



Nigeria and the Burden of our Democratic Process and Practice

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Abstract

The Greeks were the first to bring about democratic transformation within their City- State. This ideal of democracy was transferred from the city- state to the much larger scale nation-state. The transformation led to a radically new set of political institutions, which taken together refers to as democracy. There are certain basic principles of democracy such as, freedom of expression, choice, right to vote and be voted for, one man one vote, credible electoral system, tolerance. Thus, democracy is a philosophy of statecraft and the only acceptable means of peaceful transformation of power. It is said to be the bedrock of good governance that guarantees peace, stability and prosperity. However, in the case of Nigeria, it has been difficult to measure up to this level of democracy since the ideals of the western liberal democracy are alien and incongruous with our political culture and traditional norms. Thus, the objective of the study is to examine the operation of democracy in Nigeria by the elite pointing out its abuse of the rule of law which has resulted in widespread corruption, underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment and insecurity. The study adopts the Elite theory of democracy as the basis of understanding of the analysis. We adopts the content analysis as our method of data collection. Our findings is that democracy is losing its meaning, values and essence in the lives of the Nigerian citizens. All the promises of democracies have been betrayed and discarded. We recommend that all progressive and democratic forces are to rise up to defend and protect their democracy.

Key words: Democracy, Betrayal, Colonial State, Governance, Elite

I. Introduction

From ancient times some people have conceived of a political system in which the members regard one another as political equals, are collectively sovereign, and possess all the capacities, resources, and institutions they need in order to govern themselves. This idea, and practice embodying it, appeared in the first half of the fifth century BC among the Greeks, who though few in number and occupying but a tiny fragment of the world's surface exerted an exceptional influence in world history. It was the Greeks, according to Dahl (1975), and most conspicuously the Athenians, who brought about what can be called 'the first democratic transformation'. To the Greeks, the only thinkable site of democracy was, the city state.

But the city state was made obsolete by the nation state, and in a second democratic transformation the idea of democracy was transferred from the city state to the much larger scale of the nation state. This transformation led to a radically new set of political institutions. It is this new set of institutions that taken together we commonly refer to as 'democracy'. Today, the idea of democracy is universally popular. Most regimes stake out some sort of claim to the title of democracy; and those that do not often insist that their particular instance of nondemocratic rule is a necessary stage along the road to ultimate 'democracy'. In our times, even dictators appear to believe that an indispensable ingredient for their legitimacy is a dash or two of the language of democracy.

Be that as it may, democracy goes far beyond 'government of the people by the people and for the people'. Democracy as the only acceptable means of peaceful transfer of power, is indeed a philosophy of statecraft, and credible elections are necessary for democracy to flourish. As a result of



the contributions of other people and civilizations to the development of democracy, its definitions becomes as varied as the interests of persons and generations. Thus, according to Shakarrau (2009), democracy is made identical with intellectual freedom, with economic justice, with social welfare, with tolerance, with moral integrity, the dignity of man, and general civilized decency. With this, all over the world people have come to accept democracy as their emancipator from tyranny.

Therefore, democracy is said to be the bedrock of good governance that guarantees peace, stability and prosperity. However, one wonders why in many cases, democratically elected governments fail to make any difference in the lives of their citizens. Interestingly, this is merely applicable to developing countries. We can thus equally assert that democracy is said to guarantees good governance but not under any circumstances. What actually determines whether it can lead to good governance or not, is the extent of the electorate's level of awareness and the quality of their living standards in the first place (Mohammad: 2011). The point here is that, though, everybody is theoretically entitled to all his fundamental human rights, it is pertinent to note that such rights are not equal significance, hence can't practically be enjoyed altogether at once.

Frankly speaking, man's aspirations are inevitably influenced by his particular material, mental, and socio-economic circumstances, which also determine his priorities and expectations. For example, people who wallow in poverty and hopelessness cannot think beyond their immediate needs, which to a very large extent are ready to sell their votes to the highest bidder and are thus vulnerable to manipulation under different ethno-religious pretexts and other prejudices. To these people, democratic rights hardly count. All they need is an intervention in whatever way to rescue or provide them with sustainable means to enjoy at least a reasonable level of hope.

In Nigeria, it is obvious that, the vast majority of the electorates have been rendered unprepared to make the right choice in democratic elections. They have been deliberately overwhelmed with insurmountable challenges that have subjected them to perpetual struggle for survival, which has also rendered them desperate. They are therefore easily manipulated with ridiculous inducements, silly ethno-religious and other cheap prejudices. It is therefore a matter of course, if politicians who manoeuvre themselves into political offices through such means fail to deliver the dividends of democracy.

Theoretical framework

We intend to adopt the Elitist Theory as our tool of analysis in addressing the thematic issues in this paper. The elitist theory of democracy was developed in the present century. It is mainly concerned with the institutions of democracy and realities of the western liberal democratic political system. It provides a description, an explanation and justification of the existing political systems in western democracies. The theory arose due to the need for the maintenance of stability and equilibrium in the capitalist liberal societies. Its object is to suggest a political system suited to the existing order.

The essential theme of the theory is that there is in every society a minority of the population which takes major decisions in the society. As those decisions have political implications, the elite exercise considerable influence. The major advocates of this theory are, Robert Michels, Mills Wright, and Joseph Schumpeter.

The view of Michels (1957), is that a democratic system is in practice in a party. Thus, democracy becomes a 'party-cracy', which means party organizations is controlled by a group of leaders who cannot be checked or held accountable by persons who elect them. That is, due to organizational factors such as party funds, control over the press and mass media by the party in power, and psychological factors such as the apathy of the majority and technical incompetence. Michels called this 'Iron law of oligarchy', which imply that whatever form of government is adopted, in practice it is inevitably reduced to oligarchy or the rule of the chosen few.

Mills in his book, *The Power Elites* (1956), maintains that the basis of elite power is economic and social. Power in modern society he maintains, belongs to certain institutions which occupy pivotal positions in society. Those who occupy top positions in these institutions are the power elite, and they move on to positions of power in the government.

Be that as it may, the elite theory is more a theory of democratic machinery and less of democratic humanism. It is opposed to mass participation and hot politics on the ground that it leads to increase of cleavages and conflicts. It can only be entrusted to competing elites. The elites are the 'angels' who maintain the necessary democratic balance and equilibrium in society.

According to the elitist theory, the elite must have faith in democratic values and processes. They should represent all sections of the society. They should not be aloof from the general masses.



They must have the best possible accord with the masses. They must be plural and compete for the votes of the people (Mahajan: 2015).

The shortcoming of the elite theory is that it has no faith in the people. They believe that the participation of the people will destroy the equilibrium and stability of the political system. This is not true because the people are the soul of democracy and they must be given a share to run the government. By denying the right of the people to participate in the running of the government, the elitist theory empties the democratic theory of its moral and developmental contests. It is therefore, at this point that the paper takes off from its analysis. However, the elite theory contains truth regarding the working of western democracies. It cannot be denied that there is political apathy among the people. Indeed, all democracies are controlled by elites of one type or another.

Conceptual Analysis

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves. A state may be termed democratic if it provides institutions for the expression of the people sovereignty through supremacy of the popular will. The institutions for the expressions according to Appadorai (1974), are, the equal rights of all the people to vote and to stand as candidates for elections; periodical elections; equal eligibility for executive and judicial offices; and freedom of speech, publication, and association. These rights provide opportunities for political participation, for choosing rulers and deciding the general lines of their policies.

Furthermore, these rights are integral to democracy because they make possible free discussion and the continuous participation of the people in the government, not only at the time of the general elections. Also, free discussion is necessary since democracy is based on the belief in the value of individual personality. Thus, free discussion, free association and periodical elections ensure the essential of democracy where power is conferred permanently, or where, on account of an atmosphere of fear and coercion, people do not feel free to discuss, vote and displace the existing government, if they want to do so, democracy cannot be said to exist.

Basic Features of Democracy

In order that democracy may work successfully in any society, certain basic principles

are necessary. Thus, democracy allows every individual to speak, criticize and disagree with others. Foremost among these is the habit of tolerance and compromise among the people-the spirit of 'give and take'. Individuals can have their separate ideas and ideologies and democracy does not believe in crushing them. Democracy believes in the method of persuasion and peace. A democratic government does not use illegitimate coercion in the name of social welfare.

The second provision is adequate opportunities for the individual to develop and uphold the dignity of his human personality. This imply access to knowledge, minimum living wages to guard against economic slavery. Thus, the vast disparities in the distribution of national wealth should be progressively reduced. Democracy aims at the welfare of all and at the same time liberty and equality are the foundations of democracy.

In a democratic government, the people are the sovereign. The power of taking basic decisions relating to the government are vested in all the members of the community. In this light, democracy is based on the principle of majority rule, but this does not mean that the rights of the minorities can be ignored. The rights of all must be protected.

Furthermore, a democratic government is a government by the representatives of the people. Be that as it may, the voters are free to vote according to their choice without coercion. Rules for the democratic process are carried out as laid down in the constitution which is the organic norm. The change of a government takes place by the dictate of the constitution periodically as stated therein.

The legislature provides an important institutional machinery to ascertain the wishes of the people (Mahajan: 2015).

Above all, democracy requires proper organization and leadership. This is the ultimate of political parties which, in spite of their inherent defects, are essential to the successful working of representative democracy. Also democracy must help to produce a properly thinking human being, who must take an informed and an intelligent interest in public affairs that will certainly improve his social wellbeing. This therefore, call for proper education of the man. However, such education must be suited to the requirement of democracy.

However, the history of democracies shows that these basic conditions are really meant or fulfilled. Many, believes that the practice of democracy is the rule of ignorance. It places more attention to quantity of votes ignoring quality, and votes are counted, not weighted (Appadorai: 1974). Also, majority of the people are adequately educated



to appreciate the issues that are placed before them during the elections, since they merely sheepishly accept the opinions of their leaders.

Furthermore, according to Ake (2001), modern democracy is capitalistic, since the state is nothing but the rule of a propertied oligarchy. This goes to question the fundamental principles of democracy especial political equality and majority rule. Equality is thus, a myth since the smaller number may be the stronger force and may have all the reason against the mere impetuous appetite of the majority (Burns: 1929).

However, it is our opinion that with all its defects, democracy postulates a measure of personal freedom and equal consideration for all classes. It is far more superior to any forms of government because the rights and interests of every person are secured. It is with this that Lindsay (1935), opined that democracy “lifts the individual above the narrow circle of his egoism and broadens his interests”. That is, democracy makes the individual interested in his country and gives him a sense of responsibility.

The Nigerian Colonial Nation State

Nigeria is a colonial nation-state. The British governed the territory of Nigeria from 1861-1960. Nigerians were subjects who had no choice than to obey the rules, regulations, laws and orders of the colonial power. All that the colonialists provided was to ensure the reproduction and survival of the colonial state. Although, political independence brought some chances to the composition of the state managers, the character of the state remained the same. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, had a narrow social base, and relied for compliance on coercion rather authority. (Ake: 2001).

Thus, the Nigerian state after independence alienated itself from the people. It has limited autonomy, particularly from the hegemonic classes. It means that, the state does not have that objectivity to stand above all other social forces. It does not have the picture of neutrality but involves directly in politics. The institutions and structures of the Nigerian nation state are generally weak, and thus finds it difficult to resolve the class struggles in the society.

The result of this politically, is that politics in Nigeria is also a reflection, nature and character of the state. Politics concern mainly the control and use of state power. It therefore becomes a warfare because the state is not capable of mediating or ensuring order in the society. Under this circumstances, power become overvalued. Given the

fact that power is so valued in Nigeria, people believes that there is security to come to power, and they also believes that their survival depends on power. It thus means that there is hardly restrain on the use of power.

In examining the paradox of the Nigerian nation state, Alamu (2010), opined that the slip of the Nigerian nation state has entered uncharted and dangerous waters. Parasites of passion have taken up rigid positions. Amidst the ethnical and normative shipwreck of the post-colonial state, Nigeria is confronted by a federal cabinet largely made up of hustlers, and out of work nonentities making hay; a judiciary that is talking from both sides of the mouth; a National Assembly haunted by its own mediocrity and lack of pedigree; a military hobbled by the self- inflicted injuries of the past. This is how, why and where democratic polity in Nigeria becomes a mirage.

The Practice of Democracy in Nigeria

The history of Nigeria democratic practice was comparable to the direct democracy similar to the Greek City State of Athens. The political systems were open and democratic with elaborate system of checks and balances. This was evident in the pre- colonial Yoruba and Ibo societies. The decentralized system of government in Igbo land in the pre- colonial period when decisions affecting the society were taken by the *Umunna*s (the general assembly of the people), was an indigenous democracy par excellence. Similarly, in the Yoruba land, the powers of the Obas were checks by the Oyomesi and the Council of Chiefs. (Taiwo; 1982). All these ensured democracy and fair play in pre-colonial Nigeria societies.

However, the European contact and subsequent colonization of Nigeria have radically changed the nature and character of Nigeria traditional democratic institutions and values. Thus, the much cherish chieftaincy institution on which the Nigerian democracy had rested has been relegated to the background. Besides, administration which was largely made up of selected members of the ruling house based on hereditary criteria in the traditional Nigeria societies has been replaced by elected officials. Therefore, colonialism has planted the kind of western liberal democracy we are today practicing in Nigeria (Remi, 1982).

Thus, the democratic principles advocated by the British were alien or indeed repugnant to our indigenous sense of values, propriety and also authoritarian in nature. It has been difficult for Nigeria to measure up to this level of democracy, since the ideals of the western liberal democracy are



alien and incongruous with our political culture and traditional democratic norms, such as consensus rulership based on hereditary criteria, open debate on crucial issues as was the case in the Igbo society, and the checks and balances to forestall dictatorial rule and tyranny as was the case of the Yoruba society. Consequently, Nigerian leaders only pay lip-service to or merely scratch the western democratic ideals on the surface (Richard, 1992).

The genesis of undemocratic governance in Nigeria has root mainly in the colonial experience. Colonialism socialized the Nigerian political leadership in an authoritarian form of governance by monopolizing economic and political powers in their hands for the interests of the foreigners. Hence, Nigeria at independence inherited a system that was weak and could hardly perform the essential functions of democratic principles. Given this circumstance, any government that comes to power finds it difficult to play by the rules of democracy, rule of law and spirit and letters of electoral process.

Also, the early practice of democracy in Nigeria was characterized by military regimes hijacking political power which held the country hostage for over three decades, 1966-1999. Militarism had therefore stamped authoritarianism into our democracy. Thus, it is not surprising that the country's progress towards democracy was entrenched by undemocratic elements within Nigeria's political space. (Okafor: 2024).

Despite of Nigeria's chequered history, democracy remains the form of political arrangement cherished by most Nigerians. The call for its establishment and the desire and determination to see that it is firmly established is one of the great pre-occupation of our people. Indeed, Nigerians are not daunted by the fact that out of the sixty- five years independence the military had directly controlled its political destiny for quite some times especially in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In spite of our politician's inability to practice democratic politics properly, Nigerians both civilians and military, have never accepted military rule as an alternative to democracy. (Nnoli, 1980).

Though the average Nigerian is politically sophisticated and his appetite for democratic politics is robust, but the performance of the politicians as a group in Nigeria generally is, to say the least, far from satisfactory. One can state that electoral malpractices, political intolerance, economic mismanagement, using political office as a gate way to personal enrichment, political thuggery, lack of internal democracy, manipulation of religion and ethnicity to achieve selfish political ambitions, and other countless misdemeanors are the order of the

day. These practices, along with scant regard for constitutional provisions have so far made democracy a highly perishable plant on Nigeria.

Democratic betrayers: The Challenge of Nigeria's Statehood

At independence many believed that democracy was the promise land -a system of many possibilities, an oasis where the basic rights of citizens will flourish and its meaning, its value and essence in the lives of the citizens. Beyond the refrain of democracy being the government of the people by the people and for the people, the real meaning of democracy is lost in multiple conflict and social contradictions in the nation.

Almost, all the intrinsic promises of democracies have either been betrayed by different actors and the value of a democratic reign have been discarded. The promises of liberty, justice and peace have been betrayed and ignored. Today, in Nigeria our sovereignty is contested with non-state actors – those without the mandate to govern-now superintend over a large expanse of the Nigerian territories, imprisoning citizens and executing punishment, and judgment on innocent citizens in different guise through different terror tactics and strategies. They kidnap, kill, rape and impose levies on citizens in different parts of the country, and taking others for slavery and servitude. Government to which the people willed sovereignty through the ballot cannot act. There is indiscretion, inaction and dereliction of responsibilities. While the civil space is shrinking on a daily basis even as the state is busy in pursuit to capture institutions to their advantage.

The ballot is losing its potency of every electioneering cycle; votes are traded to the highest bidder, our democracy is commercialized; legitimacy is manipulated, accountability and good governance are trivialized while social justice is ostracized.

In Nigeria, democracy has not been able to address the challenges of the citizens. Civilian rule in all these years has failed to guarantee the two basic democratic rights-freedom from fears and wants. The result of this is human miseries, characterized by hunger, poverty, conflicts and underdevelopment (Ominabo: 2022).

Our democracy is the dictatorship of the wealthy and powerful. It is not the one that guarantees popular participations; It does not promotes political pluralism or does it guarantees the peoples' right to choose their leaders in all elective offices. Indeed, Nigeria's democracy has turn into money politics. The implication is that, governance has been abysmal failure because not



many of those who have the money to purchase power have the brains to be good and effective leaders. Thus, according to Yakubu (2022), "... the influence of money on our nation politics--- is becoming more present and the risk is that ours may soon become a plutocracy for the rich rather than a democracy for the people". Therefore, Nigeria faces the clear and present danger of its politicians turning its democracy from a government of the rich by the rich and for the rich.

Furthermore, political parties in Nigeria are merely vehicle for capturing power, and a discordant amalgam of strange bedfellows, jobholders, funny characters and pusillanimous and trashy politicians. Such people cannot rise to the lofty of dreaming great things for the country. In addition to the ridiculously high charges the parties imposed on their aspirants who wished to purchase nomination forms, it also usually turned out to be a bazaar affairs for the delegates who are induced with dollars to vote for the anointed candidates and highest bidder. There are few cases of desultory inspiration, accidental display of pragmatic governance, but on the whole, the country is bathed in mediocrity, rudimentary and uninspiring governance.

Indeed, our political parties which are, ideally, the vehicles for mobilization are today nothing more than barren structures. They are devoid of vision, mission and ideology. The existing parties are part of the grand contraption which constitutes the blinkers needed to prevent their members from comprehending the actual character of the political process. They have been reduced into becoming more stepping stones for people with electoral ambition. Worst of all, there is no internal party democracy. Party flag bearers are selected at the whims of the godfathers and imposed on the electorate not on the basis of competence, but on loyalty to the godfather to whom he/she would account for stewardship in cash. Some descend to the level of swearing allegiance in shrines to the god fathers.

Thus, any form of democratic practice that denies the majority the right to exercise their participation in choosing candidates to represent a political party at an election, takes something away from the letter and the spirit of democracy. It is a dangerous worm in the apple of democracy. This suppression and subversion of the legitimate wishes and aspirations of the people have made decent and responsible people to become withdrawn and distance themselves from democratic process, and leaving the stage for those who are wayward and of easy virtues.

Again, the assumed right of state governors to single-handedly choose and impose their successors and other elective positions of their political parties is another danger to our democracy. No law in the land permits the governors to assume the right to announce their anointed candidates long before the primaries and the congress of their various political parties. No political tradition according to Agbese (2022), recognizes this bending of our democratic practice to suit individual interests. This is unlawful deleterious to the health of our democracy, to said the least.

The implication of this is that such politicians, once in power, entrench themselves, prioritizing their own interest over the urgent needs and aspirations of the Nigerian populace against the essence of democracy which has been active participation, representation, and responsiveness to the public's needs. Instead, we witness a democracy that has become more about the substance of power than the provision of public- service. (Akinlabi: 2024). The consequences of this distorted democracy is that it led to a growing disconnect between the rulers and the ruled fueling disillusionment and apathy among the citizens who feel alienated from the political process.

Indeed, the basic problems of our democratic journey are traceable to the nature of an underdeveloped military which for a very long period of time held our democratic process and society captives and retarded the natural growth of our people. The military rulers created an environment that was hostile to the germination growth of ideas and the freedom of choice. It began with the elimination of the legitimate political leadership which was more focused, sincere, accountable and transparent by a group of visionless, rapacious and self-seeking military traitors in 1966.

This military rule according to Ghali (2004), became entrenched and institutionalized at the expense of the natural evolution and growth of legitimate democratic structures, institutions and systems. Thus, military rule became the dominant force in determining the fate of Nigerian society in the period 1966-1999. The implication is that it led to the gradual demobilizations of credible leaders, institutions and political activities with its attendance consequence to the health and spirit of our democratic enterprise.

National budget which is supposed to be the basis for social-economic and political development, considering its importance in the life of the nation to provide democratic dividends, is today regarded and treaded as a mere financial



statement which need not to be religiously followed to a logical conclusion. A critical examination of our economic policies, where they exist, would convince one that our reasons for the formulation of such policies are eternally motivated and centered. A responsible government under a democracy cannot pauperize its citizens in order to satisfy the whims and caprices of some external constituencies. One should be reminded that economy has direct relevance to the lives of the people and is central in sustaining the superstructure. (Ake: 2001).

The crucial litmus test of democracy is free and fair elections. But in Nigeria, the integrity of election has been on the decline since 1959 with almost all general elections widely assessed by both local and international observers as not being credible. According to Agbo (2009), the United States based Human Right Watch has stated in its World Survey that, the greatest form of human rights abuse going on in Nigeria is that, Nigerians have been denied the right to choose their leaders through a free and fair election.

By denying Nigerians free and fair elections, has prevented the country from benefiting from the best that politics can offer. According to Onu (2004), the period of election has been the best time for nations to discuss and find solutions to the major problems confronting them. Political campaigns have constituted the social laboratory which a nation requires to engineer her future, brining happiness to the citizens and greatness to their nations. The dialogue that goes on during electioneering campaigns, helps renew a nation. The new ideas, which politicians canvass as solutions to the national problems give hope to the people. The people use the opportunity to assess the knowledge, experience, preparation, vision and programs of those who aspire to lead.

Thus, in absence of a free and fair elections that will compel political parties to select their best material as candidates as well as make them take campaign seriously, we now have a situation in Nigeria where candidates and their political parties amass funds not for campaign and media space, but to rig the election by relying on INEC officials and the security agencies to get announced as having won elections. Where money fails, they employ violence, blackmail, kidnapping and other coercive strategies. Politics is now played with guns and matches. The people no longer matter in the electoral process and votes does not count anymore.

No wonder, after every elections lot of petitions are filed in the tribunals and the courts. For instance, according to the Legal Services Department of Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC), in 2007 general elections, 1,249 petitions were brought before electoral tribunals on National Assembly, Governorship and House of Assembly elections (Agbo: 2009). As a result of the petitions, election tribunals across the country annulled about 11 governorship elections. Some of these were reversed on appeal in controversial decisions.

In the landmark cases like Rivers, Edo, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti states, new governors were sworn in as courts ruled that those sworn in ought not to have ascended to power. However, INEC puts the blame at the doorstep of politicians who 'perceive election as war' that must be won at all cost. In an official report of the 2007 General Election, INEC noted, "To the political class, there is no morality in politics as the end justifies the means. To that end, whatever action or strategy that would secure victory at polls is acceptable (and) this includes the use of violence and all forms of malpractices ---" (Agbo: 2009).

One of the minimum conditions for the survival of constitutional democracy is that the rules of governing political actions be obeyed and accepted as given. On the contrary, the experience of competitive party politics in Nigeria demonstrates that politics is formed by a ferocious struggle to acquire individual, group and class benefits through the monopolization of public offices, thereby turning the electoral process into a 'Hobbesian state of nature'. (Tamen; 2012).

The most disturbing situation in Nigeria's democratic practice is at the local government level. Indeed, the nature and character of local government elections held in various states in Nigeria showcase the superficiality of our political party architecture. That a governor can literally commandeer people into a party platform and deploy it to a major electoral victory says much about the abnormality of our party politics and absence of genuine democratic culture in Nigeria. It also shows the charade that local government elections have become in Nigeria. Infact, local governments are seen by many as glorified outposts of state governments, and most of them are anointed or selected and not democratically elected. The State Independent Electoral Commissions organizes 'one-way' elections, and in most states, the ruling party 'cleared' all the contested positions.



II. Conclusion

Democracy, at its heart, is about leadership that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of the people, not just the maneuvering and manipulation of politics. It is a stark reminder that the Nigerian democracy has consistently fallen short of true democratic principles. If we all agree that democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people, then its implementation in Nigeria starkly contradicts this assertion. The Nigeria's brand of democracy has progressively sidelined the very people it is meant to serve. The focus has shifted towards a political class pre-occupied with power struggles and the endless pursuit of office.

To improve our democratic process we make the following recommendations. We must have to evaluate our democracy and get back to the basics. That is, prioritizing genuine leadership and the responsible exercise of political office in the best interest of our people.

Our democracy should not be a battleground for political gamesmanship but a platform for servant leadership and public service.

We must have to establish a democracy where the electoral process is inviolable, where the forceful imposition of candidates upon the populace is unequivocally prohibited, since power belongs to the people.

Genuine efforts must be made to fight the hijacking of the electoral process, whether through violence, intimidation, or manipulation, undermining the very foundation of a representative government which silences the voices of the people and replaces their will with the desires of a few. Godfathering should be abolished.

Ensure that a democracy which is seen as a gold mine and a quick way to amass wealth for personal enrichment is completely discouraged. Politics should not be seen as a do or die affair but for provision of genuine services to the people.

The time has come to shift our focus from mere politicking to active and transformative leadership. We must move beyond the superficial trappings of political contests and dedicate ourselves to the serious work of providing concrete democracy dividends to our people.

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