

## **Democratisation as Social Empowerment: Nigeria, a Focus of Study**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper argues that democracy is the best form of government given man's experience with other forms of government like monarchy, aristocracy, dictatorship, theocracy, military rule, etc, which have been tested and found wanting in many ways. Only democracy treats everybody as an end and not as a means to an end, and that gives it a big edge over others that are discriminatory in favour of the rulers and against the ruled. For this reason, Nigerians especially the masses are enjoined to support the efforts to democratize every aspect of their lives and institutions if they want to develop, experience a high standard of living and build a nation that will be the envy of other nations.*

### **Introduction**

Ever since human beings decided to live together in society with one another, they have been facing a lot of challenges. These challenges range from how they can adequately feed, house, clothe, educate, remain healthy, govern and secure themselves to how they can transmit, preserve and improve the lessons arising from the preceding activities. Their well-being is the overall end of all they do and its realization is their ever-burning desire. Hence, their determination to make a success of everything about their well-being.

Of all these challenges: food, housing, clothing, education, justice, peace, governance and so on, the one that is most taxing and intractable, as experience has shown, is governance. Analogically, what head is to a human body is what governance is to human society. A human body has many parts and each part has a contribution to make towards the overall goal of the human body (human person). But the head plays a coordinating role among other parts of the body-it directs them towards performing their individual and collective functions for the attainment of the overall aim. It is the same with governance in the society. It coordinates other parts of the society such as economy, education, history, health, transport, science/technology, agriculture, sports, business, urbanization, foreign relation, religion, e t c, for the attainment of the overall goal of the society. For that reason, anything that happens to the head, weather good or bad, affects the entire web of the society.

People, quite aware of the crucial role of governance in the society, have considered no sacrifice too great to make towards having a political system of government, which can help them achieve the goal of their well-being. For the sake of this, they have tried every political system that has ever crossed human mind. Monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy, diarchy, gerontocracy, democracy and so on, have been tried with little or no success? Each of them has one problem or the other that made people to feel that they have not arrived and so went on in search of a better system; a system that accommodates all and excludes none in all matters that affect all. Among these political systems, the one that is less problematic and more promising in terms of promoting human welfare is democracy. Democracy evolves from the people and works for the people. No wonder Abraham Lincoln one time American President in his Gettysburg Address defined it as the "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (McMichael, 1974:1746). In support of this view, A.G.A. Bello observes about democracy when he writes:

In a democracy, sovereignty in all spheres belongs to the people, not to any individual, or group of individuals, to the exclusion of others. Moreover, in a democracy, the will of the people is supreme, not the will of any individual or group. This will may be expressed in a variety of ways, including periodic elections to choose leaders, representatives, etc; or in occasional referenda to decide fundamental issues (Oguejiofor,2005:44).

In other words, democracy's inclusiveness in matters of governance-that is, mass participation in governance, gives everybody a sense of belonging; makes everybody see government as his or her government. For that reason citizens are ever ready to do anything within the law to help their government succeed in its programmes for the attainment of the overall goal of the state.

Democracy is an ideal system of government. Like every ideal system, people work towards attaining it. Even great democracies in the world like Britain, America, France, etc, are still struggling to attain it fully. In these democracies there are still cases of abuse of power, circumvention of law, inequality, injustice, segregation, disregard of public opinion, unfair distribution of common resources, etc. For example, is it not surprise that America despite its 222 years' practice of democracy, has not found its female citizens fit to contest and perhaps win a presidential seat. Does it mean that no American woman has understood ethics of governance as to enable her, when elected into that number one position, to use the power well in promoting American interests? What of Britain in its conspiracy with America, which led to the robbery of "African Islanders of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian ocean of their home land, and turning it into an American military base" (New African, February 2007:34)? These African Islanders enjoy British citizenship rights, yet their homeland, was leased out without their consent. These cases are cited to show that no country has attained an ideal democracy. But it is worth pursuing and sacrificing everything to that end.

So, the position of the paper is that Nigeria's dream of great nation is realizable, provided a conducive atmosphere is created. The conducive atmosphere required is one of democracy. Everything about Nigeria from A to Z should be democratized. Unless that is done, Nigeria's presence in the comity of nations is on sufferance and it will continue to remain a butt to all nations that care. Hence, Nigerians at home and abroad are called upon to support the enthronement of democracy, as it has helped other nations to grow it will equally help Nigeria to do like wise.

### ***Analysis of Concepts***

**Democracy: What is democracy?** Does it have origin? These too questions are very important, as they will help people to grasp what democracy means and connotes in all its ramifications. Such grasp will enable them to separate grains from chaffs whenever they are treated to a concoction of a political system in the name of democracy. For it is a common sight nowadays to see individuals, groups and nations putting on democratic labels and descriptions on everything about them despite the fact that their real behavior, thoughts and actions put them down as the sworn enemies of democracy.

The question of origin should be treated first as the origin of thing determines its nature and by extension its meaning. The origin of democracy is seen from two perspectives –ontological and historical perspective. From ontological perspective, democracy's origin is traced to human nature. Studies have shown that threads from which human nature are woven are freedom, justice, fairness, equity, love, truth, equality and self-initiative. Man can afford to compromise any other value but not these, which are the soul, essence and meaning of his life. Development ever made in the annals of human history is traceable to their recognition and observance; while backwardness of all forms, human beings ever experienced, is attributed to their neglect.

For that reason, any person or group of persons that as a result of circumstances created by their fellow humans are denied opportunity of enjoying the above values will never stop kicking against the perpetrators until the circumstances are reversed. No wonder Sekou Toure the former Guinean head of state during the struggle for their country's independence was held in high esteem for speaking the minds of Africans when he said NO to France with a follow-up statement that his people preferred freedom in poverty to slavery in wealth. So they should handover the reigns of power to them without further delay. France reluctantly granted them independence in 1958(BBC Focus On Africa, 2007:30). Nothing is like freedom and it is the spirit and language of democracy and what it strives to achieve for humanity. From historical perspective, articulate formulation of democracy as a political system of government started in the Athenian City State in Greece.

The term democracy is a derivation of two Greek words: *demos*-meaning the people and *kratia*-meaning rule or power to the people. Thus, the root meaning of democracy shows that it evolved from the people, to champion their interests and seek ways of actualizing them. As a system of government, it is not for the few but for the entire mass of the people – the entire citizenry. In support of this view Bryce (1921:187) says of democracy as: “That form of government in which the ruling power of a state legally vested, not only in any particular classes, but in the members of the community as a whole. This means, in communities which act by voting, that rule belongs to the majority....” In the ancient city-state of Athens pure or direct democracy was practiced as all the adult citizens could easily assemble at the designated place and discuss matters of public interest and decisions reached, were implemented. This was possible because the population was small. But in the modern times representative form is adopted because of large population. This involves the people sending their accredited representatives to the national assembly to represent them. As it is not possible for everybody to take part in running the affairs of state, it becomes necessary to have voting system through which people are elected into power. Appadorai (1975:137) acknowledges this about democracy when he describes it as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power directly (or indirectly) or through representatives, periodically elected by themselves.

**Democratization:** The term democratization is formed from democracy. To democratise means to be democratic; and to be democratic means to put into practice principles of democracy. Democratization therefore is a form of transformation, which happens when people in any given society have accepted both in theory and in practice to observe principles of democracy such as freedom, mass participation, majority rule, transparent and accountable government, free, fair and credible election, etc. Having accepted to live by dictates of democracy, they strictly ensure that their behaviours and institutions to the least of them whether in public or privacy comply with the demands of democracy. According to Bello,

In principle, democratization means the empowerment of the people in the political, economic and social spheres. In practical, how ever it involves the cultivation of the attitudes of mind and heart, the nurturing of institutions, the canvassing of principles, the promotion of forms of social behaviour and generally the creating of an enabling atmosphere for democracy to sprout and thrive (Ogwejiofor,46).

In other words, acceptance of democracy in principle as a good form of government precedes democratization (empowerment) but democratization itself precedes actual practice of democracy. That is to say, democracy is neither a chance event nor a manna falling from heaven. It is an art with its own rules to be studied, understood and observed in obedience, and not in breach, for it to deliver its expected services.

As it is, democracy not preceded by democratization of people’s minds, hearts, habits, character and their institutions, remains only on their lips – on the surface. It is only democratization can deepen democratic tenets and virtues into their minds, hearts, characters and institutions which with time become manifest in their ways of living. Having imbibed democratic values, people will always respond to events democratically as if they learnt them from Adam. Browne (2007:51) extols the virtue of democratization though indirectly, when he writes:

Democracy in its true sense is not something found on a piece of paper. Democracy flourishes or is buried by how we relate to each other as human beings. For it to thrive, democracy must be etched in the hearts and minds of the players in the moral drama. It must seep into how we act daily, into our discussions, our decisions, into how we view the world and each other’s place in it.

In other words, for democracy to deliver on its promises it must run in people’s veins and arteries, form their ideals, thoughts, actions and reactions in their daily dealings with one another.

In a democratic culture, the principle, for example, live and let live is observed by everybody. Tolerance, patience, perseverance, hard work, opposition, discipline and mass consciousness are forms of social behaviour. People show respect for due process, respect others’ rights to opinions different from theirs, respect for life and recognition of every person’s humanity. When one life is in danger of missing, like a shepherd with 100 sheep, ninety-nine can be left behind, in search of one that has gone astray. John Locke the chief priest of modern democracy once said he might disagree with a person on his view but his right to his view, he (Locke) must defend till his last breath. In a democracy, behaviours leading to bigotry, dogma, rigidity, opinionatedness, intolerance of dissent views, e t c, are frowned upon as antithetic to human progress.

Also, in a democratized culture, principles such as the rule of law, economic security, social equality, fair and just treatment, consent of the governed, right of say, separation of powers, checks and balances, free, fair, transparent and credible election, independence of the judiciary, enlightened electorate, and transparent, accountable and responsible government are rules and not exceptions. Take for instance, the principle of separation of power. This principle insists that the three arms of government must remain separate and without interference by one arm with another. Each arm, to man its constitutional function; legislature to make laws, judiciary to interpret the laws, and executive to carry out the instructions of the law. Where this is not the case like Nigeria, the legislature and judiciary become just puppets in the hand of the executive. In such a situation, court orders are flouted and impeachable offences committed but offenders go scot-free because other arms that suppose to call the executive to order have already compromised their moral authority or emasculated by the executive.

Again, another area democratization is needed seriously is election. Election is a process through which the electorates elect or vote people of their choice into power. The process has to be flawless for election to be accepted, to inspire confidence and belief of the people. As it is, for election to be acceptable, it has to be free, fair, transparent and credible from the beginning to the end. Unless it is so, people that emerge from it are not regarded as leaders but as impositions on the people. Government they form is not government of the people, by the people, for the people but government of political abortionists, by political abortionists, for political abortionists. Nigeria's general elections of 2003 and 2007 are a good example. It was mass rigged by political party in power – People Democratic Party (P D P). The two elections in question failed to achieve their central aim of election which is "... promoting democracy and broadening fundamental freedom in a society" Browne (50). Election is the soul of modern democracy, without it – a flawless one in that matter democracy dies in conception and people are thrown into darkness as far as good governance is concerned.

As well, democratization calls for the promotion of certain forms of social behaviour like consensus, compromise, dialogue, explanation, reasoning, debate, etc, as means of settling disputes over personal or group disagreement or over public issues. Anyone who has studied human nature will not fail to notice that unanimity of opinions among human beings on any issue is a rarity – a pure luck. For that, in the course of disagreement in a democracy, the best option to adopt by citizens is persuasion rather than threat or use of force, violence or abusive language in canvassing their points of view. One of the arteries of democracy is criticism, but many have lost sight of its virtue. Criticism is bitter, unsettling and shattering to ego but despite all these it remains the reliable source of growth whether in individuals or groups. Criticism reminds mortals that they are mortals, and not God, so can make mistakes. Mortals are not perfect, so they know reality in fragments and not in whole. Also, ego does not allow people to see their faults, so they require a mirror being criticism to help them out. As Patrick Wilmot would say criticism is a mirror, if the criticized does not like his image as presented by mirror, threatening to break the mirror, is not the issue, but himself who is not good looking. So, democratization persuades people to accept, dialogue, disagreement, criticism, opposition and consensus as ways of life, and credible forms of social behaviours.

**Empowerment:** The term empowerment is a derivation of power. In fact, among human beings power is as important as food. If not that one will first of all eat before looking for power, power would have been put down as the number one priority. The importance of power in human affairs has made Robert Greene to write a book titled: *The 48 Laws of Power*. In the opening preface of the book he comments thus on power: "The feeling of having no power over people and events is generally unbearable to us – when we feel helpless we feel miserable. No one wants less power; everyone wants more" (Greene, 1998:xvii).

Now what is power? The word power is usually associated with words: ability, capability, domination, control, force, threat, enablement, influence, authority, e t c. This is the reason for various conceptions of power by scholars. Dukor (2003:viii) says: "Ontologically, power is the capacity to bring about an effect, but in the social realm, it is the capacity to exercise some measures of influences materially, intellectually and physically on someone else. It is the ability to command and adjudicate". That is to say in whatever realm, power is the capacity to influence someone else, to persuade or compel one to obey order, wish or instruction of its holder. For Asogwo and Omemma (2001:342), "Power is the ability of its holders to exact compliance or obedience of individuals to their will." While Max Weber has defined power as "the chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action," (Haralambas and Heald, 1980:101). Each of these conceptions sees power as an instrument of coercion with which the possessor persuades or forces people over whom it is exercised to comply with his will.

But Talcott Parsons rejects the above conceptions of power which see it as an ability to further, promote and enhance an individual's or a group's interest but rather regards it as something possessed by society as a whole and to be exercised in the interest of all. In his own conception, power is "a generalized facility or resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general "public" commitment has been made" (Haralambas and Heald, 101). In his own view of power, every member of society is having it or should be enabled to have it. For it is only in this way that every member – man or woman can be effective in the efforts to realize the goal of the society.

Having explained power, what is empowerment? Empowerment, simply put, is enablement. But in a political realm or a democracy, it means democratization of polity (governance). In other words, empowerment means in actual fact creating measures that will lead to acquisition of ability – ability that will enable every member of the society to play his or her role effectively and successfully either to himself or herself, to the family, community or to the state even to the world. When one lacks such ability one is said to be powerless. Thus to bring out someone in a state of powerlessness to state of power is what empowerment simply means. Yahaya (1999:1) when commenting on the need for women empowerment describes it as "the provision of adequate opportunities to women to develop their potentials and contribute to the development of the nation." While Adewale (1997:3), sees empowerment of woman "as the provision of conducive environment, opportunities for women to contribute their own quota to the social, political and economic development of the nation".

In a political community, empowerment means enablement of the citizens and their institutions to be at vantage position to perform their duties as individuals or as groups creditably with a view to attaining whatever goals they have set for themselves. In concrete terms these involve among other things, supremacy of constitution, equality before the law, rule of the law, respect for individual's freedoms of speech, assembly, association, worship and the rights to life, security and pursuit of happiness, access to sound and critical education, access to information, opportunities to economic security and empowerment, social equality, enlightened electorate, mass participation in governance, right to be informed about government policies and to criticize them, free, fair, transparent and credible election, impartial electoral body, periodic elections, e t c. For example, in a political state with enlightened citizens – that is, well-informed citizens who are economically well off and morally sound, dictators and tyrants which depend on ignorance, poverty, apathy and impotence of the masses to live and exercise their wicked power will hardly spring up as they have no hiding place. Dictators and tyrants are legion in Africa and Asia because majority of people are ignorant, poor, apathetic and powerless. In fact they are ignorant of what it means to exist as human beings. Knowing next to nothing in the art of governance, they leave their wicked leaders to carry on with their bloated ego- that after God they are the next in the world. While they themselves, in utter passivity carry on with vegetative forms of life. In fact, without empowerment democracy has no chance of taking root let alone thriving. And without democracy a country's dream of becoming a great nation remains a mere dream as development upon which greatness is built will be suffocating in the oven of dictatorship.

### ***Obstacles to Democratisation***

History of democracy as a system of government shows that it has never had it easy in its wayfaring in human society. Being a child of the underdogs in human societies, who have suffered so much in the hands of their rulers- their taskmasters, who would want them to be every way ministering to their (leaders') needs except where their destiny was being decided. So democracy is a product of long struggle of the masses to be masters of themselves and it is largely a child of modern times in terms of its articulate formulation. But its ancestry is traced to the city-state of Athens in the ancient Greece where its principles and practices were documented. But before it, were empires, kingdoms, caliphates, principalities, sultanates, emirates, e t c, ruled by kings, caliphates, Ezes, Obas, Asantehenes, Czars, Caliphs, Sultan or Emirs whose word was law, their order carried out without questioning and their actions despotic, dictatorial and ruthless. The reason for this prelude to the discussion of obstacles to democratization is to help the reader to understand and appreciate the environment in which democracy is struggling to thrive.

Many factors work against democracy in many parts of the world especially Africa and in particular Nigeria. First factor is a dictatorial environment. The long rules of Kings, Ezes, Obas, Sultans, Emirs in Nigeria with dictatorial airs have permeated into every part of the societies and influenced everybody to the extent that actions of anybody who happens to head any human group starting from fathers at home to kings presiding over the kingdoms are always despotic, autocratic and dictatorial.

People under them are expected not to ask critical questions but to accept their orders and instructions as given. This kind of environment is hostile and antithetic to the growth of democracy, which requires freedom, criticism and openness to thrive. The statement: “what I have said I have said,” which is common among Africans especially their leaders is an enemy of democracy.

Second factor is people’s ignorance of democracy-its meaning, purpose, principles and nature of its operations. It has been observed that many people especially in Nigeria do not know the true meaning of democracy, what it stands for and seeks to achieve. According to A. G. A. Bello:

This ignorance appears to pervade the whole spectrum of society, including politicians, academics, civil servants, lawyers, journalists, writers, and the common man. Indications of this ignorance include impatience with due process, calls for the intervention of the “presidency” in matters that calls for negotiations or other legal or quasi legal procedures, readiness to serve in regimes set up by dictators or autocrats or other leaders without electoral legitimacy.... (Oguejiofor,46).

Democracy is the government of the people, which encourages mass participation in governance, upholds every citizen’s right for say and insists that what concerns all must be approved by all. But due to ignorance of these tenets of democracy by politicians or refusal to observe them, they often carry on as if public opinion means nothing to them. Take for example, the third term bid pursued by the last administration under the former president Olusegun Obasanjo against public opinion. If not united efforts of all segments of the populace, the administration would have succeeded in elongating its life span in power.

In a democratic culture where citizens are enlightened on the art of governance and are aware of their rights and duties, any government which does not pass through free, fair, transparent and credible elections under the law of the land will not be allowed to rule as it is an imposition on the people. But this is not so in this part of the world due to ignorance and apathy of the citizenry. Democracy is fragile and needs to be defended and protected. But the defence and protection must come from the people, and not from the leaders who feel that democracy is checking them too much in their exercise of power. So, the problem with democracy is that those who are privileged to assist in its growth are its enemies.

Third factor is poverty. Experience has shown that democracy is worst hit in countries bedeviled by poverty. Poverty is a lack of basic needs of living such as food, house, cloth, education and access to justice, etc. African countries as a whole and Nigeria in particular are experiencing wars of poverty. Hunger is a guest in most of the homes; unemployment has reached a crisis stage; underemployment is a common sight. For example, a university graduate in motor-cycle riding business in order to scratch a living; women selling their favour in the midst of HIV/AIDS crisis in a bid to eke out a living. What of young men offering themselves to politicians to be used as thugs-cannon-folders-as a way to sustain themselves.

In a situation like this a talk about democracy is a talk about moonlight game. Everybody is interested in what sustains life at the moment hence majority are prepared to sell their votes to the highest bidder ranging from ₦500 to ₦1000. The truth is that the majority of the people are still preoccupied with questions of basic needs especially food, house and cloth that they do not have the time to think of ideals of which democracy is one.

Fourth factor is colonial-cum-neocolonial experience. Colonialism is a rule by one country over another country. The rule is usually an imposition on the latter as its consent was never sought. Europeans came to Africa in their economic mission, conquered Africans and imposed their predatory rule over them. So colonial administrations were dictatorial from head to toe. They governed with airs of superiority and Africans were convinced that they were inferior to Europeans who never expected anything less than servitude from them. All resistance to their rule was brutally and ruthlessly suppressed. Efforts of African rulers who resisted the European rule like “ Samori Toure, Ahmadu of Segu, Behanzin of Dahomey, Prempeh 1 of Asante, Lat-Dior of Cayor, Jaja of Opobo and Nana of Itsekiri chief” are still green in the African memory (Onwubuiko, 1973:234-235).

When African countries gained their independence the colonial rulers handed over the reigns of power to the native elites (neocolonialists) with structures of government such as armed forces, the police forces, the judiciary and the civil service intact.

These predatory structures designed by colonial masters for the subjugation of the colonial people were unsuitable for governing free people; yet were not changed by the new taskmasters who decided to continue from where their erstwhile masters stopped. The new masters whether civil politicians or military politicians were only black in terms of skin but in terms of philosophy, predisposition, attitudes, laws, rules, services and mannerisms they were then and are still now white. Odey(2005:11), in his lamentation over the Africans' predicament writes:

First of all, Africa suffered under the colonial masters how came as innocuous seekers of fortune but proved to be harbingers of Africa's doom. Today, the same Africa is going through the challenge and horror of leadership in the hands of Africans. People are suffering in almost every African nation as they never suffered in the colonial era.

African leaders are enemies of democracy. Their ruthless struggle for power and when clinched, to hold it until death takes them away has been the major cause of Africa's crises in governance.

Fifth factor is corruption. Corruption is a dishonest dealing in social life that manifests itself many ways. In politics, by politicians rigging elections, assassinating political opponents, influencing voters with money, bribing electoral officers, e t c. Party in government, manifests corruption also by extending political patronage to political opponents to silence them, to pressure groups like labour union, student body, the council of traditional rulers, town unions, the media, e t c, with a view to gagging their mouths. In civil service, officials refusing to do their normal duties unless they are given bribe, receiving 10% in government contracts, hiding files, police refusing to do their work unless they are given money. The problem of corruption is a big one in a poverty stricken society like Nigeria where majority of people lack the basic needs of life. Everything is for sale including justice. Judes have their prices; you pay the piper his price and dictate the tune.

This choking and corrosive atmosphere has been prevalent in Nigeria since her flag independence, hence the prolonged travails of democracy. Ever since the birth of self- rule in the first republic, democracy has been suffering avoidable abuses and in the present republic under the Obasanjo administration democracy has been beaten to the wheelchair. This present fate of democracy made Odey(2003:12) to comment:

Today, democracy is still in chains and with it, the future of our children. For instance, when I walk on the streets and see thousands of children who should be in school hawking pure water and other menial wares in order to keep their family alive, I am disturbed.

The cause of this pathetic picture is corruption. Nigeria has enough resources to keep her children within school-going age in school but cannot due to corrupt enrichment of leaders. Corruption has destroyed morality in Nigeria hence the leaders could not hesitate to mortgage the future of their children, the future of their children's children for political patronage. Sixth factor is military intervention in governance. The military encroachment in governance has been caused by the failure of political leaders in many African countries like Nigeria to fulfill the hope and promise of the countries' independence. The political leaders cum nationalists who chased the whitemen away from their countries' seat of power and shores and thus regained their countries' independence had promised heaven and earth for everybody if the white men left leaving the managing of the countries' resources in their hands. But the struggle for power and wealth by politicians left them no time to keep their promise of heaven and earth (the development and maintenance of stable polity and the protection and enhancement of the people's well-being) with the people.

Nigeria, for example, the deafening cries of the masses over the betrayal invited the military. The military personnel as human beings cherish like other human beings democracy, but they do not pretend to be democratic- the nature of their training is the cause. They came in with promise to sanitise the system, organize election and handover power to credible politicians. But the lure of power went into their heads, they never wanted to go but when they finally left, they never stopped looking at the direction of powerhouse; and this led to several interventions of military in governance. The result of this is a militarized polity, which is antithetic to democracy. Commenting on the pernicious presence of the military in Nigerian politics Oladipo (1999: 21):

Coming to the realm of values; one does not need to be a political scientist or philosopher to see that we are far from inculcating in our people a spirit of give and take- the bedrock of any democratic culture. Military authoritarianism and arbitrariness have stifled the development of our capacity to resolve crucial national issues through dialogue and consensus.

Thus, it is on record that the military endangered the more what they intervened to save: democracy. It was sentenced to coma throughout the period they lasted in power.

The seventh and final factor is the attitude of the international community to undemocratic governments in Africa. The attitude of some sections of the international community seems to suggest that what matters is their economic and political interest and not whether the government is democratic or undemocratic. Hence some of them have been caught in instigating, aiding and abetting, condoning and welcoming intervention in government that set aside democratic processes through coup d' etats. British celebrated the ousting of the president Milton Obote of Uganda by their boy a corporal Idi Amin Dada who later crowned him the Field Marshal and president for life. Coups that occurred in countries like Algeria, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Burma, Zaire (now democratic Republic of Congo), Senegal, Liberia, e t c, a foreign active support was behind them. They provide defence for governments that promote their economic interest and cut the ground off the feet of the ones that do not. The plot that led to the assassination of the president Patrice Lumumba of Congo was masterminded by a section of international community in fact, America's C.I.A. was fingered.

Economically, the western countries have been spearheading Africa's underdevelopment in variety of ways: First, providing cover for corrupt African leaders. Second, acting as receivers of stolen wealth from Africa. Third, providing foreign aids that are not helpful in any way but rather stifle indigenous creativity. Fourth, refusing to repatriate run away heads of state to come and give account of their stewardship. Fifthly, by using international corporations like the world Bank, the International Monetary Fund (I M F), e t c, whose activities in Africa hang perennial debts on the necks of African States and in consequence undermine their quest for economic self-reliance.

### ***Enthronment of Democracy***

The question whether democracy is the best political option regarding governance is already settled. The world has settled for it as the most effective way of governance given its essential elements like supremacy of constitution, regard for freedoms, respect for life and human dignity, right of say in a matter that affects one, mass participation in governance, people-centred government, a sense of belonging to all, e t c. The question now which stays humanity in the face especially in Nigeria is how to imbibe and internalize these basic elements of democracy so that they manifest naturally in the ways men and women relate with one another and do things both in public and private life. In order to achieve objectives of democracy the following must be the order of the day. First, is the recognition of the supremacy of constitution. Constitution is the highest legal document in a democracy containing laws, spelling peoples' relationship with one another, and with the existing institutions in the state. This must be held sacred and its spirit and provisions must be respected and upheld by all the citizens irrespective of their place in the State. Democracy cannot be given birth and let alone thrive in a lawless State. Hence, the need for all the citizens to subject themselves to the dictates of constitution. In constitution should be enshrined civil liberties or human rights as freedom of speech, association, assembly, worship, the press, the opposition, and rights to life, security, education, employment, e t c. It must equally contain guidelines of when and how elections are to be held. These guidelines and rules pertaining to the elections must be adhered to strictly.

Second is attitude of the people in a polity. Attitude is a general disposition toward something. The success or failure of a thing be it an idea, a project, an institution or anything at all depends on the people's attitude towards it. If the people's attitude is positive, that is, favorably disposed towards it, it is likely to succeed; but if it is negative, it is bound to fail. Farouk (2007:31) emphasizing the importance of attitude in the efforts of people to attain their goals sees "attitude as a human attribute, which is the primary force that determines the extent to which we succeed in the pursuit of our goals either as individuals, institutions or as a nation." Also, recognizing the catalytic nature of attitude, Thomas Jefferson one time American president said: " Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude" (31). So, what Africans especially Nigerians need to do to make democracy succeed in their environment is to be favourably disposed toward it. This in practical terms means observing in practice the principle of 'live and let live', loving one's neighbour as one's self, respect for life and human dignity, showing regard for the rule of law, adopting dialogue and consensus in settling interpersonal, intergroup disputes, tolerating opposing views, using persuasions and arguments in canvassing one's point of view, respecting majority decisions and right of minority to say, recognizing protest, e t c. These are veins and arteries of democracy.

Third are an enlightened, virile and vibrant press, political parties and pressure groups. Politics is a democratic process for which power is contested. Whoever wins the power is thus constitutionally empowered to authoritatively allocate values in accordance with the stipulations of the law. But, experience has shown that power has the tendency of making its wielder even saint let a lone ordinary mortal degenerate to using it at the cost of others' interest. As well, experience has confirmed it that for any project that calls for many hands to succeed, people are needed to play the role of supervisors, watchdogs or overseers. These people constantly watch the workmen at the site of the project to make sure things are going according to plan and to alert the public or the owner of the project when things are going wrong. In a polity democracy is the number one project for the people's general well-being depends on it.

In a democracy the role of watchdogs is played by the press, the opposition parties and pressure groups like trade (labour) unions, student body, fraternities, professional associations and civil rights groups. They are expected to have sound knowledge of the State, the problems and aspirations of the citizens. To scrutinize government policies and to advise through constructive criticisms on the best options to take on any public issues. Criticism, when heeded saves governments and individuals from going astray but ignored, leads to problems and consequently a failure. Criticism is the soul of democracy. It could be positive or negative. Positive criticism criticises to build while negative criticism criticises to destroy. Positive criticism sees possibility of good springing up in the object criticised, while the negative criticism sees nothing good in it and ever ready to throw the bathwater away with the baby. Dawaki (2007:15)'s opinion on criticism is very instructive: "Better to make amends and save your life than to rot in pride. You cannot reach the pinnacle of your career, if you turn a deaf ear to reasonable counsel."

Fourth is education of the entire citizenry. The civil society and the armed forces especially the army and the police should be well educated to understand their rights and duties. Democracy cannot thrive in a society where the citizens are not enlightened through education. "Education is the passport for advancement. It makes people to make better choices on life's journey and enables them to live lives of meaningful contributions through serving both God and humanity better," (Dawaki, 19).

The civil society-the masses should be educated that democracy depends on their good will to survive. If they go to sleep instead of defending and protecting it from the political hawks (no leaders) who are never warm with the idea of democracy, they will carry it away and substitute it for them with dictatorship which will reduce them to walking skeletons, refugees in their own lands. For the military, they must be educated to understand their constitutional role which is defence of the state and stick to that and never allow the lure of power and lucre to make them stray into politics. In Nigeria like in most countries they have tried their hand in governance and failed woefully; discovering to their eternal shame that they were even worse than the politicians they flushed out of power. The police to stick to their constitutional duty-maintenance of law and order in the civil society. It is lack of education that makes them support people that break the law of the land because they happen to be in the corridors of power. Corruption is a corrosive disease that eats 'the man' or 'the woman' in every citizen that stains his or her hands in it. So they should stop themselves from soiling their hands in the oil pot of corruption in their offices and at check points.

Fifth and final is eradication of poverty. Poverty is a worst disease that can afflict any human being, because it is a form of sentence on its victim which puts him or her in confusion on what role to play: whether that of human or that of animal? In other words, the victim could be described either way: an animal human or a human animal. That notwithstanding, he or she is neither wanted by humans nor by animals. This is the reason why the poor masses in Nigeria are never seen near where decisions that affect their destiny are made. So, to make a poor man to understand and appreciate democracy, he must first of all be made human by helping him to do away with poverty-poverty of all kinds – material and spiritual. A victim of material poverty lacks the means to satisfy his basic needs such as those of food, housing, clothing, education, e t c. While a victim of spiritual poverty lacks fine qualities that define a genuine human personality such as principles or social ideals that enhance and advance life. Social ideals such as live and let live, respect for life, regard for human dignity, love for oneself that will prevent him from committing suicide and for others that will prevent him from committing murder, insistence on justice, defence of truth, application of due process, selfless service, sharing of milk of human kindness, e t c. Oladipo (43) in support of the view that eradication of poverty among the Nigerian citizens is a sine qua non to building a great and wholesome society says: "Poverty, simple as it sounds, embraces a lot of things-want, deprivation, hunger, disease, ignorance and other related afflictions."

Therefore, efforts should be made to banish poverty from the life of every Nigerian. Nigeria is well blessed in terms of material and human resources. It is an irony of life that Nigeria is suffering poverty. So, for democracy to take root in this wealthy-poor country poverty must be shown the exit way.

### **Conclusion**

The thinking that runs through this paper from the introduction to the conclusion is that world has tried several political systems and finally settled for one that is less problematic and more promising in terms of assisting man to attain the goal of his existence – his well-being through good governance. That system is democracy. Democracy as experienced has shown, has never defaulted in providing good governance to countries that have kept their own side of the social contract agreement, that is, have observed democratic principles both in theory and practice to the letter. So Nigerians are enjoined to cultivate appropriate democratic culture that will help them translate principles of good governance into reality.

Democracy is an ideal, like every ideal, it is not usually had on a platter of gold. It is not apple to fall on people's laps- it is not a manna to fall from heaven – it is neither a product of chance nor a marathon prayer. It is a product of will to succeed in a set goal. The process leading to the set goal is an art, that is to say, democracy is art and like every art, it has its rules, which the craftsmen and women must learn, master and use in accordance with tested prescriptions. To make a success of this, calls for sacrifices – individual and group sacrifices. Leaders to shun corruption in whatever guises and the ruled to shun apathy. As even saints with power unchecked will falter, they should mount eternal vigilance over democracy knowing quite well that they are the true bulwarks of democracy. The ruled knowing that real power resides with them they have no reason to fail, for dictators and tyrants thrive on their ignorance and apathy.

Nigeria should not pretend to arrive so early at the practice of perfect democracy. No country, even Britain and America the oldest modern democracies, has attained that. But what is important for the country is to remain on the right course and continue gradual expansion of democratic space. A.G.A Bello recognizes this gradual assimilation and practice of democratic tenets when he writes: "... democracy is an ideal like justice and equality, and can only be approximated in practice, never attained. Therefore, we may start with the basic minimum and continue to work for the enlargement of the democracy space," (Oguejiofor,52). Democracy is a long journey, but a journey of one thousand miles begins in a step. Nigerians shall do so much in the years to come but what have they done today? Their today's work individually and collectively will determine to a large extent whether or not the goals pursued will be attained – when and how they will be attained. Therefore, every Nigerian should be empowered to contribute to its attainment.

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