

# The Malady of Nigeria's Democracy and Its Effect on Governance

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## ABSTRACT

Practically, democracy has been the tune that most states are dancing to because of its flexibility and accountability, which allows citizens to take part in the government's decision-making. Though it was introduced by Greece and was vastly practiced by America, Nigeria has imitated it, but Nigeria's democracy has deviated from the ideal democracy, because it lacks some variables (freedom of speech, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, equality of law, and equal political representation) that an ideal democracy has. As a result of this, this paper takes an intellectual tour to ditch out the schisms between Nigeria's democracy and ideal democracy by using the historical approach and secondary relevant data to know the history of Nigeria's democracy. Also, this paper uses the elite theory as its framework because it aligns with democracy, and it also stresses minority representation of the majority. This paper indicates that the deviation of Nigeria's democracy thwarts her dream of economic, political, and social development by keeping her toddling in the sphere of underdevelopment. The paper recommends that, in order to achieve political, economic, and social development, Nigeria should adopt the ideal democracy.

**Keywords:** democracy, governance, underdevelopment.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the Second World War, democracy has been the model of direction that most modern states follow to pilot their governmental affairs, how their power should be structured, who should structure it, and when and how they should structure it. The reason for this is because of its general opinion acceptance, which gives room for the masses' opinion, representation, and contribution in government. The history of Nigeria's democratization began at independence with the adoption of democratic institutions, modeled on the British Westminster parliamentary system. Under this system, the prime minister, who was the leader of the party with majority seats in the parliament, was the substantive Head of government at the center (federal) while the President was a mere ceremonial Head. African states imitate European countries in practicing democracy (Linus, 2014). This form was instituted in Britain and the United States between 1860 and 1890 and later spread to other European countries as well as the developing regions of the world, including Africa and Nigeria, in the second half of the 20th century.

The ideal form of the American modern system of democracy is aptly captured as: 'the supreme, absolute and uncontrolled power remains in the people. Our constitutions are superior to our legislature so that people are superior to our constitution...democracy is then that government in which the people retain the supreme power' (Padova, 1963:16, cited in Noah, 2006:192). Nigeria adopted democracy to let its government develop like those Western states that practice it. Unfortunately, democracy was misinterpreted and practiced by many African states, allowing their governments to dwell in a comatose state and lag behind others. According to Elaigwu, as cited in Yio (2012), the concept of democracy is alien to Africa and needs to be domesticated to Nigeria's by extension (Africa) local conditions and targeted to its peculiar problems. He went further to define democracy as a system of government based on the acquisition of authority from the people; the institutionalization of the rule of law; the emphasis on the legitimacy of rules; the availability of choices and cherished values (including

freedom); and accountability in governance They (Africa states) deviate from the practice of ideal democracy, as a result of this Nigeria is practicing a quasi-democratic model of government that imbibes some other variables different from western democracy. Nigeria's democracy was affected or malice by corruption, mismanagement of funds, kleptocracy, public malfeasance, nepotism, and tribalism. Its deviation led it from being a quasi-democracy to a real state democracy.

In order to examine how the Nigerian democracy deviates from the ideal, this article will examine historical perspectives on Nigerian democracy as well as how this has affected Nigerian good governance in Nigeria.

## Conceptual Discourse

### Democracy

Democracy, a term that has echoed through the annals of history, embodies the essence of societal organization, where power is vested in the hands of the people. But in the contemporary world, its definition often becomes muddled amidst political rhetoric and ideological debates. Appadorai, in his book *Substance of Politics*, contends that it may be described as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves. This description by Appadorai avers that the concept of democracy should be built on public or mass participation in government. Also, according to Dahl (1971), a renowned political theorist, democracy is a system where "political equality, civil liberties, and the rule of law are respected." The definition of Dahl's central democracy is based on three variables: liberty, rule of law, and general equality. Also, Joseph Schumpeter viewed democracy as a system where political leaders compete for votes through periodic elections, focusing on the role of electoral competition in shaping governance and emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and legal principles.

Schumpeter's definition goes in line with Huntington (1996), who argued that a political system is democratic if its most powerful collective decision makers are chosen through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote. At its core, democracy isn't just about casting a vote; it is about fostering an environment where every voice resonates, where every opinion matters. Democracy champions the principle of equality. It transcends socio-economic disparities, offering each individual an equal footing in shaping the collective destiny. In a true democracy, the farmer's ballot weighs as much as the financier's, and the teacher's voice echoes as loudly as the CEOs. This equality extends beyond the ballot box, permeating through institutions, laws, and societal norms. Moreover, democracy thrives on participation. It is not merely a spectator sport but an active engagement in the affairs of the state. From grassroots movements to national elections, democracy flourishes when citizens are informed, involved, and invested in the governance process. It is the town hall meetings where concerns are voiced, the protests where injustices are condemned, and the ballot boxes where aspirations are realized. However, it is a model of government that is built on the vox de populi (voice and opinion of the masses), which makes the population its main theme of concentration that allowing the people to elect some small portion of people to represent them in the government. It constitutes: freedom of speech, periodic election, equality of law, and rule of law as part of its variables. Oche (2004:10), points out three basic senses in contemporary usage: a form of government in which the right to make political decision is exercised directly by the whole body of citizens, acting under procedures of majority rule, usually known as direct democracy; a form of government in which the citizens exercise the same right not in person but through representatives; also it is a form of government, usually a representative democracy, in which power of the majority are exercised within a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee all citizens the enjoyment of certain individual or collective rights such as freedom of speech and religion, known as liberal or constitutional democracy. Direct and indirect are the basic types of democracy.

Yet, democracy isn't without its challenges. The specter of populism often clouds the democratic landscape, where leaders exploit fears and prejudices to sway public opinion. In such scenarios, the true essence of democracy is obscured by the allure of a demagogue, threatening the very foundations of liberty and justice. Furthermore, the concept of democracy extends beyond the confines of the nation-state. In an interconnected world, global democracy becomes imperative, where international institutions are transparent, accountable, and

representative of diverse interests. From climate change to human rights, global challenges necessitate global solutions, grounded in democratic principles of cooperation and consensus-building.

In essence, democracy is a dynamic tapestry, woven with threads of equality, participation, and accountability. It is a journey towards a more just and inclusive society, where the voices of the marginalized are amplified, and the aspirations of the disenfranchised are realized. To clarify democracy is to illuminate its essence, to recognize its complexities, and to uphold its principles in the pursuit of a better tomorrow.

## Governance

Governance is one of the most used concepts in the social sciences: sociology, psychology, political science, public administration, and history. It means how society or an organization operates or steers to achieve its specific aims. How they operationalize themselves at the time of storming, norming, and conflicting, and also motivate themselves to attain their goals. Governance has suddenly become a term joining two issues together. First, it is an expression of the *state/government policies*. It reflects either its form or/ effectiveness of the measures taken. This approach still refers to the exercise of power and authority of the state (government, its administration, but also the whole public sector), as well as [possibly] to the failures resulting from government activities, and to economic and political issues. Next comes the *managerial approach*, the organization and efficiency of the processes of administration. It is not necessarily connected with the government or state activities. These could be described, too, as linking policy and its management, or as the procedural, structural, political, or economic points of view (Vymetal, 2007).

Governance denotes different meaning that leads to different connotations. The one used in this paper is for power politics. It is based on how who gets what in society steers what of the society to achieve goals of the society. This entails the ability of a legitimate ruler or a forceful ruler to utilize the human and non-human resources of a state to realize the state enthusiast objectives. Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (Asian Development Bank, 1998). Politically, it connotes exercising sovereign power over a particular people living on a specific geographical land or entity. This led to Smiley's (2007) view that governance deals with how organization in a society operates.

## Theoretical Framework

Modern democracy, which Nigeria is practicing, allows the representation of the interests of a large number or population of people by a small portion of them, although this is different from the Athenian democracy, which is direct democracy, which doesn't allow representation. As a result of this, in order to be well-structured and prevent this paper from ill analysis, the author would like to introduce elite theory as a framework of analysis.

Elite theory is a theory that was propounded to explain the power relationship in society. It critically made an analysis on how power is distributed in society. It was propounded by Italian scholars Vilfrado Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michel at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. It gained its prominence in the field of Political Science after the end of first War I. It explains the question: who rules the state? Whose hands do the power of the state reside? How does state power rotate?

This theory explains democracy through its emphasis on oligarchy. Elite theorists argue that politics is inevitably shaped by small groups who dominate decision-making. Michels famously noted that "he who says organization, says oligarchy." In Nigeria, this is evident in how party "godfathers" and financiers dictate candidate selection and policy direction, limiting the influence of ordinary voters (Moshood, 2015). However, democracy as a political arrangement is also based on representative government. In which the interest of the masses should be represented by the minority elected by them. As a result, one of the variables of democracy, periodic elections, aligns with elite theory, which emphasizes the representation of the minority by the majority. The primary concerns of the elitist theorists have been the maintenance of democratic stability, the preservation of democratic procedures, and the creation of machinery which would produce efficient administration and coherent public policies (Jack, 1966). This theory surfaces aristocracy, oligarchy, and elitism. The above-mentioned concept shows the maintaining stance of elite theory for democracy. Both Mosca and Pareto tried to translate the 'simple,

almost obvious, observation that all organized societies consist of a vast majority without any political power and a small minority of power holders’—this was the object of a ‘true science of politics’, that is, to ‘understand how the “political class” recruits itself, maintains itself in power, and legitimates itself through ideologies’ (Hirschman 1991, p. 52). Even if democracy is just one possible political model that legitimizes the ruling class and its power, as classical elitists maintained, the adoption of one or another model is not without consequences for the members of the non-elites. As Burnham pointed out, there are ‘real and significant differences in social structures from the point of view of the masses’; ‘these differences ... cannot be properly evaluated in terms of formal meanings, verbalism and ideologies’ (Burnham 1943, p. 166).

The adherence of democracy to Darwinism theory of natural selection, that the majority would not be represented by the majority but would be represented by an organized minority that possesses some enviable natural traits, was well explained by elite theory. Elite theory lets us know that the policies of the state or that the masses would adhere to were made by this minority, and these policies were made on the tenet of the interest of the minority, not on the interest of the majority. This led Mosca (1939) to assert in his book that *the ruling class* that a king’s decisions were always taken with the participation of his advisers, in an aristocracy, a smaller group of activists made the policies issued in the name of all the aristocrats, and in a democracy, the sovereign electorate was manipulated by the politicians. For example, during the 1999–2007 period under Obasanjo, party elites determined key policies such as privatization, often prioritizing elite economic interests over public welfare (Ogundiya, 2010). Similarly, the 2023 party primaries demonstrated elite dominance, as exorbitant nomination fees--₦100 million for presidential aspirants in the All Progressives Congress (APC) excluded the masses from meaningful political participation (TheCable, 2022; Infomediang, 2022). By applying elite theory to these cases, it becomes clear that Nigeria’s democracy is not merely imperfect in practice but structurally constrained by entrenched elite dominance.

This goes in tandem with Vilfredo Pareto in his book “*The Mind and Society*”, where he propounded the 80/20 principle. In this principle, Pareto affirms that the 80% population of the population would be governed by 20% of the population, and 80% of the society of the state’s resources would be controlled by the 20%.

Pareto believes that there would be a circulation of the elite. An elite could be retired if he no longer possesses the elite qualities, and other elites would be recruited if the recruited elite possess the specific qualities. Pareto’s assumption aligns with the principle of democracy because of the election. The ruling elites would attain their sovereignty and authority through the specific qualities, election. The retired ruling elite would be a former elite if he wasn’t granted the people’s will (votes).

Nigeria is a democratic state that adheres to the principle of elite theory--election. This makes this theory go in tandem as a framework analysis of this paper. Elections are held every four years in Nigeria, which enable us to change our elected political leaders who represent the economic, political, and social interests of the majority or masses, thus accentuating the relevance of this theory to the objective of this study.

On the second note, the elite theorists opine that the policies of the state are the product of the elites, and the direction of it is their will. The elite theory regards public policies as the values and preferences of the governing elite. In other words, public policies are the products of elites reflecting their values and serving their ends (Ibeogu, 2015). The political and economic elites wield power, wealth, and influence on government policies in their favor. The policies of the previous and present democratic government, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa/Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (1960 – 1966), Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979 – 1983), Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 – 2007), Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’dua (2007 – 2010), Dr Good luck Jonathan (2010 – 2015), General Mohammadu Buhari (2015 – 2017) was and is still also characterized by the struggle for who gets what, when and how of the proceeds of governance. Since the ruling minority constitutes the powerful in a given democratic system (godfathers and party stalwarts) who determines the place and fate of governance orchestrated by the politicization of government policies and programs by the elites who influences the outcome, have given rise to the renewed insecurity, insurgency and political violence and failed economy in our democratic system (Abah and Ibeogu, 2017). This allows the optimal use of resources, and the feasibility of their policies allows the development of the state to lie in their hand.



## Historical Overview of Democratic Development in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has undergone a tumultuous journey in its quest for democracy. From colonial rule to military dictatorships and eventually to a budding democracy, Nigeria's political landscape is marked by a series of challenges, triumphs, setbacks, and progress. This historical overview delves into the intricacies of Nigeria's democratic evolution, highlighting key events, figures, and milestones that have shaped its path. Nigeria's democratic journey began under the shadow of colonialism. British colonial rule, which lasted from the late 19th century until independence in 1960, laid the groundwork for Nigeria's political institutions. However, colonial governance was characterized by authoritarianism, exploitation, and limited political participation for the indigenous population.

The pre-independence period witnessed the emergence of nationalist movements and leaders who agitated for self-rule and democratic governance. Figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello played pivotal roles in mobilizing support for independence and advocating for democratic principles. The struggle against colonial oppression laid the foundation for Nigeria's aspirations for democratic governance. On October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule, marking the beginning of its journey as a sovereign nation. The country adopted a parliamentary system of government, with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe serving as its first indigenous Governor-General and later as its ceremonial President. However, the early years of independence were marred by political instability, ethnic tensions, and power struggles among regional elites.

In 1963, Nigeria adopted a republican constitution, with Azikiwe assuming the presidency as Nigeria's first ceremonial head of state. The transition to a republican system aimed to consolidate the country's democratic institutions and foster national unity. However, the euphoria of independence soon gave way to ethnic rivalries, regional disparities, and a struggle for control of the central government. Nigeria's fledgling democracy was short-lived, as a series of military coups plunged the country into years of authoritarian rule. In January 1966, a group of military officers led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu staged a coup, overthrowing the civilian government and assassinating several political leaders, including Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The following day, January 16th, 1966, Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi addressed the nation, confirming the military coup. He said: "The government of the Federation of Nigeria, having ceased to function, the Nigerian Armed Forces have been invited to form an Interim Military Government for the purpose of maintaining law and order, and of maintaining essential services (Odey, 2015)

The aftermath of the coup ushered in a period of military dominance in Nigerian politics, characterized by coups, counter-coups, and the suppression of civilian rule. Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi assumed power briefly before being overthrown and assassinated in a counter-coup led by Northern officers. This marked the beginning of military rule dominated by Northern officers, with General Yakubu Gowon emerging as the new head of state. Gowon's administration initially promised a return to civilian rule through a transition program known as the "3Rs" (Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation). However, the civil war that erupted in 1967 following the secession of the Eastern region under Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu's leadership disrupted the transition process and prolonged military rule. The war, also known as the Nigerian Civil War or the Biafran War, lasted from 1967 to 1970 and resulted in significant loss of life and widespread devastation. Following the war, Gowon's government embarked on a policy of post-war reconstruction and national reconciliation, but political tensions and economic challenges persisted.

In 1975, Gowon was ousted in a bloodless coup led by Brigadier General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, who promised to restore civilian rule and initiate democratic reforms. However, Murtala's tenure was cut short by his assassination in a failed coup attempt in 1976, leading to the ascension of General Olusegun Obasanjo to power.

Obasanjo's regime continued the process of political transition but failed to fully realize the return to civilian rule. Instead, Obasanjo ruled as a military dictator until 1979 when he handed over power to a civilian government following the adoption of a new constitution and the organization of elections. Second Republic and Challenges of Democratic Consolidation: The period between 1979 and 1983 marked the Second Republic in Nigeria's history, characterized by the return to civilian rule under President Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The Second Republic witnessed a semblance of democratic governance, with multiparty elections, a free press, and a vibrant civil society.

However, the euphoria of democracy was short-lived, as the Shagari administration soon became mired in allegations of corruption, economic mismanagement, and political patronage. The oil boom of the 1970s, which had initially buoyed Nigeria's economy, gave way to a downturn, exacerbated by falling oil prices and mounting external debt.

In December 1983, the Second Republic was abruptly terminated by another military coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari, citing the need to curb corruption and restore order. Buhari's regime embarked on a campaign against indiscipline (War Against Indiscipline) but was criticized for its human rights abuses and authoritarian tendencies. Buhari's tenure was short-lived, as he was ousted in another coup in August 1985, leading to the installation of General Ibrahim Babangida as Nigeria's new military ruler. Babangida's regime promised a transition to civilian rule through a gradual process of democratization, which culminated in the organization of presidential elections in 1993. However, the June 12, 1993, presidential election, widely regarded as free and fair, was annulled by Babangida, sparking widespread protests and plunging Nigeria into a political crisis. The annulment of the election and Babangida's subsequent decision to hand over power to an interim civilian government further eroded public confidence in the military and underscored the challenges of democratic consolidation.

The death of General Sani Abacha in 1998 and the subsequent ascension of General Abdulsalami Abubakar to power marked a turning point in Nigeria's political trajectory. Abubakar's regime initiated a transition program that culminated in the restoration of civilian rule in 1999, heralding the beginning of the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic saw the emergence of a new political elite, the proliferation of political parties, and the reconfiguration of power dynamics within Nigeria's federal system. In May 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state, was elected as Nigeria's civilian president under the banner of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), signaling a new era of democratic governance. Obasanjo's administration inherited a country grappling with myriad challenges, including political instability, ethnic tensions, corruption, and economic stagnation. Over the course of his two terms in office (1999-2007), Obasanjo pursued an ambitious agenda of political and economic reform, albeit with mixed results.

Despite his efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, Obasanjo's tenure was marred by allegations of corruption, electoral irregularities, and human rights abuses. This makes Ogundiya (2010) argue that the return of the country to electoral democracy in 1999 has not made any significant impact on the economy and general well-being of the people because of the manipulative nature and character of the national elite. The 2003 and 2007 elections were particularly contentious, with widespread reports of vote-rigging, violence, and intimidation.

### Malady Of Nigeria's Democracy

There has not been any system of government that has allowed people's participation like democracy. It is practiced in order to allow multiple views and opinions in the government, to safeguard the rights of the people, and to foster social-political development. Nigeria also adopts democracy with the aim to achieve the aforementioned goals; unfortunately, achieving it is a dream that doesn't come to reality because of its deviation from an ideal democracy. It deviates from an ideal democracy because of its lack of freedom of speech, inequality of political representation, a dependent nature of the judiciary, and corruption.

**Corruption:** The reason for the adoption of democracy in a state is to let the state develop, and also allow the opinion of the masses. This is the main difference between a democratic and an autocratic state. In the same sense, Nigeria practices democracy in order to let the power reside in the hands of the people. This is in assonance with the etymological meaning of Democracy in Greek words, *demo*, which means power, and *kratia*, which means people. This etymology stresses that people own the power in democracy. The aims of this are to let people's opinions reflect in the public policies. But the reverse is the case in Nigeria, as people's opinions are not reflected in Nigeria's policies. Nigeria's democracy depicts government of the few, by the few, and for the few. It goes in contradiction to Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy, as the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. This is the reason why Casely Hayford said in his book "Gold Coast Native Institutions" that "The office of the king is elective. No king, that is to say, is born a king... It is the right of those who placed him there to put him off the stool for any just cause. But no other authority can rightly interfere with

his position, if his people are satisfied with him". The last sentence of this assertion beacons that the leader, king, or ruler has the authority or power through his people's consent in order to safeguard the interests of the people, but the reverse is the case for Nigerian political leaders. They fight for their own pocket instead of the people's interest after they assume a political position. The comparison of the salary structure of Nigerian politicians with that of civil servants' salaries shows a huge gap. For example, Sheu Sanni, a former Kaduna central Senator, disclosed in an interview with *This Day* in 2018 that Nigerian senators collect ₦750,000 and also see more than ₦14,000,000 monthly, compared to the minimum wage salary, which is ₦300,000 for a civil servant. Thus, brain drain emerges, underdevelopment occurs, and insecurity is the news of the day because of selfish leaders. In reaction, millions of Nigerians, particularly the young ones who feel that they are unjustly cheated and sidelined, have some reservations about the nation. History has shown that no nation in the world has grown and enjoyed steady development in almost all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless leadership (Ogbeide, 2012). Regrettably, corruption has ravaged the country and destroyed most of what is held as cherished national values (Abah and Nwoba 2016). Achebe (1984) had posited "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership". So, in all ramifications, our beloved country, the much-vaunted giant of Africa, should do something urgently to better the lot of the citizens by ensuring an improved economic base.

**Limitations of Freedom of Speech:** Nigeria's democracy is afflicted with limitations on freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is one of the most important variables of democracy. It allows people to display their opinion on the government, whether positive or negative. It is essential in society that the ruler knows the loopholes. This led John Stuart Mill in his book "*On Liberty*" to opine that 'expression is part of essential factors that contribute to the development in society'

This opinion can be displayed by riot, strike, protest, and others. But Nigeria's democracy deprives people of this freedom. People can't express their opinion on government decisions or policies. If people that is in opposition do it would be called an act of insurgency, while rioting by people against the government's opinion leads to mass killing. October 2010, "Lekki" toll gate can be an exemplification of it.

**Dependence of judiciary:** Nigeria's judicial sector has been plagued with corruption, and the dependency status of the judiciary is the causal factor. The judges are not exercising their function independently. Most of the judges have become politicians' puppets, so much so that what the politician blows on their trumpet is what the judges will blow out. The judges are utterly dependent on the executive arms of government for their salaries and funding, and this can compromise their independence. This means that the judges are not interpreting the law in tandem with the constitution, it being interpreted in accordance with the pocket. This birthed the phrase "the justice is for the highest bidder in Nigeria". Ahmed Lawani's phenomenon in 2023 and Hope Uzodima's 2019 are apt exemplifications of it. This makes Kperogi (2023) label the Supreme Court a "rotten gaggle of useless purchasable judicial bandits" in one of his articles. However, the existence of dependency of the judiciary will affect equality and justice, which is one of the important aspects of democracy, whether in Nigeria.

**Lack of equal representation:** Democracy sounds like equal representation in government, in which there should be an existence of equal representation between the masses and the elite. The elite can be a people representative while the masses can also be the same also representation should be determined by the people. However, the reverse is the case in the Nigerian political system. Political positions are for the elite only, in which the have-nots cannot vie for this position because of the exorbitant price of the party ticket. The elite are using a political party as a hindrance tool to prevent the have-nots from vying for political positions. For example, in the 2023 general election APC sold the party ticket at an exorbitant price. They sold presidential ticket ₦10,000,000, and other tickets at exorbitant prices-- Governorship ₦50 million, Senator ₦20 million, and House of Representatives ₦10 million.

**Lack of internal democracy:** internal democracy is an act of exercising democracy in subgroups that contain a state, e.g., political parties, religious groups, ethnic groups, and other relevant groups. In other words, it is an act of maintaining public and member contributions in political parties or groups' decision-making. This will activate the collective contribution of decision-making in a group, and also deactivate the authoritarian feature in a group. This is one of the features of democracy that will produce the best leader and also allow the group members' reflection to exist in decision-making. However, political parties in Nigeria didn't maintain internal democracy;

indirectly, this affects our governance because the best figure won't emerge as the political party's candidate for flagbearer, and it is this flagbearer that will pilot the affairs of the state.

### Mass-based fault

The hiatus in Nigeria's democracy and bad governance doesn't lie with Nigeria's political leaders only, but also lies with the masses. The author suggests the following problem as a mass-based problem in Nigeria's democracy:

**Lack of a developmental mindset by the citizens:** A developmental mindset by the citizens is sacrosanct in every democratic setting. This means the plain allegiance to the country's constitution, and also having a good mindset towards the country. Most Nigerians have lost hope in Nigeria to the extent that it is a diminutive population that prays for Nigeria's development. Even, there is one popular dictum among Nigerian citizens, "Nigeria no go beta," which means development in Nigeria is a mirage. However, this is the reverse in other developed democratic settings. Every citizen in America always prays for their country every blessed day they rise, that "God bless America," but that is a dearth in Nigeria. In order to have good Governance in Nigeria, Nigerian citizens should have a good developmental mindset.

**Shifting of masses' responsibilities on Political leaders:** Nigerian masses have turned Nigerian political leaders into their personal responsibility messiah. Most of them believe that being a political position holder has legitimized them to transfer their financial responsibility to them. This lets the masses indirectly tell the political office holders that they should go to Aso-Rock to steal or go to their state secretariat to siphon public funds for them.

**Political apathy:** it is an orthodoxy in Nigeria, general and or state elections to be an existence of low turnout. For example, Premium Times gathered in the 2023 general election that out of the 93.4 million registered voters this year, 87.2 million people collected their Permanent Voters Card, and the total number of actual voters on election day was only 24.9 million. This led them to conclude their analysis that no state had a turnout above 40% in the last general election. However, this will let the perpetrators manipulate the election figures and do the abracadabra.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to activate the ideal democracy status of Nigeria, which will ensure development and collective responsibility, this study enjoins both the government and masses to collective action. As a result of this, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Judicial independence must be guaranteed through constitutional reforms that grant the judiciary financial autonomy and transparent appointment processes, reducing political interference.
2. Freedom of speech and press must be protected by strengthening media laws, preventing harassment of journalists, and ensuring citizens can peacefully protest without intimidation.
3. Electoral reforms are needed, such as adopting electronic transmission of results, enforcing strict penalties for vote buying, and strengthening the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure credible elections.
4. Anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC) must be strengthened with prosecutorial independence to hold political elites accountable, regardless of status or party affiliation
5. Nigeria's governance should be piloted with the provision of the constitution by adhering to the provisions of the constitution.
5. Internal party democracy should be enforced by law, requiring transparent primaries and caps on nomination fees, to make political competition accessible beyond wealthy elites.



## CONCLUSION

Democracy in the world is practiced because of the socio-economic equality in the state and also society development. Any country practicing it is expected to demonstrate freedom of speech, justice and equality, political representation, periodic elections, and other rights. Unfortunately, Africa, or Nigeria specifically, doesn't practice an ideal democracy. Their democracy deviates from the ideal one because the inherent variables of democracy are dearth in Nigeria's democracy. This variability is the cause of political disruption in Nigeria. It contributes to effects like insecurity, ethnicity, corruption, political instability, and economic quagmire that we are experiencing in Nigeria.

In order to restore the ideals of Nigeria's democracy, there should be an existence of equality and justice; freedom of speech; independence of the judiciary; and prevalence of equal representation in Nigeria. This will let Nigeria restore its economic and political lost glory.

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