizens to exercise free choice, hence diminishing the extent of democratic participation. This sometimes leads to substantial electoral difficulties, since the godfathers employ both legal and objectionable tactics to ensure success in elections. The integrity of the sportsmanship component, which contributes to the complexity of political processes during elections, has been damaged. The prevalence of anarchy, instability, disorder, and violence becomes the dominant standard (Adeyemi-Suenu, 2004). This is the dominant image that is currently prevalent in Nigeria's political realm. The ramifications of this on Nigeria's democratic advancement and future are challenging to completely grasp. The core principles of democracy are eliminated. The people's choice, which confers legitimacy upon elected authorities, is disrespected and undermined when elections are manipulated without repercussions, demonstrating a lack of respect for the people's sovereign rights. The presence of influential individuals, commonly referred to as godfathers, leads to a period of oligarchy within the political system, rather than promoting progress. The Anambra experience offers a more distinct portrayal of this predicament.

- **Ethno-Religious Crisis and National Integration**

- Democracy provides equal opportunities for political office competition. However, this concept is only logical when rivalry is mitigated by the principles of tolerance and compromise. Regrettably, the Nigerian political elites have disregarded this crucial element that imparts significance to the democratic endeavour, thereby precipitating a state of crisis. The introduction of democracy in Nigeria has resulted in a significant increase in ethno-religious violence, which is provoked by political rivalries. This was seen in the case of Jos, Plateau State in September 2000 (Muhammad 2006). Since 1999, it is concerning that the level of nationalism exhibited by different ethnic groups appears to have resisted recognised and current solutions. Notable ethnic nationalist groups that have emerged include the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Egbesu Boys, and several others. The volatility of sensationalist groups has escalated to the extent that they occasionally challenge the state's exclusive control over weaponry. This condition invalidates earlier endeavours to achieve sustainable development, while also casting scepticism on fresh endeavours.

- **Monetization of the Political Process**

The current prioritisation of financial resources for election reasons in Nigeria is disgraceful. Individuals possessing leadership skills are prohibited from engaging in politics due to their lack of financial resources to pursue their electoral aspirations (Obikeze, 2005). The wealthy elite in Nigeria have taken control of the electoral process and political landscape, viewing politics as a means to invest, exert influence, and anticipate returns. Monetary policies are detrimental to democracy and are incapable of fostering genuine developmental plans.

- **Legislative-Executive Relations**

An examination of Executive–legislative relations primarily focuses on the enduring conflict for policy influence between the legislative and the executive branch. This conflict can be seen as a battle or competition to determine which branch holds greater power or is more prominent (Eminue, 2006). An obstacle encountered in democratic governance is establishing an effective collaboration between the Executive and the Legislature. Regrettably, Nigeria's experience since 1999 portrays the legislative and the executive as two branches that are consistently hostile towards each other and maintain a mutual distrust. Akinterinwa (2004) notes that the relationship between the executive branch of government and the legislative has been challenging since the beginning of the Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999. The unease in the relationship can be attributed more to legislative arrogance, self-misperception, and megalomania rather than to efforts to safeguard the constitutional rights of the legislature. The legislature's enactment of laws that are applicable to all Nigerians, but not meant to be applicable to the politicians themselves, can be seen as an overt display of hubris and an overestimation of their own importance. The legislature desires to investigate others but is unwilling to be subjected to investigation itself.

The current state of democracy in Nigeria exhibits a form of extremism in the functioning of the two branches of government. According to Muhammad (2006), the main issue is that both the legislative and the administration have been heavily involved in antagonistic politics, which clearly undermines the sustainability of democracy in the country. This significantly impacts the process of formulating and executing public policies, which are crucial for achieving long-term national development.

Way Forward

Based on the aforementioned debates, it is evident that the state of democracy in Nigeria, as reflected in its balance sheet, is unsatisfactory. However, there is still room for optimism. Despite numerous instances of shattered expectations, deprivation of rights, and breach of confidence by successive Nigerian administrations, the yearning for democracy among Nigerians has steadfastly persisted. Therefore, in order to advance Nigeria's democracy for the sake of national progress, it is important to emphasise that the principles governing the system must be based on justice, fairness, and equity. In order to attain these qualities, it is crucial that the rule of law is of utmost importance, the promotion and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms are essential, and accountability, transparency, and due process serve as the guiding principles in the conduct of public affairs. Our stance is that a democratic government is the only type of government that can

ensure these virtues due to its ambitious goals for national progress.

In order for Nigeria to overcome its current state of underdevelopment caused by inadequate democratic practices, it is imperative to enhance its human capital and improve the well-being of its citizens. This can be achieved through the implementation of free and fair elections to select competent leaders for public positions, the establishment of an independent and unbiased judiciary, and a serious commitment from all levels of government to prioritise the security of lives and property.

The government should take a more proactive approach to ensure that the anti-corruption authorities are both effective and efficient, rather than being seen as tools of the presidency used to unfairly target political opponents. Furthermore, there is a necessity for a shift in attitude. Nigerians must unequivocally alter their negative mindset towards politics and governance. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure the autonomy of the judiciary in regards to the selection and advancement of judges and other judicial personnel, in order to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and impartially.

Finally, civil society organisations should be more watchful and proactive in opposing the objectionable policies of the government. INEC should fulfil their statutory duty of overseeing the activities of political parties in order to establish internal democracy inside the parties, ensuring strict compliance with their respective constitutions.

Conclusion

Democracy is widely favoured as a system of government worldwide because it is believed to promote development through the ownership of tools that aid in national progress. However, the actual situation in Nigeria, as indicated by several measures, shows that democracy has not led to an improvement in development, despite the fact that numerous concepts and frameworks of development have been tested. The article advocates for unwavering adherence to the values of democracy in order to foster national progress.

Suggestions

Based on the discussions made so far in this paper, the following are suggested:

1. The multiple methods implemented were merely a modification in terminology, while the formulations and implementation process remained unchanged. It is widely acknowledged that persisting in the same actions and anticipating different outcomes is not feasible. Hence, in order for development to flourish in Nigeria, it is imperative that the individuals responsible for implementing the different plans alter their attitude and mindset.
2. Commitment and honesty from policy makers and implementers are the sole remedies for developmental issues and the inefficiency of development plans. Nigeria can only achieve its developmental goals by embracing the notion of good governance in all areas of national activities, including politics, economy, culture, sports, and more. Consequently, the country does not require additional acronyms such as "Change Agenda"

or "Next Level". Instead, the current government must take the lead in promoting and fostering the establishment of a new set of principles and beliefs for the nation. A value system characterised by a defined set of principles that are both consistent and measurable. Values are a manifestation of an individual's moral compass or their perception of what is morally correct or desirable. In Nigeria, it is crucial to prioritise the restoration of the dignity of employment, as well as the dignity and sanctity of life, honour, and integrity. We must reinstate the cultural norms that endowed our Founding Fathers with strength and respectability both domestically and internationally. Presently in Nigeria, there is a clear shift in values, which is impacting the beliefs and attitudes of the population.

3. The democratic leaders in Nigeria should include those who possess substantive political will and creative mind.
4. As a matter of fact, a strong institutions, political will, and an organized democratic system of government that can rift the backbone of poverty and fast-track national development should be established.

5. To achieve self-sufficiency, nations have historically prioritised technology and education, diversifying away from reliance on crude oil and agriculture. This shift has been a key factor in their success. Obviously, most technical and educational items nowadays are intangible things; and individuals and countries that affianced with these products are leading the world monetarily. China, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Apple have generated significant riches worldwide. Furthermore, it is important to note that a country does not achieve significant financial power solely through the trading of crude oil, as this may not lead to the strengthening of democratic systems and national growth, but rather create an illusion of progress.

6. Nigeria should embrace the practice of two political parties to achieve national development.

7. Godfatherism, vote buying, ethno-religious crisis, and corruption in political process must be extricated.

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