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# Beyond the Façade of Democratic Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Democrazy or Democracy?

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary debates on democracy, governance, and development are greatly inspired by the level of political transformations and reforms that have taken place in many countries within the African continent. In countries such as Nigeria, where the democratisation process is a work in progress, the intellectual preoccupation in the country reflects on how the prevailing political conditions foster and trigger democracy, whose vestiges bring good governance and sustainable development. The main thrust of this paper examined the place of democratic governance and sustainable development in the Nigerian political system. Methodologically, the paper adopted qualitative and made use of secondary data sourced from books, journals, articles, conference papers, etc., to thematically analyse issues raised in this study. This paper reveals that all efforts by successive civilian governments to entrench a true democratic system and good governance in the country seem to be counterproductive and prove abortive. This paper concludes that Nigeria has yet to achieve democratic consolidation, as the practice of democracy in the country is underdeveloped. The expected benefits, such as effective political representation, protection of civil and political rights, public accountability, peaceful ethnic coexistence, freedom of association and expression, and adherence to the rule of law, are largely absent or minimally realised.

## Keywords

Democracy, Development, Governance, Good Governance, and Sustainable Development

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary debates on democracy, governance, and development are greatly inspired by the significant political transformations and reforms that have taken place on the African continent. At the heart of every political discourse/debate in Nigeria are the frequent usages of the concepts of democracy, sustainable development, governance, and, to some extent, good governance. Expressing the above assertion further, Mimiko (1995, cited in Bakare, 2019) contends that some political questions are raised for democratic governance and sustainable development in the country, as well as the evaluation of the Nigerian political system. Hence, the need to raise some salient but relevant questions that guide this study: What is democracy? What are the indicators of good governance in a state? What is the measurement of

sustainable development in a state? What is the composition and structure of the Nigerian political system? among others.

The Third Wave democratisation, which started in the late 80s, has ignited an irreversible process of profound social, political, economic, and cultural transformation in Africa. Hitherto described as a continent of mindless, ancient, rustic, and despotic political leadership with no organised or accepted structure, the current socio-political realities of Africa where an authoritarian rule will no longer be tolerated in the political system (Jerry, 2019). However, it should be noted that the wave of democratisation did little or no good to the political leadership of Africa and, by extension, to Nigeria. Ake (2001, cited in Igwe, 2015) asserts that there are still some vestiges of primordial and primitive accumulation of wealth, personalisation of power, policing of the state, and ethnic politics in the African political system that affect its democratic process. Corroborating the above, Ayodele (2020) notes that what has become prevalent on the continent is the abuse of democratic power and a reversal of the real idea of the tenets of democracy. Some states such as Togo under Eyadema, Uganda under Musaveni, Zimbabwe under Mugabe, Zaire under Kabila, Rwanda under Kagame, Niger Republic under Mamadu, Burundi under Nkurunzisa, Gambia under Jamme, Cameroun under Paul Biya, Libya under Gaddafi, Lesotho under Tom Thabane represent a sad reminder of unpopular, undemocratic and sit-tight regimes within the continent. The irreversible trend of democratisation is widely acknowledged as a weakness in the continent.

In Nigeria, the democratisation process is grappling with stability/work-in-progress, or what is best described as a mirage or a shadow of itself, which is a contemporary intellectual preoccupation for reflecting the undemocratic activities clouded under the umbrella of democracy. Thus, contemporary debates on good governance and development became widespread and intense following the commencement of the democratisation process in the Third World. In other words, the conversations on this time-honoured phrase were greatly inspired by the political transformations that have taken place in Africa and mainly in countries such as Nigeria. The abysmal and unrepentant flaunting of court orders by the previous and current governments, the usage of the state securities at the discretion of the executives, and many infringements are the perceived hallmark of democratic rule in the country. This paper, therefore, provides a wealth of knowledge necessary for the process of interrogating the issues that surround the democratisation process in Nigeria to understand the implications of good governance and sustainable development, as well as identify and discuss the challenges of the practice of democracy to good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. To achieve the objective of this study, the work is organised into six sections. Section one is the introduction, giving general background information of the study and stating the problems. Section two focuses on the discourse of the concepts. Section three presents the methodology employed in this paper. The fourth section delves into the main issue of discourse in this paper: the false image of our democracy. Section five dwelt on steps for repositioning Nigeria's democracy, and the final section, which is the sixth section, concludes the study and presents a set of recommendations for this study.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, the conceptual issues centered on concepts of democracy, governance, and sustainable development.

### Democracy

The concept of democracy has generated so many controversies among scholars on the continent. Democracy in Africa represents a new civilisation whose features endanger the existing authoritarian profile. Given this, Akachi (2021) captures democracy as a system of government that expresses the popular will of the people in terms of governing the society and as an instrument for development.

Karl (1988, cited in Akachi, 2021) sees democracy as a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. Heater (1964, cited in Okoh, 2019) describes it as a way of life, or an attitude of the mind, and also a method of organising society politically. He observed further that:

There are five basic elements without which no community can call itself truly democratic. These elements are: equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law, and liberty of the individual (Heater, 1964:117 cited in Okoh, 2019).

In the perspective of Omitola (2021), “democracy is a political system in which citizens enjoy several basic civil and political rights, and in which their most important leaders are elected in free and fair elections and accountable under the rule of law”. One common denominator of these definitions is the primacy of the citizens and their right to determine, through the legitimate process of election, those who should lead them. It is this idea of citizen’s right of self-determination that led Plano (1979 cited in Okoh, 2019), to suggest four cardinal principles of democracy, namely; individualism – this holds that the primary task of government is to enable each individual to achieve the highest potential of development; liberty – this allows each individual the greatest amount of freedom consistent with order; equity – this maintains that all men are created equal and have equal rights and opportunity; fraternity – this postulates that individuals will not misuse their freedom but will cooperate in creating a wholesome society.

At this juncture, it is imperative to submit that democracy as a system of rule maximises the responsiveness of the rulers to the expressed interests and needs of the public. Explaining further, it can be deduced that democracy is anchored on two key issues, “People and Government”. The people own or constitute the government, and as such, the complexity of society gives rise to representative government. Therefore, by extension, the people select, appoint, or elect those who govern or rule them, and at will to recall, impeach, or dissolve the government if found wanting.

## Governance

Within the context of political discourse locally and internationally, this is another issue that has clouded the debate of this kind of political discourse in Nigeria. Governance as a concept becomes too vague without bringing into consideration the indices/indicators of good governance. As such, it becomes problematic to discuss governance without delving into good governance. In the submission of Stephen (2020), governance is the total of the acts and processes of constituting a government for the sole aim of administering a political community. From the above, it can be seen as a process of social engagement between the rulers and the ruled. This conception of governance is rooted in the social contract theory, in which this social engagement is defined in terms of the consent of men to constitute a sovereign authority to gain three things: laws, judges to adjudicate laws, and the executive power necessary to enforce these laws. Agagu (2010) conceives governance ordinarily as how public institutions manage public affairs to ensure effective use of resources to achieve the good life expected of its citizens in a state. The concept itself is as old as human civilisation. However, in the last two decades, it has acquired new meaning. For example, the UNDP viewed governance as:

The totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country’s affairs, comprising the complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, and mediate their differences (UNDP, 1997a: 7 cited in Stephen, 2020).

Since governance involves rules, processes, and institutions, Olowu definition (2010) integrates value judgment as to the propriety or otherwise of the application of these rules, processes, and institutions. He observed that governance is the “...manner in which (state) political leaders manage, use (or misuse) power, whether to promote social and economic development or to pursue agendas that undermine such goals”.

Governance, therefore, is either good or bad, depending on whether or not it has the basic ingredients of what constitutes a system acceptable to the generality of the people. The assumed ingredients of good governance are freedom, accountability, and participation. The basic features of good governance in any political system are the conduct of an inclusive management wherein all the critical stakeholders are allowed to have a say in the decision-making process. It also includes an appropriate political leadership and environment that furnishes a predictable and transparent framework of rules, institutions, and behaviour for the management of public affairs. Good governance debates and their requirement are not so much about whether democracy provides good governance, but more about how best democracy should execute the good governance project on a sustainable basis. Therefore, democratic governance seeks, in common with good governance, efficient institutions and a predictable economic and political

environment that make economic growth possible and public services effective. It is the sustainability of the means and ends of good governance that nurtures development in human society.

## Sustainable Development

There has been a variety of literature on sustainable development ever since the beginning and failure of the MDGs, which gave birth to the SDGs in 2015. However, to have an in-depth knowledge of the term, it is pertinent to understand what development is all about. The discourse on development has furnished a variety/complexity of definitions. However, development can be said to be a complex and multi-dimensional social process that can be viewed from the individual and societal levels. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. At the level of the social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relations (Rodney 1982, cited in Stephen, 2020). Whatever level one chooses to focus attention on, the most important thing in the final analysis is the quality of life enjoyed by neither the individuals nor groups within the society. This goes to say that humans are the focal point of development (Eze 2021). It therefore becomes impossible to conceptualise development exclusive of humans. Man becomes the climax of development.

Consequently, the concern for sustainable development has undoubtedly assumed a paradigm shift in the global discourse, and thus, it becomes a challenge in the 21st-century political and economic discussions and debates. The consensus across all climes has therefore been on the need to enhance the capabilities of the institutions of government through active participation, engagement, and mobilisation of the people for effective and efficient management of their resources. As such, the need to constantly redefine and reform the role of government in the management of resources for better service delivery to the citizens has been a major challenge that nations in Africa have had to grapple with. Therefore, for development to be sustainable in any democratic setting, the full potential of groups and individuals must be afforded adequate opportunity for realisation in an environment of self-confidence and dignity. According to Tomori (2019), the social and economic well-being of people in a political system is only guaranteed within the context of “a process of self-growth, achieved through the participation of the people acting in their interests as they see them...” At this juncture, it is pertinent to have a cursory look at the nexus that exists between the tripod conceptual discussions.

## Development, Governance and Democracy: The Tripod Stand

The good governance debates and their requirement are not so much about whether democracy can provide good governance, but more about how best democracy should execute the good governance project on a sustainable basis. The duo of democracy and governance seeks, in common with good governance, efficient and sustainable institutions, economic viability, and political stability that make and facilitate economic growth, and by extension, making and engendering effective public services (UNDP, 2006, cited in Omotoso, 2010). It is also the sustainability of the means and ends of good governance that nurtures development in human society.

The foregoing development paradigm is regarded as the indicator of good governance, which the environment of democracy is expected to promote and entrench. However, it should be noted that the political conditions that must prevail to engender good governance are relative in that what is practicable in developed countries is extremely different from what is obtainable in developing countries. However, according to Omotoso (2010), some of the indicators of governance are: enthronement of civil and political rights, public accountability, rule of law, and the idea of formal equality of citizens. This view was corroborated by Stephen (2020) and Abegunde (2010) when they observed that the properties of good governance are believed to be reinforce democratic norms and practices; “for instance, authority seeks expression in the legitimate use of power when the people elect and control their leaders and the parameters of accountability is the extent to which the people hold their elected leaders or public officials responsible for their actions”. However, some scholars in the democracy-development discourse questioned the blind faith in the relationship between democracy and good governance. They observed that good governance is not about a mode of polity or a procedural arrangement, but a consequential variable in the political discourse. Also, it is not about forms of government, but the result of governance. Furthermore, it is not the process or course of a political rule, but its effects; it is about effective and productive governance (Adejumobi, 2004, cited in Omitola, 2021).

It is further argued that most of the state institutions that make good governance possible are largely undemocratic institutions. In the East Asian countries (such as Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea, North Korea, Singapore and China) recorded remarkable growth rates within the context of authoritarian rule, serve to demonstrate that what is important is not so much the form of government, but its impact; economic well-being, political stability, social order, communal harmony, efficient and honest administration. However, authoritarian regimes promote dividends of development in countries where that is the case, but there is the problem of sustaining the gains of good governance over the long haul. Without the orderly process of political organisation and procedure, the gains of development may not be sustainable, illegality cannot beget legality (Aniekwe, 2018). Therefore, it requires that a democratic political organisation and process in a political system emphasise the primacy of the people and their resources in the development process.

However, Omotoso (2019) is quick to point out that given the realities of “Africa’s social pluralism, its poverty, its relatively low level of literacy and the emphasis on rural communities on solidarity and cooperation”, social democracy is the most suitable form of government to address the urgency of development in the continent. In Nigeria, this variant of democracy is required to create the political conditions that provoke widespread social mobilisation to promote the common good. Flowing from the arguments so far, it is alluded that an iron triangle in the development process, which integrates public administrators who manage programmes and execute policies, the private sector whose initiatives and enterprise propel the engine of development, and most importantly the civil society/network of non-governmental institutions that ensure the development of a well-functioning economic system, the strengthening of democratic governance and a widespread participation of the people and by extension breeds development.

## METHODOLOGY

Research method is a critical angle to academic research that serves as a cursor to understanding how, where and why data are experimented to understand any given variables (Abegunde, 2024). The method used in this paper is content analysis, which refers to a careful review of scholars’ views and positions on democracy, governance, and good governance in Nigeria and elsewhere. In this prelude, journal articles, textbooks, documentary materials, and internet documents are gathered to gather the required data and information, and therefore, present them in thematic order.

## THE FALSE IMAGE OF NIGERIA’S DEMOCRACY

The quest and appetite for democracy, good governance, and sustainable development have become a major preoccupation of discourses about the Nigerian state since independence in 1960. Democracy in Nigeria has become a far cry from what have become the tenets of democracy as practiced and seen in other climes or developed societies are not perceived. A democracy best described as “Authoritarian Democracy”. In a retrospective look, given the general optimism and anxiety that trailed the minds and aspirations of everyone on the independence morning, one was expecting the brand of democracy that flourished in the home of our colonial masters to be transported to us (Igwe, 2015). This aspiration has remained elusive due to many challenges that confronted the nation. These challenges have continued to undermine the democratisation process in the country thereby crippling the nation’s democracy. Some of the main issues bedeviling Nigeria’s democracy, as discovered in this study, are as follows:

### Corruption

This becomes an epidemic that has eaten deep into the nation’s length and fabric and afflicted both the private and public services. As Achebe (1983) puts it, “it becomes difficult to keep an average Nigerian from being corrupt. To put it clearly, it has become a norm to outsmart the government and at the tail end be celebrated as a hero. Corruption in Nigeria, according to Omotoso (2019), is celebrated by whoever controls political power. As such, in Nigeria, corruption is solely attributed to those in power. Just as the saying goes, “Power corrupts, while absolute power corrupts absolutely”. As such, corruption becomes peculiar with politicians (Igwe, 2015). Corruption, therefore, becomes a clog in the wheel of progress of Nigeria’s democracy and governance. According to Joseph (2001, as cited in Oso, 2019), corruption has resulted in catastrophic governance in Nigeria. A look into the causal effect of corruption among public office holders has been given a good light by Omotoso (2019), who attributes it to the capital-intensive nature of our electoral system.



In Nigeria, what becomes practicable is what Ibaba (2017) termed “Bushmeatisation”. Looted funds are regarded as bush meat, and public office holders are seen as hunters who must bring back bush meat to the people. Such a mindset makes corruption a national slogan, as whoever steals public funds is celebrated, especially when a portion of the money is given to the people. At the return of former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori, to Nigeria after serving a jail term in Britain, he was given a resounding welcome. A man accused of notable cases of corruption. This creates a mindset in the individual seeking public office that stealing and giving a little to your people becomes a norm to have people to back you up when the heat becomes too much. Thus, Omotoso (2019) refers to this as how politicians recruit unemployed youths to serve as e-rats against any form of social media attacks and recruit thugs and sycophants to sing their praises. Another dimension associated with corrupt practice is the slogan that “It is a bad habit to talk while eating” (Ibaba, 2017). Politicians who have their political parties in power do not criticise the government. It becomes a free means of amassing wealth as long as you are in the corridors of power, and even if you are caught, the state and its institutions will cover you. For instance, to the glaring surprise of all and the media, the erstwhile National Chairman of All Progressive Congress (APC), Comrade Adams Oshiomole, which is the party in power, said “if you steal and come and join the party, your sins will be forgiven” (Vanguard, 2019).

Cases abound in the current administration of how corrupt politicians are protected by the government because of party affiliation, the likes of Senator Danjuma Goje who after stepping down for Senator Ahmed Lawan to the race of the Senate President of the 9th Assembly, had his corruption cases withdrawn, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir Lawal, among others. This makes democracy a laughing stock and a mockery of democratic rule. As Oso (2019) puts it, the state covertly and overtly uses its security forces to perpetuate corrupt practices, and what we now have is state-sponsored corruption. In a bid to ensure that the opposition does not have access to state power, the government in power uses anti-graft agencies to witch-hunt the opposition under the guise of fighting corruption. Under Olusegun Obasanjo, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under the Chairmanship of Nuhu Ribadu witch-hunted the opposition who stood on their ground to stop his third term bid. Prominent among them was His Excellency, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, his erstwhile Vice (The Guardian, 23rd March, 2007). Some of the people see the EFCC as an institution for fighting corruption by the international bodies; it was, in its real sense, used as a tool to silence the opposition.

Therefore, it is imperative in this study to argue that anytime or whenever the government attempts to fight corruption in the country, it is merely preventing other people (from other political parties) from having access to the resources and power of the state. Corruption becomes an epidemic in governance as everyone no longer cares for entrenching the dividends of democracy rather the dividends of acquiring wealth for the next election.

## Commodification of Violence

It is instructive to note that Nigeria’s politics defies any rationality and reasonability. The politicians are not careful about entrenching democracy, prestige, and honour; rather, the way and manner politics is played in the country takes the form of the Hobbesian state of nature (Omotoso, 2019). Political violence in the country has become a recurring decimal that always occurs in the nation’s elections. This approach has created an avenue to assume violence as an approach/instrument of winning elections at the federal, state, and local government levels. Elections in Nigeria no longer take an assumed free, fair, and credible environment. Reacting to this, Adejumobi (2004, cited in Stephen, 2020) contends that right from the return of civilian governments in 1999 till date, political violence holds a strong antecedent in the archives of Nigerian elections. This has led the international body to conceive Nigerian democracy as a “baby democracy”. The worst of it all is that even the student union elections in the universities and other tertiary institutions have taken a cue from what is obtainable in the national polity. Onibonje (2019) puts it, “with this nature of political violence, we fear our future is bleak as we are making no headway in our democracy”.

It is worth noting that political violence in Nigeria has been traced to politicians who use it to create an environment of tension, especially in the areas where they know or perceive they are not going to lose. Consequently, these politicians recruit thugs who are said to be die-hard supporters to instigate hate speeches, which translate to violence. Violence in elections is now used by politicians to ensure victory in the polls. A notable case of political violence that became a national cry was the gubernatorial elections of Rivers state in 2015, which earned it the name “Rivers of blood”. Democracy which one of its indices is free, fair, and credible elections, becomes a ruse in Nigeria as politicians

now see violence as the only way to win the ballot. On a sad note, the poor masses that blindly follow and kill themselves for these politicians, because of the little money thrown around by these politicians.

Ironically, the erstwhile political enemies after the elections reconcile their differences, thereby leaving the scars of enmity between their supporters. Today's perceived political enemy is tomorrow's political ally. The unifying interest of Nigerian politicians is clinching to power and at all cost even if it means killing to cling to power. The nature of politics in Nigeria takes a violent colouration, which connotes that there is no room for decency in politics; politics then becomes a dirty game.

## Flaunting of Court Orders

In any sane country that claims to be democratic or that assumes to uphold the tenets of democracy, the supremacy of the law becomes absolute in that no arm of government asserts power over the other. The rule of law and the separation of powers are the two cardinal points that make any nation or state democratic (Aliu, 2017). Anifowose and Enemu (2008, cited in Adibe and Orji, 2017) opine that the doctrine of the rule of law is ultimately bound with the practice of democracy. Put differently, there can be no democracy without the rule of law. Dicey (1999, cited in Adibe and Orji, 2017) conceptualises it as the absolute supremacy or dominance of regular law as opposed to the influence or arbitrary power, and excludes the existence of arbitrariness, prerogative, or even of wide discriminatory authority in the path of government. This definition sees the rule of law as a principle that seeks to curb governmental powers by insisting that governance should be by the laws of the land and not according to the dictates of the executive or legislative, or judicial arm of government. In other words, the powers of an arm should not be according to the whims and caprices of the power holder.

However, contemporary issues have transcended the definition of A.V. Dicey, which now includes the supremacy of the constitution, judicial independence, observance of democratic practices, which include: the freedom of speech and expression, the press, strict observance of the dictates of the rulings of courts, and the right of personal liberty. Adibe (2014) conceives of the rule of law as government institutions with limited powers according to the law that is devoted to the preservation of the liberties of individual citizens, all of whom are deemed equal before the law. As such, the synergy and respect for each arm make for the smooth and outright running of democracy and governance to thrive. Democracy thrives well when all arms of government know their boundary and work within them.

In Nigeria, regrettably, the reverse becomes the case as there has been a plethora of cases of outright neglect of court orders by the current administration, as well as the clampdown on protesters against the activities of the government. Democracy thrives well when citizens are allowed to ventilate their anger for or against the government of the day. Instances occur from the arrest of El Zakzaky by the Nigerian Military and the continuous flaunting of the court orders to effect his release; rather, the executive arm of government declares El Zakzaky a threat to national security. Another case in hand is the arrest of Omoyele Sowore and Deji Adeyanju (Conveners of Revolution Now). The case of the latter brought about national embarrassment to the extent that the Department of State Service (DSS) invaded court proceedings and forcefully arrested Omoyele Sowore, to the extent that the presiding Judge was scared out of her chambers. This incident came a day after his final release after so much pressure (bbc.com, 6th Dec, 2019). Among this abuse and outright flaunting of court orders by the Presidency are the arrests of Sambo Dasuki (released in 2019; after four years of arrest), Abba Jalingo, Olisa Metuh and Nnamdi Kanu, the invasion of the National Assembly by men of the DSS (Punch, 2018), the clampdown of EndSars protesters, among others. With such a situation, where do we go from here among the comity of democratic nations?

## Unitarist-Federalism

This is another major blow to the tenets of a democratic state that claims to be federalist, which makes the inequity and lopsidedness of Nigeria's federalism have attracted intellectual/academic scrutiny. In retrospect, the issues of revenue allocations have been the dominant topics in Nigeria since the 1940s. The sharing of funds from the federation account is one of the most contentious and sensitive issues in the Nigerian polity, as this has remained a central element in fiscal relations among states in the federation (Aniche, 2009, cited in Nwaguru, 2018). The question of an acceptable formula for revenue sharing among the component tiers of the Nigerian federation is one of the most protracted and controversial debates in the political and macroeconomic management of the economy. This debate

has its foundations in the history and evolution of the Nigerian federation. Revenue allocation or the statutory distribution of revenue from the Federation Account among the different levels of government has been one of the most contentious and controversial issues in the nation's political life (Abegunde and Nwaguru, 2024). So contentious has the matter been that none of the formulae evolved at various times by a commission or by decree under different regimes since 1964 has gained general acceptability among the component units of the country.

According to Ndu (2019), there are two key reasons for the erosion of true federalism, which characterised the Nigerian state in the First Republic before the intervention of the military in 1966. One of the reasons he gave was the collapse of the First Republic when the military intervened in January 1966. The intervention by the military marked the end of true federalism in Nigeria. He asserts that, unfortunately, the visionary development of federalism specifically from 1954 to 1965 abruptly ended with the mutiny of January 15, 1966, which not only eliminated some of the founding fathers of federalism in Nigeria but also killed the essence of federalism itself. The federal form, which survived that military onslaught and on which the country precariously persisted as an entity, has never regained its true essence.

Two interconnected developments accounted for that demise, Ndu (2019). First, the coup and the eventual threat to the unity of the country following secession and the civil war were traumatic events that called for a centralised authority capable of pulling things back into one-fold. Secondly, there was, and still has always been, the professional practice of unified command with which soldiers are familiar. He sees the centralised federalism in Nigeria today as one of the disruptive legacies of military rule.

The second reason he advanced for wearing a way of true federalism was because most states in Nigeria are feeble, particularly in their extractive capability and, consequently, can hardly perform as federating units. Omotoso and other protagonists of true federalism have argued that states are feeble not because they lack the resources and manpower that would make them strong economically and administratively, but the fiscal and legislative relationships between them and the federal government render them feeble (Omotoso, 2019).

Nwabueze (2019) further pointed out that the erosion of federalism is due to a lack of proper understanding of the concept among the leaders and the general public of the nature between the federal and state governments in a federal polity. He noted that the autonomy of each tier of government in Nigeria is misconstrued to mean competition and confrontation, with each trying to frustrate the other. However, the conception underlying this is that the federal and state governments are mutually complementary parts of a governance mechanism.

Revenue allocation is another challenge to Nigerian federalism. The reason is that states depend on the federal government as the mainstay of their sustenance and survival. The faulty origin of Nigeria's federalism from the colonial masters, through a unitary system of government introduced by the military, also promoted this challenge and is responsible for the poor condition of the states. If the states in Nigeria were independent and came together to form a federation, they would have been stronger. However, the outright rejection of true federalism creates a tension in the political economy of Nigeria, which negates the practice of good governance and democracy.

## Politics of impoverishment

The desire to be in power or stay in the corridors of power or close to the centre in Nigeria has led politicians and the political class to be so ruthless while seeking power (Omotoso, 2019). This is the situation among Nigerian politicians. In the quest to retain power and remain in the corridors of power, they employ all tactics and antics which include using the youths who serve as thugs, cyber wisards, and in some extreme cases, extremists who go at lengths to attack individuals or groups who are against their principal. One thing stands out in all these scenarios, corroborating what Omotoso (2019) posits: the youths are only useful during the electioneering period. The youths are only seen as mere objects of mayhem and not good for a political position. To make it look better, they can be referred to as youths of no good political repute and relevance that are only good at upsetting the polity and not instruments of change in the polity.

However, the irony of this is that these politicians use the opportunity of getting to power to deprive the youths and the people of the economic means of survival, limiting it to only their circle. The logic behind this dangerous act is seen from what Marx conceives when he defined politics as the executive of a modern state is nothing but a committee for



the collective management of the common affairs and interests of the whole bourgeois class (Ake, 1987, cited in Nwaguru, 2018). The commonwealth of the state is now used as an instrument to facilitate the impoverishment of the people because if the youths or masses gain access to economic power, then there will be no one to do the 'dirty jobs' or play the 'dirty politics'. As such, economic power is deprived of the people to continue their stay in power, which Omotoso (2019) and Ibaba (2017) conceive as "personalisation of power".

Again, the elite space is only reserved for the family and relatives of the ruling class because they are given the best of education abroad (that is why the politicians treat University strikes with levity and of no concern), reserve the best of jobs and top positions (their parents are placed in strategic boards of companies, so no matter how many times advertisements are placed, the right owners are the sons and daughters of top politicians), among others, what is called in politics as recycling of the elite class. For instance, the Daughter of the late Olusola Saraki, Gbemisola Saraki was a serving Minister while his son, Senator Bukola Saraki served as a Governor of the state for 8 years, a Senator for 8 years and Senate President for 4 years, the son of the Former Governor of Abia State, Senator T.A. Orji, is the Speaker of the state House of Assembly, the son of the Emir of Kano, Aminu Sanusi is a top placed Police Officer (ASP), among others. Also, evidences show that almost all top government officials have their children studying abroad, so why then should they care about the educational system? This, however, negates the notion that power belongs to the people. In Nigeria, power belongs to the politicians, and they use it as they wish, even to the extent of using it as an instrument of impoverishment.

## REPOSITIONING NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE

The enthronement of democracy and good governance in Nigeria is necessary for the socioeconomic and political transformation of the country in the 21st century. The situation in Nigeria is not beyond redemption. As Achebe (1984) captures it that "there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian people, place, environment, the problem lies in the inability of its leaders to rise to the challenge confronting her, which is the hallmark of true leadership". Indeed, Nigerians demand good governance, justice, equity, fairness, and real development and progress of the country to encourage confidence and trust in the polity. To this end, the following measures are suggested to fast-track the process of deepening democracy and the enthronement:

### Institutional Strengthening

In the words of former American President Barack Obama, "what Africa needs is not strong leaders but strong institutions (Aniekwe, 2018). The independence and strength of these institutions are what determine the democratic development of any state. A situation where these institutions are not free from each other creates a situation of a unitary or authoritarian state. Some of these democratic institutions include; political parties (which serves as political communication, interest articulation and aggregation), the press (expresses the minds of the masses), the National Assembly (the peoples representatives); the Judiciary (the last hope of the common man); the Independent National Electoral Commission (the electoral umpire); Civil Society (the conscience of the masses); Anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Department of State Service, amongst others. The Executive arm of government should not be allowed to interfere in the activities of or use these institutions of the state to witch-hunt their rivals. The police, EFCC, DSS, etc., are not to be used at the discretion of the President or Governor. The promotion, disciplinary, appointment, and financial activities of the Nigerian Judicial Council (NJC) that is expected to be free from the apron string of the Chief Executive, in the term of the President, regarding the appointment and removal of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) without any due and proven cause.

These institutions are to be allowed to operate freely (independently) and effectively from the apron strings of the executive and legislative arms to promote justice (judgments should take the image of the blindfolded woman), full implementation of the full weight of the law on any defaulter irrespective of whose ox is gored. Also, the Press and those expressing their opinion on issues should be given adequate security and should be free to air their views, no matter the actions for or against the government in power. Another main issue is that the electoral institution in the

country by the state be allowed to come up with electoral acts and guidelines for an election without any interference from any of the arms of government. The outright strengthening of these institutions will entrench democracy and sustainable development, adhering to some of the following:

- A transparent fight against corruption must be carried out with total commitment from political leadership. This must be backed by strong political will devoid of lip service, party affiliation, and rhetoric. Also, there should be a serious drive towards poverty reduction and inequality through people-oriented policies and programmes, a drive to ensure transparency in any governmental recruitment process. Policies that would address the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, health-care services, safe drinking water, electricity, and education, among others.
- The Leadership in Nigeria must imbibe the culture of leadership by example, anchored on selfless service to the people with total commitment and sacrifice. They should not see political office as a means of self-enrichment and personal aggrandizement; there is a need for attitudinal change through a rebranding of the country's value system to promote hard work, integrity, honesty, transparency, and accountability at all levels of governance. In addition, people should be enlightened and empowered to demand from their elected representatives a report of their stewardship.
- Political offices should be made less attractive, not to entice money-conscious politicians, and allow those who are genuinely concerned about rendering service to seek offices; election is one of the foundation principles of democracy. Elections should thus be conducted in a free, fair, and most transparent manner such that people's votes count in the choice of who becomes their leader, etc.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the synchrony between democracy and good governance and how it affects the sustainability of development in the country through the lens of the challenges and prospects. There is no doubt about the fact that Nigeria is not yet a democratically consolidated state. Democratic practice in the country is still at its lowest, with little or no dividends. Dividends of democracy in this regard mean political representativeness, enthronement of civil and political rights, public accountability, peaceful co-existence of different peoples and ethnic groups, freedom of association and speech, rule of law, among others. Therefore, hope in the democratic process in the country must not be lost after all, as there are visible elements of democratic consolidation such as the presence of a vibrant press, an independent judiciary, a budding civil society, as well as acceptance of elections as a means of choosing political leaders.

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