

Democracy in Nigeria: Practice, Problems and Prospects

Adeyinka Theresa Ajayi¹ and Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo²

1. Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, NIGERIA
2. Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, NIGERIA

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to attempt a critical appraisal of the pace, practise, pattern, priorities, problems and prospects of Nigerian democracy. While it remains true that Nigeria is governed by democratically elected leaders at the federal and state levels, Nigeria is yet to institutionalise democracy after a century of existence as a political entity. The paper discusses some of the impediments to the institutionalisation of democracy in Nigeria after more than half a century of political independence. Some of these are the country's colonial background interspersed by vagaries engendered by deep-rooted ethnicity; complacent and spendthrift leadership; incessant intervention of the military in the democratic process; electoral fraud; wide spread poverty and high illiteracy level. The paper argues that the pivot around which most of the factors listed above revolve is corruption which has virtually become a way of life in Nigeria. The paper however contends that the above notwithstanding, the prospect of a politically stable and democratically viable nation is marked by people's eagerness to participate in the electoral process; the relative stability and sustenance of multi-party system and the general realisation in the country that the only acceptable and popular route to the acquisition of political power is the ballot box. The paper obtains its data from primary and secondary source materials and employs the historical method of data analysis - simple descriptive collation and analysis of historical data.

I. Introduction

Democracy and Nigeria are like Siamese twins; though conjoined, they are uncomfortable and under intense pressure that could result in all forms of hurt, even death. Although, democracy may not be strange to an overwhelming percentage of Nigerians; what may be strange to them is the brand of democracy that invests, first and foremost, in human and material resources for the purposes of political stability, economic viability, scientific advancement, technological breakthrough, educational development and life-enhancing social services. Given the general optimism that Nigeria was going to be the bastion of democracy in Africa following her independence from Britain in 1960, one should normally expect that by now democracy should be deeply rooted and institutionalised in the country. Ironically and unfortunately, Nigeria, as far as the practise and delivery of dividends of liberal democracy is concerned, is yet a cripple that can barely stand let alone walk or run.

This paper asserts that Nigerian democracy has three outstanding features. First, it is spendthrift. Nigerian democracy is a brand of democracy that spends so much to accomplish so little (where and when it achieves anything at all). Second, it invests in the comfort of officials rather than in human and material resources. In fact, the welfare of the common man occupies the bottom rung on the ladder of the priorities of the anchors of Nigerian democracy. Third, Nigerian democracy is plagued by hydra-headed and pathological corruption that ensures that the impact of any seeming good policy is either extremely negligible or almost exactly nil. The paper however concludes that while the balance sheet of democracy in Nigeria may be less than satisfactory; all hope is not lost as the desire for the practice of true democracy amongst Nigerians remains unassailably high.

II. Conceptual Discourse

Democracy, either as a concept or a system of rule, has become excessively ambiguous in contemporary political analysis. Indeed, there is probably no concept that has been so subjected to varying definitions, antagonistic interpretations and contradictory practises as the concept of democracy. This is not surprising given the fact that democracy has become more and more widely praised and embraced thereby making it more and more difficult to pin down. Politicians from the extreme left to the extreme right always insist that the form of politics¹ or rule they support is the one that is democratic in character. Even military regimes, which, according to Robert Mundt et. al.

cannot ‘deliver’ democracy,² always invoke the concept of democracy in support of arguments although such invocations are often punctured by ubiquitous violations of the fundamental rights of the people. This is what Peter Ekeh refers to as *democratism*, which, according to him, refers to the brand of rule that makes use of ‘false principles of the institutions of democracy’ while at the same time creating anti-democratic conditions.³

Thus, being the least objectionable form of rule, most regimes stake out some sort of claim to the practise of democracy while those that do not often insist that their particular instance of non-democratic rule is a necessary stage along the road to ultimate democracy. Indeed, Bernard Crick has described democracy as the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs.⁴ This is ostensibly because democracy is what is virtuous for a state to be – even in Africa, where liberal democracy has suffered several severe setbacks; since the 90s, it has gained a momentum comparable to that of science in the world of technology since the Industrial Revolution. One major consequence of the universal research attention democracy has received is what can be described as its contestation. Gallie may therefore not be wrong in including democracy in the catalogue of what he referred to as ‘essentially contested concepts’⁵ since a term that means anything means nothing. This appears to be the case with democracy which nowadays is not so much a term of precision or restricted and specific meaning but a vague endorsement of a popular idea.

The above notwithstanding, some conjectural attempts could still be made at explaining the common but complex and almost abstract concept of democracy. As Ukana Blankson has asserted, any meaningful attempt at understanding democracy must proceed from the ancient definition of democracy as peoples’ rule.⁶ The Greek words *demos* and *kratia* mean people and rule or authority respectively. Thus, democracy refers to ‘rule by the people’. This began in the first half of the 5th century B.C. among the Greeks thus beginning what Robert Dahl calls the transformation from rule by the few to rule by the many.⁷ During the French Revolution (1789-1799), the French lawyer and political leader, Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794), defined democracy as a “state in which the people, as sovereign, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself all that it can do well”.⁸ This definition implies that there are things ‘the people’ may be unable to do or cannot do well. The questions then are: what are these things? Who then do such things? We will return to this issue later.

In his Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln gave what has since become the most famous definition of democracy. In the Address, delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery on 19 November 1863 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Lincoln asserted that ‘all men are created equal’ and defined democracy as ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’.⁹ This definition makes the people the subject and object of democracy or what Nkolika Ebele terms ‘the *raison d’être* of governance’.¹⁰ This definition has many merits; although, like any other, it has its limitations. The definition stresses the principle of equality since all men are supposedly created equal. Harold Laski defines equality as the absence of special privilege.¹¹ Thus, a democratic state is often said to be one wherein the citizens have equal access to justice, job, power, privilege, etc. Indeed, Andrew Gamble describes a democratic state as the ‘republic of equals’.¹² This is because democracy implies that there should be a substantial degree of equality among men both in the sense that all the adult members of a society ought to have, so far as is possible, equal influence on those decisions which affect important aspects of the life of the society; and in the sense that inequalities of wealth, social status, access to education and knowledge, etc should not be so considerable as to result in the permanent subordination of some groups of men to others. According to Robert Darl, in every democratic state, the citizens are ‘political equals’.¹³ This is because, as Bottomore has pointed out, all human beings are remarkably alike in some fundamental respects – they have similar physical, emotional and intellectual needs.¹⁴ In 1646, in an article entitled ‘An Arrow Against All Tyrants’, Richard Overton (a puritan) wrote “For by nature, all men are equal...even so we are to live everyone equally”.¹⁵ Indeed, in virtually all his major works, Alexis de Tocqueville insisted that history (the story of mankind) is synonymous with equality.¹⁶

However, as fascinating as the concept of egalitarianism is, there exists a wide gulf between its theory and practise and indeed between the theory and practise of democracy itself. There is hardly anywhere in the world where democracy is a republic of equals because, as Kenneth Janda et. al. have asserted, ‘through occupation or wealth, some citizens are more able than others to influence political decisions’.¹⁷ Indeed, the elite theory is founded on the notion that politics is an affair of the coherent minority dominating the incoherent majority. Terms such as the *people*, the *masses* or the *majority* should even be used with caution as it is often difficult to identify what or who is meant by these terms in the specific case and even more difficult to gauge the attitudes and interests of these terms even when and where they are identified.¹⁸ This may have informed Roger Scruton’s assertion that “...the concept of democracy is immensely complicated partly because of difficulties in understanding who the people are and which

acts of government are truly theirs rather than those of some dominant group or interest".¹⁹ From the Greek City States to the emergence of modern state, the concept of egalitarianism had been consistently negated.

In the often eulogised Greek City States, which Giuseppe Di Palma referred to as the 'birthplace of democracy'²⁰, every inhabitant supposedly had a direct say on issues which directly affected the state. It must be pointed out however that in practise, Greek democracy was an exclusive one because a large part of the adult population was denied full citizenship i.e. the right to participate in politics whether by attending the meetings of the Sovereign Assembly²¹ or by serving in public offices. Not only were women denied the right of full citizenship, but also long-term resident aliens (*metics*) and slaves. Indeed, the slaves were no more than the property of their owners wholly without legal rights.²² Thus, only the non-slaves were allowed to vote²³ and by 430 BC, nearly half of the total population of Athens were slaves.²⁴ Furthermore, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the Enlightenment French social and political theorist and one of the first thinkers to question the basis of the undemocratic and absolute power wielded by Europe's monarchs, limited his notion of democracy to property owners while John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the British philosopher-economist, called for the extension of the franchise to the property class only.²⁵

Moreover, the emergence of modern state meant some loss of individual's rights and privileges since the state can force its members to carry out certain tasks. Since a state is a legal and political entity with power to require or compel obedience and loyalty from its citizens,²⁶ in most modern states, while the citizens may be free to express their views, they are made to live under the conditions prescribed by their states (leaders).²⁷ Although, while democracy is not synonymous with *diktat*; the above consideration may have informed the submission by Sir Henry Maine that democracy can never represent the rule of the majority because, more often than not, the people merely accept the dictates of their leaders.²⁸ In every human society and organisation, as Gerald et. al. have noted, there are bound to be inequalities in status, contributions and rewards.²⁹ Indeed, inequality is the bottom line of the Circulation of Elite Theory as postulated by its leading apostle, Vilfredo Pareto ((1848-1923)), the Italian sociologist and economist. By definition, elites are a group which influences power and re-defines the norms of society. They have pre-eminence over other members of the society by various acts of deference.³⁰ The definition and deference of the elite may have informed Pareto's conclusion that "history is a graveyard of aristocracies".³¹ What then is the content and context of the egalitarianism vaunted by democracy? The concept of equality espoused by democracy is theoretical hence its dismissal by William Letwin as the 'leading fetish of our time'.³² Even in a leading democracy like Britain, as Andrew Harding has pointed out, most people only engage in democracy when they vote in general election every four to five years. While admitting that to an extent, voices are lost or misplaced, Andrew argued that "more often than not, they are simply not heard".³³

In his penetrating study of American political system, John Lees asserted that 'elitist and inegalitarian traits have always existed in American society'.³⁴ Indeed, Thomas Patterson made this point more explicit. According to him, despite the lofty claim that all men are created equal, equality has never been American birthright. He cited the 1882 ban which made it impossible for the Chinese to immigrate into the United States. The suspension and other sundry discrimination against the Chinese and other Asians, which were not ended until 1965, were premised on the assumption that the Chinese were an inferior people.³⁵ Also, the Rosa Parks incident of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama is a well known one.³⁶ However, despite the foregoing, it must be conceded, as Lees rightly argued, that politicians in the United States have always recognised the importance of the common man with a strong commitment to liberty.³⁷ From our analysis so far, it appears that while government may be for all, it cannot be by all. As Julius Nyerere has pointed out, in every form of government, as far as the masses are concerned, power is something wielded by others – even if on their behalf.³⁸ Indeed, Charles Anderson defines politics simply as 'making choices on behalf of other people'.³⁹ This consideration may have influenced Appadorai's definition of democracy as a system of government under which people exercise governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves".⁴⁰ Appadorai's definition brings us back to Maximilien Robespierre's definition of democracy to which reference has been made. Appadorai's 'representatives' is probably the equivalent of Robespierre's 'what the people may not be able to do [well] by themselves' which may be better done by the representatives of the people. The issue one may wish to query here is whether a person can truly and adequately represent another in the context of the above definitions.

It is incontrovertible that representative democracy has replaced direct democracy and since modern democracy is capitalistic, the political state represents nothing but the rule of a propertied oligarchy. If the principle of representative democracy is worthwhile and workable in other climes; its practise in Nigeria is faulty and fraudulent. In Nigeria, no one represents or protects the interests of others: individuals, whether in the cabinet or parliament, can

hardly be described as the representatives of the people. Indeed, as Suberu has pointed out, a fundamental feature of contemporary Nigerian democracy is the deep and profound distrust of Nigerians for their elected representatives.⁴¹ This is not surprising given the endless abortion and frustration of the aspirations and hopes of the people by successive Nigerian governments. Let us even admit that a man can adequately represent another. At best one can represent a fraction – for example, an agriculturist may represent other agriculturists, lawyers may represent lawyers, a teacher may represent other teachers, etc. This is because a representative may know enough of everything to do everything badly and enough of nothing to do anything well. It would be recalled that in Nigeria, the main justification for military coups are almost always given as widespread dissatisfaction with the political and economic policies of the ousted regime. The usual claim is that democracy has been stifled, assaulted, malnourished and brutalised while the economy has been recklessly mishandled to the detriment of the masses and to the selfish advantage of a small elite – the representatives of the people! Yet, government by all is neither possible nor practicable because, as Frank Bealey has pointed out, with vast numbers of people in the modern nation state; direct participation in decision making by all is impossible.⁴² Ironically, democracy flourishes when and where citizens enjoy basic freedoms, have a voice in how they are governed and understand the workings of their governmental system.

From the above, one may be tempted to conclude that democracy is an abstract and illusive form of government because the assumptions on which it rests are almost always difficult of fulfilment. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of democracy has attracted several severe criticisms from both adversaries and sympathisers. The adversaries (e.g. Plato, 328-347 B.C.) asserted that while democracy may be possible, it is inherently undesirable. There are also those who, like Robert Michels, hold the view that while democracy might be desirable if it were possible; in actuality, it is inherently impossible.⁴³ The sympathetic critics are those who strongly support democracy but are critical of it in some important respects. The above notwithstanding, the greatest merit of democracy is probably its recognition of the duties of government and the rights of the governed. Thus, democracy may not be foolproof; its strength lies in the possibility of adjustment and re-adjustment of institutions in accordance with prevailing socio-political and economic conditions and realities. Thus, like any other concept or form of government, democracy has its own limits and possibilities. There is no doubt that democracy has brought untold succour or what Ronald Manzer terms ‘political goods’⁴⁴ to humanity particularly in the Western world. Conversely, the pattern and practise of democracy in Nigeria has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, fuelled corruption, exacerbated ethnic and religious unrest, provoked unprecedented agitations by ethnic militias, led to the intervention of the military in the democratic process, strangled the economy and impoverished the masses.

III. The Practise and Problems of Nigerian Democracy

Although, democracy is a universal concept, its practise differs from one place to another with regard to acquisition of (and disposition to) power and institutional arrangements. Hence, one can talk of American democracy, British democracy, Irish democracy, Canadian democracy and so on. It has been pointed out above that the concept of egalitarianism has more theoretical connotations than practical application. There is nowhere in the world where democracy is a republic of equals. Thus, socio-economic and political inequality is a prominent and permanent feature of democracy particularly in Nigeria where democracy has widened the gap between those who have access to power and public funds and those who do not. Since democracy is said to be government of the people by the people and for the people, it is therefore generally assumed that democracy is the most suitable form of government at least as far as the delivery of Ronald’s ‘political goods’ is concerned. It is therefore generally taken for granted that the pursuit of the welfare of the generality of the people is the epicentre of democracy wherever it is practised. While this may be so in some democracies, the reverse is the case in others: while democracy is synonymous with holistic development and aggregated growth in some climes; it is the representation of betrayal and inhuman deprivation in others. Nigeria probably personifies the latter. While some countries aspire to and do indeed practise democracy for the socio-economic benefit of the generality of the people or at least as many people as possible; others, like Nigeria, make their own brand of democracy government of the few by the few and for the socio-economic benefit of the few. Indeed, the most outstanding feature of Nigerian democracy is mind boggling and unpardonable waste of public funds on the comfort of a few Nigerians. The democracy of waste practised in Nigeria invests, first and foremost, in the comfort of officials rather than in human and material resources.

For example, in the 2012 national budget, about ₦176 million was allocated to the extension of the gates of the Aso Rock Villa (the official residence of the President) apart from the ₦280 million allocated to the purchase of two bullet proof vehicles. In addition, about ₦36 million was allocated to the extension of power supply to the State House Centre Store while ₦52.4 million went into the provision of uninterruptible power supply to the Presidential Guest House. Moreover, ₦127.5 million was allocated to the overhauling of two generating sets in the Presidential Lodge. Furthermore, ₦512.54 million was allocated to the renovation and refurbishing of the family wing of the President's main residence while ₦101.67 million was allocated to the rehabilitation of the transformer sub-station in the Villa. Finally, ₦97.95 million was allocated to the extension of the Villa's car parks. In all, about ₦1.5 billion was allocated to all kinds of upgrades and renovations in and around the President's residence.⁴⁵

From available evidence, it is obvious that Nigeria has one of the largest Presidential Air Fleets (PAF) in the world. While Ghana and Algeria each has only one aircraft in their Presidential Air Fleets and Japan and the Netherlands each has two, Nigeria has ten. The cost of the aircrafts in the PAF, which is larger than those of three Nigerian airlines combined, is estimated at about \$390.5m (₦60.53b). Furthermore, it is estimated that about \$58.5m (₦9.08b) is spent annually on running the aircrafts in the Nigerian PAF.⁴⁶ Closely related to the above is foreign travels. In 2012, ₦684.74m was budgeted for President Jonathan's foreign travels while ₦1.289b was earmarked for the same purpose in 2013⁴⁷ whereas following nation-wide protest against fuel subsidy removal in 2012, the President had promised to drastically reduced his foreign trips. In 2014, the President is spending ₦1.159bn on foreign and ₦1.219bn on local trips; ₦483.279m on the maintenance of motor vehicles; ₦426.493m on publicity and advertisements; ₦56.786m on medical expenses; ₦23.9m on foodstuffs; ₦173.3m on refreshments and meals; ₦122.9 on lubricants; ₦320m on honorarium and sitting allowances, among others. In all the Presidency's total allocation under the 2014 Budget of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is ₦33bn⁴⁸ (about \$190m) whereas all Nigeria's federal roads, most of which are accident-infested because of utter lack of maintenance, got a paltry sum of ₦100bn.⁴⁹ (about \$575m)

Another example of what the Women Arise for Change Initiative referred to as Nigeria's 'culture of waste' was the over ₦4 billion (about \$23m) allocated for the building of an office for the African First Ladies Mission Initiative. Mrs. Patience Jonathan, the wife of the President and the brainchild of the project, ensured that budgetary allocation was made for this project in the 2013 budget of the Federal Capital Territory.⁵⁰ The Senate however queried the rationale behind the commitment of huge taxpayers' money to the prosecution of a project that would make no contribution to the socio-economic well-being of Nigerians and consequently squashed it.⁵¹ Unfortunately, this tradition of waste is replicated, at varying degrees, down to the local government level. This is because the same outrageous budgetary and extra budgetary allocations are made for state governors and their wives, ministers, several dozens advisers and personal assistants to political office holders, members of parliament, commissioners and local government chairmen amongst several others. Unfortunately, as shall be shown later, since endemic corruption always ensures that funds are not utilised for the purposes for which they are allocated (when and where they are actually released), funds are allocated to same projects cyclically and almost without end.

Ironically, in Nigeria today, individuals struggle heart and might to provide for themselves those basic social amenities the state should normally provide. Those Nigerians who have the means generate their own power, make personal security arrangements, patronise privately-owned schools and hospitals, etc. On the other hand, the less privileged rural dwellers who are in a clear majority, live in palpable darkness, drink all sorts of contaminated water and contract all kinds of water-borne diseases there from and are regularly harassed, wounded or killed by armed bandits. Only recently, the Inspector-General of the Nigeria Police Force publicly admitted that the Force was being grossly under-funded thereby making its task of protecting the lives and properties of Nigerians an uphill one.⁵² Malaria fever, which has been permanently 'conquered' in some climes, still kills dozens of hundreds of children whose parents cannot patronise privately-owned hospitals while many indigent school age children are either out of school or learn under the most horrific conditions in state-owned schools. Last March, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) released a damning report about Nigeria's education sector. According to the report, Nigeria has more than 10.5 million out-of-school children.⁵³ Only recently, in a State of the World Mothers Report published by the Save the Children International, about 89,700 day-old babies are said to die in Nigeria annually. According to the report, Nigeria has the 12th highest rate of first-day deaths in the world and the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁴

In most parts of Nigeria, power supply⁵⁵ is almost exactly nil, potable water⁵⁶ is a scarce commodity, health care facilities are either altogether nonexistent or in complete shambles while hundreds of people die in motor accidents

annually owing to extremely poor road networks.⁵⁷ From all indications, the irreducible fact seems to be that the promotion of the welfare of the masses is neither the primary preoccupation nor the cardinal objective of the anchors of Nigeria's democracy. Unfortunately, a famished, weak and ignorant citizenry can hardly serve as catalyst for the deepening and sustenance of democracy. According to a recent World Bank report, about 100 million Nigerians live in destitution. This implies that 8.3% of the world's 1.2 billion destitutes are Nigerians.⁵⁸ In a newspaper article entitled 'The Story of Cain, Abel and Nigeria' Ademola Adedokun captures the practise of Nigerian democracy thus

Today, Nigeria is literally bleeding. There is too much violence. We have bred enough Frankenstein monsters to haunt us. We feed them red meat each time they cry for blood. Those who are not killed by Boko Haram are killed by the Joint Task Force. Those who escape the JTF fall into the hands of mind-bending illiteracy. Those who manage to escape all those are consumed by road accidents. Some die in poorly equipped hospitals. Those lucky to bypass all of the above are either killed by hunger, poverty, or frustration practically turns them to the living dead. It is the curse of Cain. The earth antagonises people who needlessly shed blood. Recently, multiple road accidents claimed almost 100 lives. In a country where life counts, that should have led to a major social change. Sadly, not even a paragraph of official response came from the government, not even the local government chairmen of the areas the accidents happened. Unfortunately, the government aides who explain away these deaths are the same ones who rush to *Twitter* to console President Barack Obama over the Boston bombing. They are not their own brother's keepers because their brother's life is worthless.⁵⁹

Although, Nigeria has produced nine written constitutions;⁶⁰ it is yet to institutionalise democracy. This is because the problem is neither with the makers nor matters of the constitution; but the men who have the responsibility of operating the constitutions.⁶¹ To institutionalise democracy is to develop and strengthen the legal-rational structures⁶² that would invariably strengthen and solidify democracy and the rule of law. Decalo defines political institutionalisation as a process through which stable, complex political structures and procedures are put in place, developed and legitimised to create a degree of sub-system autonomy for the purposes of running people-centered governments.⁶³ In Nigeria, like in most African states, politics and government are mostly personal and so do not always conform to an institutionalised system. This is perhaps the most important singular factor for the frequent failure of democracy and the regular breakdown of democratic structures and regimes in Nigeria and Africa at large. As David Roth and Frank Wilson have pointed out, military coups are frequent in states where democracy is not institutionalised and very rare in those with institutionalised political framework.⁶⁴ It would be recalled that of Nigeria's three democratic dispensations since independence in October 1960, the current 14-year old civil rule which commenced with ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime on 29 May 1999 is the longest.⁶⁵ It should be emphasised that while the Nigerian First Republic lasted approximately five years (1 October 1960 – 14 January 1966); her Second Republic lasted only four years (1 October 1979 – 31 December 1983). The implication of the above is that of the 39 years between 1960 and 1999, military juntas held sway for about 30 years.

It must be stressed however that military incursion into politics is not peculiar to Nigeria; it is a world-wide phenomenon though notoriously prevalent in Africa.⁶⁶ While we may not venture into a detailed enquiry into the proximate causes of the prevalence of coups and coup attempts in Africa, suffice it to state that there are a number of causative factors.⁶⁷ At the risk of over generalisation, one is that countries where poverty is prevalent and per capita GDP is low are places where successful coups often take place. Moreover, Diamond and Plattner have asserted that where civil society is weak and politicians are corrupt and divided, the military 'will prevail in the moment of opportunity'.⁶⁸ This moment of opportunity, according to the Diamond-Plattner thesis, depends on the availability of a charismatic military leader (one who has no ties with or at least cannot be blamed for the unpopular decisions of the incumbent government). Diamond-Plattner's 'moment of opportunity' abounds in African history. Indeed, because of pathological corruption, prevalent poverty and endemic economic and political crises, the intervention of the military in the democratic process sometimes received standing ovation and widespread support (for example in Nigeria in 1966 and 1983). Between 1960 and 1969, Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed 27 coups; 30 between 1970 and 1979 and 22 between 1980 and 1989.⁶⁹ Indeed, as Thomson has estimated, by 1989, about 60%

of Africa's democratically elected governments had been toppled by the military.⁷⁰

The wrong practise of democracy and its regular breakdown in Africa may have informed the view that representative government, particularly adversarial democracy is alien to Africa. One of the exponents of this view is Adiele Afigbo, a notable Nigerian Professor of history of Igbo extraction. According to him, the proximate cause of the travails of Nigerian democracy is that it was foisted on Nigerians from outside and did not evolve on the basis of need. Afigbo contends further that western democracy in Nigeria is a plant of very recent growth and by implication of very tender age. According to him, democracy "has no ancestors or parents in indigenous Nigerian political culture. Its sponsors were the Western European bourgeoisie who introduced it in the first place and then retreated beyond the shores of Africa."⁷¹ While Afigbo may be tolerably correct in his assertion that 'western democracy in Nigeria is a plant of very recent growth and by implication of very tender age'; one finds it difficult to accept his view that democracy 'has no ancestors or parents in indigenous Nigerian political culture'. Obviously, village or traditional democracy was the ancestor of modern/western/liberal democracy, not only in Africa but in the world at large: the Athenian and the Greek City States' brands of democracy illustrate this point very clearly.⁷² Variants of Athenian democracy existed in traditional African societies, empires and kingdoms. For, example, in the Old Oyo Empire⁷³ 'traditional democracy' was strong and almost unassailable.

The principle of separation of power, aimed at ensuring that the chief executive did not arrogate too much power to himself (the same aim of liberal democracy), was sacrosanct and, in the Old Oyo Empire, any *Alafin*⁷⁴ who attempted to arrogate extra constitutional powers to himself did so to his peril as he would be asked to 'sleep' (die by committing suicide) by the *Basorun*.⁷⁵ Thus, as Oyemakinde has pointed out, the very existence of chiefs who advised and assisted the Yoruba sovereign provided a counterweight against monarchical absolutism.⁷⁶ In rejecting an offending *Alafin*, one of the pronouncements made by the *Basorun* is "...the people reject you". This is in perfect agreement with the submission of Casely Hayford 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 him⁷⁷

This is in tandem with liberal democracy's provision for the removal of an unpopular, cruel, dictatorial and oppressive or corrupt leader and the retention of the humane, selfless, responsive and responsible ones. Indeed, in most traditional African societies, the concept of democracy carried the seal of the gods. This constantly kept the rulers in check since the pronouncement of the gods in rejecting a ruler was immediate, irreversible and final unlike in western democracy where conflicting pronouncements could emanate from court-rooms. The authority of traditional African rulers was thus derived from the sovereign will of the people. From time immemorial, Africans had abhorred tyranny, detested dictatorship and opposed high-handedness. African history is replete with instances of opposition to tyrannical and cruel rulers. For instance, in the Benin Empire,⁷⁸ one of the reasons for the rejection of the *Ogiso* Dynasty by Benin people was the perceived highhandedness of the *Ogiso* kings (Kings of the Sky). Even Oba Ewuare, the supposed founder of modern Benin,⁷⁹ encountered stiff opposition from several quarters because of his perceived high-handedness and dictatorial tendencies. In one of his Intelligence Reports on the Ekiti Division of Ondo Province, Captain N.A.C. Weir, an Assistant District Officer, spoke of "definite form of objection to the rule of a person who is inclined to be autocratic".⁸⁰ In most cases, in pre-colonial Africa, leaders and decisions survived only if they had the support and blessing of the masses of the people. It is therefore misplaced to assert that democracy has no ancestors or parents in indigenous Nigerian political culture.

Traditional African societies, according to a Sessional Paper published by the Kenyan Government, had two outstanding attributes: political democracy and mutual social responsibility. The Paper pointed out that political democracy in traditional African societies provided a genuine hedge against the exercise of disproportionate political power by economic groups and that even when traditional African leaders appeared to have exercised disproportionate political influence over their tribe or clan; there were traditional checks and balances including sanctions against any perceived abuse of such power.⁸¹ Thus, one cannot but agree with K.A. Busia's description of traditional African leaders as 'trustees' whose influence was circumscribed both in customary law and religion.⁸² The fundamental reason for the constant breakdown of democracy in Africa and Nigeria in particular is not because

democracy has no ancestors or parents in indigenous African or Nigerian political culture. As Kidane Mengisteab has pointed out, many African traditional institutions of governance have valuable characteristics that can inform the development of culturally relevant institutions of democratic governance in contemporary Africa.⁸³ Pre-colonial African societies had rich traditional political, economic and social institutions that dealt with allocation of resources, law-making and social control.⁸⁴ Indeed, one prominent feature of Africa's traditional institutions of governance is the consensual nature of decision-making particularly in the areas of resource allocation and law-making.

It can indeed be argued that in terms of conflict resolution, traditional African societies have an edge over liberal democracy. This is because differences and disputes in the former were almost always settled through consensual negotiations rather than through the latter's adversarial procedures which often produce proud winners and punched losers. The Eritrean village *baito*, the Igbo village assembly in Eastern Nigeria, the *kgotla* in Botswana and the *gada* system in Ethiopia are some of the famous examples of ancestors or parents of western democracy in Africa.⁸⁵ The immediate cause of the constant breakdown of democratic structures in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is the non-institutionalisation of democracy. Every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientation. In Nigeria, power is almost always the exclusive preserve of the President⁸⁶ thereby making rule more personalised than institutionalised. According to UNESCO, for democracy to take roots in any society, it must be anchored on a genuine institutionalised culture of debate and dialogue.⁸⁷ The most cursory glance at the practise of democracy in Nigeria would reveal that it is almost exactly the antithesis of the universally acclaimed meaning of that concept. Because of non-institutionalisation of democracy - with the exception of what Lt.-General Alani Akinrinade calls 'one or two lonely exceptions',⁸⁸ - democracy has constantly been on the retreat in Africa.

Perhaps, the greatest problem threatening Nigerian democracy today is corruption. In Nigeria, the latter is probably more institutionalised than the former hence the country is an eminent member of the comity of the most corrupt nations of the world. It must be admitted here however that corruption is not a plant of very recent growth in Nigeria. On 26 February 1952, the Emir of Gwandu moved the following motion on the floor of the Northern Nigeria House of Chiefs

That this House, agreeing that bribery and corruption are widely prevalent in all walks of life, recommends that Native Authorities should make every effort to trace and punish offenders with strict impartiality and to educate public opinion against bribery and corruption⁸⁹

In his assessment of the first year of Nigeria's independence, Chief Awolowo found the outstanding feature of the newly independent country to be "a dangerous decline in moral values where honesty was at a discount and corruption and mediocrity had a high premium". He charged that bribery and corruption, especially in high places was on the increase and that "a large percentage of monies which were voted for expenditure on public projects found their way into the pockets of certain individuals".⁹⁰ Two years after Chief Awolowo's submission, Ronald Wraith and Edgar Simpkins gave a continental assessment and impact of corruption on Africa as follows

In Africa, corruption flourishes as luxuriantly as the bush and the weeds which it so much resembles, taking the goodness from the soil and suffocating the growth of the plants which have been carefully and expensively bred and tended⁹¹

The above is a good summary of the devastating effects of corruption on Nigeria even though the corruption Ronald and Edgar spoke about was inconsequential compared with the monumental corruption in present-day Nigeria in particular and Africa generally. In the case of Nigeria, among others things corruption has ensured that power generation capacity – the pathway to sustainable development – is miserably low: about 3,300 megawatts as at April 2013 (for a population of over 140 million).⁹² Also, dozens of thousands of Nigerians die in road accidents yearly owing to extremely poor roads. In addition, corruption has ensured the absence of qualitative educational, social and medical services. Indeed, corruption has ensured that Nigerians live in grinding poverty in the midst of abundance natural resources, extravagance and squander. Although, there are pockets of corrupt practices in the private (particularly banking) sector; virtually every segment of the public and civil service is characterised by institutionalised corruption. It is therefore not surprising that for a fairly long time now, Transparency International

has consistently rated Nigeria as a pandemically corrupt nation.

In its most recent report, Global Financial Integrity, GFI, a Washington-based research and advocacy organisation ranked Nigeria 7th nation (out 143) with the highest level of illicit financial outflows. According to the report, Nigerian leaders laundered about \$19 billion within a decade (2000 and 2010).⁹³ This is in addition to several billions of naira stolen by public and civil servants which are in safe custody locally. In the view of the present writer, the figure of illicit financial outflows from Nigeria quoted by Global Financial Integrity appears too conservative. Let us consider the two most popular amongst several high profile money laundering cases in Nigeria. A former governor of Balyesa State, Chief Diepreye Alamiyeseigba, was in 2007 convicted for stealing billions of naira state funds. He pleaded guilty and offered to return ₦43 billion (about \$270 million) to state coffers.⁹⁴ Whether he ever did or the use to which the money was put are issues that only state officials can address. Also, a former governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori, was said to have embezzled \$250 million state funds. These are just two of hundreds of high profile embezzlement of state funds.⁹⁵ The main cause of this tragedy is that the generality of Nigerians worship material success no matter by what means the success is achieved. This has led to what Justice Mustapha Akanbi refers to as the 'economic ruination' of Nigeria⁹⁶ which has in turn led to steady growth in the rates of misery, poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and other socio-economic deprivations.

Unfortunately, the forces reared against corruption in Nigeria are altogether feeble and negligible. Indeed, directly or otherwise, successive Nigerian governments had aided and abetted corruption. For example, in March 2013, Nigeria President, Goodluck Jonathan, pardoned (under state amnesty) Chief Diepreye Alamiyeseigba, a former state governor who stole public funds running into several million dollars while nothing drastic was done to James Ibori, another former state governor⁹⁷ until a Southwark Crown Court in the United Kingdom sentenced him to 13 years imprisonment in April 2012. While it is true that the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo established two supposed anti-corruption agencies,⁹⁸ most Nigerians know too well that, except in very negligible instances, these agencies are nothing more than objects of vendettas, vengeance and persecution of the enemies (real and imagined) of the president.⁹⁹ Irrespective of the magnitude of corrupt practices of public officers, they are immune to prosecution and conviction as long as they are in the good book of the president. Unfortunately, the judiciary, the supposed second estate in the realm and the last hope of the common man is itself a breeding ground of corrupt practices, has inflamed corruption in Nigeria. Only recently, a judge imposed a fine of ₦750,000 (\$4,546) on a pension administrator who was alleged to have stolen pension funds running into millions of dollars¹⁰⁰ This corruption-abetting judgment drew the wrath of many prominent Nigerians including the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court Abuja, Justice Ibrahim Auta, who posited that corruption cases should not carry the option of fine, because, according to him, 'when penalties are stiffened, the incidence of corruption naturally comes down'.¹⁰¹ At present, there seems to be no end in sight to the tragedy of corruption in Nigeria. Indeed, many Nigerians probably share the view expressed by a pessimist like Alex Akinyele, a former Minister of Information and Culture who opined that only the Sango and Ogun deities can stop corruption in Nigeria.¹⁰²

The perpetual inability to conduct relatively free and fair elections is the final problem confronting Nigerian democracy discussed in this paper. Competitive, free and fair elections are the *sine qua non* of democracy because they are a regular and direct means of citizens' participation in governance. Unfortunately, despite their enormous financial implications,¹⁰³ Nigerian elections can hardly be described as elections as they are characterised by all sorts of malpractices and fraud. It is indeed instructive to note that controversies arising from widespread electoral fraud and malpractices had assailed Nigerian democracy all through its entire post-colonial political history. It would be recalled that the military intervened in the democratic process on 15 January 1966 following an acrimonious election in the defunct Western Region. Again, the military sacked the Aliyu Shagari-led civilian administration on 31 December 1983 following pervasive post-election violence in several parts of the country. Also, the *military-civilian* administration of General Ibrahim Babangida collapsed following the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election presumably won by Late Chief Moshood Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba. From the above, it is evident that Nigeria has a long history of failed electoral processes.¹⁰⁴

IV. Prospects of Nigerian Democracy

From the above analysis, it is obvious that the balance sheet of democracy in Nigeria is less than satisfactory; yet all hope is not lost. In the first place, despite myriads of disappointment of hopes, denial of rights and betrayal of trust

by successive Nigerian governments, the desire for democracy amongst Nigerians has remained unassailably high. Since the commencement of the current democratic dispensation, Nigerians have consistently expressed their desire and preference for democracy by their active participation in the various transition programmes and electoral processes despite their reservations and regrets over aspects of these programmes and processes. In addition, today, there is a general realisation in the country that the only acceptable and popular route to the acquisition of political power is the ballot box.

The relative stability and sustenance of multi-party democracy holds good prospects for democracy in Nigeria.¹⁰⁵ A cursory glance at the political history of Nigeria reveals that the current democratic dispensation has the largest number of political parties. It would be recalled that the First Republic (1960-1966) was dominated by four major political parties: Northern People's Congress, NPC; Action Group, AG; National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC and Nigerian National Democratic Party, NNDP. During the Second Republic (1979-1983), the political scene was dominated by five registered political parties: National Party of Nigeria, NPN; Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN; Nigerian People's Party, NPP; Great Nigerian People's Party, GNPP and People's Redemption Party, PRP. In the Third Republic (1987-1993), there were two government founded and funded parties: National Republican Convention, NRC and Social Democratic Party, SDP. In the current political dispensation, prior to 6 December 2012 when Nigeria's electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, deregistered 28 political parties,¹⁰⁶ there were 50 registered political parties in the country. Of the remaining 30, only four are electorally viable. These are the ruling People's Democratic Party, PDP; Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN; Congress for Progressive Change, CPC and All Nigerian People's Party, ANPP.¹⁰⁷ With the exception of the Labour Party, LP and the All Progressives Grand Alliance, APGA, many of the other political parties are almost completely unknown, although they present the Nigerian electorate an avalanche of political parties thereby giving them the opportunity of deciding where to swing their electoral pendulum. However, in a country like Nigeria where illiteracy level is very high, confronting the electorate with too many political parties breeds confusion. It is gratifying however to note that some of these parties present relatively strong and viable opposition to the federal and the respective state governments. The most important signal to the prospect of the survival and strengthening of democracy in Nigeria is probably the ability to transit from one civilian administration to another even if through heavily flawed and widely flayed elections. Although Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, it was in 2007 that the country, for the first time, successfully transited from one civilian administration to another. All earlier attempts generated suffocating political logjams that ended in the intervention of the military in the democratic process. Although, the results of the 2007 elections attracted widespread condemnations, the overall result was a rather smooth and peaceful handover of political power from one civilian government to another. It would be recalled that on 29 May 2007, Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian from the Southwest who had spent two consecutive terms of four years each, relinquished power to Alhaji Musa Yar'adua, a Muslim from the Northwest. Yar'adua however died in office on 5 May 2010 and his deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, completed his (Yar'adua's) term before running as substantive president in the 2011 elections which he won amidst devastating controversies. Again, on 29 May 2011, Nigeria once again transited from one civilian government to another thereby accomplishing what it could not a few years back.

V. Conclusion

This paper has attempted a critical appraisal of the pace, practise, pattern, priorities, problems and prospects of Nigerian democracy. One of the major findings and arguments of the paper is that while democracy is being nourished and made to take roots in other climes, it is being manipulated and malnourished in Nigeria. In his 1962 assessment of the practise of democracy in Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo¹⁰⁸ opined that democracy was "pinning away on its death-bed...it has been mercilessly assaulted and violated...it is already being made to suffer from gross misuse and utter lack of nurture".¹⁰⁹ While it is true that this kind of criticism should normally be expected from a Parliamentary Opposition Leader; Chief Awolowo's assessment was probably an irreducible fact. Regrettably, the situation is worst today. The pace of democracy in Nigeria is everything but progressive – at times it stagnates while at some other times it retards. Nigerian political history is replete with failed electoral processes, a cyclical failure that returns the country to the scratch each time an attempt is made at making democracy get off the ground in the country.

In a similar reference to Africa generally and Nigeria in particular on the threshold of the twenty-first century, Alani Akinrinade asserted that

Africa remains the only continent that is entering a new millennium remarkably worse off than it entered the one just ending...it is even more shameful [that]...places that ought rightly to be the continent's beacons of hope are now its most worrying blights...Among places that ought to have given the continent a fillip, but which has not, and perhaps may never be able, is Nigeria¹¹⁰

Once upon a time, Nigeria was a beacon of hope for Africa. A few years after the country gained independence from Britain, Nicolas Freville wrote "since her independence, Nigeria has become a very good example to other African countries...More children go to school in Nigeria than in any other African country...the government cares for the sick..."¹¹¹ From our discussion so far, it is obvious that the same cannot be said of Nigeria today. As far as the practise of democracy in Nigeria is concerned, it is virtually not beneficial to the common man. There is however no perfect democracy anywhere in the world and, as pointed out earlier on, the eagerness of Nigerians to participate in the electoral process; the relative stability and sustenance of multi-party system and the general realisation in the country that the only acceptable and popular route to the acquisition of political power is the ballot box are some of the fillips that suggest that all hope is not lost.

Notes and References

¹ James MacGregor Burns defines politics as 'the method by which people live together, decide how to meet their basic needs, solve common problems, protect themselves against threats both foreign and domestic' as well as 'the process of who gets what, when and how'. See his *Government By the People* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. xi. Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright see it as 'a way of determining, without recourse to violence, how power and resources are distributed in society'. *Keeping the Republic* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), p. 5.

² Robert J. Mundt et. al. "Politics in Nigeria" in Gabriel A. Almond et. al. (eds.) *Comparative Politics Today* (New York: Longman, 2008), p. 706.

³ Peter K. Ekeh, "Democratism Versus Democracy" in Festus Eribo et. al. *Window on Africa: Democratization and Media Exposure* (North Carolina Center for International Programs Publication No. 1, 1993), p. 51. This is the equivalent of Alexis de Tocqueville's 'democratic despotism'. See Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1983), p. 117.

⁴ Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 56.

⁵ For a comprehensive list of Gallie's 'essentially contested concepts', see Andrew Coax et. al., *Power in Capitalist Societies: Theory, Explanations and Cases* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1985), p. 30.

⁶ Ukana Blankson Ikpe, "The Patrimonial State and Grassroot Democratic Participation in Nigeria", Ph.D Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, 1988, p. 1.

⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New York & London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 1.

⁸ Andrew Gamble, *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 91.

⁹ Full text of Lincoln's Address could be viewed at <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address. Both sites were assessed on 4th September, 2012.

¹⁰ Nkolika E. Obianyo "Democracy on Sale: The 2007 Nigerian Elections and the Future of the Democratic Movement in Africa" in Victor Oguejiofor (ed.) *Nigeria's Stumbling Democracy and Its Implications for Africa's Democratic Movement* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), p. 38.

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- ¹¹ Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 1982, p. 153. For a detailed examination of the origins, meanings, components and some of the reasons for inequality, see *ibid*, pp. 152-165.
- ¹² Andrew Gamble, p. 88.
- ¹³ Robert A. Dahl, *Participation and Opposition* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 1.
- ¹⁴ T.B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 129.
- ¹⁵ Quoted from A.P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 69.
- ¹⁶ For a critique of Tocqueville's major political thought, see Seymour Martin Lipset *Political Man* (London: Heinemann), pp. 4-8. For a fairly detailed examination of some of the factors that promote inequality in the society, see Ernest Gellner *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 91, 93-110.
- ¹⁷ Kenneth Janda et. al., *The Challenge of Democracy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), p. 13.
- ¹⁸ For this line of thought, see Mark N. Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1975), p. 296.
- ¹⁹ Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, p. 116.
- ²⁰ Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies* (California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 14.
- ²¹ The whole body of free born males (citizens) formed the Assembly or Ecclesia, a town meeting which every Athenian who had reached the age of twenty was entitled to attend. The Assembly met regularly ten times in the year and in extra-ordinary sessions. See George H. Sabine & Thomas L. Thorson *A Theory of Political Thought* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. PVT. Ltd., 1973), pp. 20-21.
- ²² For details, see Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, p. 22.
- ²³ For another comprehensive examination of the origins and growth of Athenian democracy, see Andrew Cox et. al., *op. cit.*
- ²⁴ Winin Pereira, *Inhuman Rights* (The Other India Press, The Apex Press & Third World Press), p. 34. George H. Sabine & Thomas L. Thorson *op. cit.* estimate that only a third of the inhabitants of Athens were slaves, p. 20.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 29.
- ²⁶ Hugh Setson-Watson, *Nations and States* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 1.
- ²⁷ See Geoffrey Hurd et. al., *Human Societies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 28.
- ²⁸ Cited in A.A. Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 141.
- ²⁹ Gerald Zaltman et. al., *Innovations and Organizations* (New York: John Willey & Sons, 1973), p. 123
- ³⁰ B.W. Hodder, *Africa Today – A Short Introduction to African Affairs* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 53. For a detailed examination of the roles of the elite in the political process, see Kenneth Newton, *Second City Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), particularly chapter 8, pp. 165-193 and for the problems and privileges of elites, see P.C. Lloyd, "The Elite" in P.C. Lloyd et. al., *The City of Ibadan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 139-150.

³¹ Quoted from T.B. Bottomore, *op. cit.*, p. 48. For a fairly detailed examination of the origins and characteristics of inequality, see John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York & Toronto: The New American Library, 1958), particularly chapter VII, pp. 69-83.

³² William Letwin, *Against Equality* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), p. 1.

³³ Andrew Harding, “Democratic Practise could be institutionalised in private and public spheres to help develop political debate and deliberation” available at <http://blogs.ise.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/archives/23502>. This site was assessed on 2nd October, 2012.

³⁴ John D. Lees, *The Political System of the United States* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 79.

³⁵ Thomas E. Patterson, *We the People - A Concise Introduction to American Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), p. 15. It must be pointed out however that there is probably no other nation that had fully opened her doors to immigrants from round the world as the United States. For example, between 1820 and 2000, about 65.2 million immigrants settled in the United States. *Ibid*, p. 6.

³⁶ For a detailed analysis of the Rosa Parks incident and its consequences on American politics, see Fred R. Harris, *America's Democracy: The Ideal and the Reality* (Qakland: Scott Foreman & Co., 1980), pp. 106-110.

³⁷ John D. Lees, *The Political System of the United States*, p. 79.

³⁸ Julius Nyerere, “Decentralisation” in Martin Minogue and Judith Molloy (eds.), *African Aims and Attitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 97.

³⁹ Charles W. Anderson, *Statecraft: An Introduction to Political Choice and Judgement* (New York: John Willey & Sons, 1977), p. 3.

⁴⁰ A.A. Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics*, p. 137.

⁴¹ R.T. Suberu, “Constraints on the Process of Mobilization in Nigeria” in S.G. Tyoden (ed.) *Democratic Mobilization in Nigeria*, Proceedings of the 15th Annual Conference of the National Association of Political Science held at the University of Ibadan, 26 June – 1 July 1988, p. 118.

⁴² Frank Bealey, *Democracy in the Contemporary State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 36. Frank asserts that while direct participation by all in decision making may be possible at what he calls the ‘micro’ level (e.g. village); it is not practicable on the ‘macro’ level (e.g. state or national). *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁴³ For a detailed analysis of the views expressed by the adversarial and sympathetic critics of democracy, see Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics op. cit.*, pp. 2-4.

⁴⁴ Ronald Manzer, “The Essential Political Goods” in Paul W. Fox & Graham White (eds.) *Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill & Ryerson Ltd., 1984), p. 3.

⁴⁵ *The Nation*, 21 December 2011. The choice of word in the foregoing should be noted. The word ‘allocated’ is used rather than ‘expended’. This is because in Nigeria, monies allocated for specific projects are hardly expended on same.

⁴⁶ *Punch*, 23 October 2013

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 3 November 2013.

⁴⁸ *Punch*, 25 December 2013

⁴⁹ *Nigerian Tribune*, 25 December 2013.

⁵⁰ *Daily Independent*, 15 February 2013.

⁵¹ See *Punch*, 6 June 2013.

⁵² *This Day*, 15 February 2013.

⁵³ For the full report, see *Nigerian Tribune*, 14 March 2013.

⁵⁴ ‘2013 State of the World’s Mothers Report’, *Nigerian Guardian*, 9 May 2013.

⁵⁵ Only recently, the Nigerian Federal Government described the nation’s power crisis as a nightmare and estimated that about 120 million Nigerians have no access to power supply. In other words, only about 40 million Nigerians (25%) have access to public power supply. *Daily Independent*, 6 June, 2013.

⁵⁶ According to a Federal Government estimate, 58% of Nigeria’s population has access to potable water. *Daily Independent*, 15 February, 2013. However, an objective estimate would put the percentage of Nigerians who have access to potable water at about 20 or 25%. This was indeed confirmed by the President when he observed that “one in five rural households has clean water” *Ibid*, 19 February 2013. According to the Federal Government, Nigeria requires between ₦350 and ₦360 billion for efficient and overall development of the country’s water sector.

⁵⁷ According to the Nigerian Federal Road Safety Corps, ‘human factor’ and not deplorable condition of roads accounts for 90 per cent of accidents on Nigeria’s highways, *Daily Independent*, 16 February 2013. While it is obvious that the percentage of accidents allocated to the so-called ‘human factor’ is ridiculously high, it may well be a case of bad roads; bad users.

⁵⁸ *Punch*, 13 November 2013

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 18 April 2013.

⁶⁰ Constitutional development in Nigeria could be divided into four phases. One, the imposition phase - the Clifford Constitution (1922) and the Richards Constitution (1946). Two, the negotiation phase – the MacPherson Constitution (1951); the Lyttleton (federal) Constitution (1954) and the Independence Constitution (1960). Three, the civil phase – the First Republican Constitution (1963); and four, the militarised phase - the Second Republican Constitution (1979); the 1989 Constitution and the 1999 Constitution.

⁶¹ Interview with Chief Anthony Eromosele Enahoro. He was interviewed at No. 33, King George V Road, Onikan, Lagos on 22 August 2009. A foremost Nigerian politician and elder statesman, Chief Enahoro moved the famous self government motion as an Action Group back-bencher in the Federal House of Representatives on 31 March 1953. Chief Enahoro died on 15 December 2010 at the age of 87.

⁶² Some of these are independent judiciary, free press, promotion of fundamental human rights and independent and effective legislature.

⁶³ S. Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Motivations and Constraints* (New York: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 30.

⁶⁴ David F. Roth and Frank L. Wilson, *The Comparative Study of Politics* (New Jersey: Prince Hall, 1980), p. 316.

⁶⁵ Ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration midwived the first ever civilian to civilian transition in Nigeria. After two terms of four years each, he handed over the presidency to late ex-President Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua who won the presidential election held on 21 April 2007 amidst wide-spread criticisms. He was inaugurated on 29 May 2007 and died in office on 5 May 2010 at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa.

⁶⁶ For a list of successful coups in the world since 509 BC when members of the Tarquin Dynasty led by Lucius Junius Brutus overthrew the king of Rome, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus and established the Roman Republic, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_successful_coups. Site was accessed on 17 April, 2013.

⁶⁷For a detailed examination of some of the reasons for what William Tordoff calls 'a rash of military coups' in Africa, see his *Government and Politics in Africa* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), pp. 7, 180-182.

⁶⁸ I. Diamond and M. Plattner, *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 32.

⁶⁹ L. Sylla, "Good Governance and Military Question in West Africa" in S. Odion-Akhaaine (ed.), *Path to Demilitarization and Democratic Consolidation in West Africa* (Lagos: Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarization, 2001), p. 62.

⁷⁰ A Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 131. It must be pointed out however that from 1990, there was what Larry Diamond calls 'second African independence' or 'second liberation'. As Carol Lancaster has estimated, by 1991, nearly three-fourths of the 47 countries south of the Sahara were at various stages of political liberalisation. See Larry Diamond "International and Domestic Factors in Africa's Trend Toward Democracy" in Festus Eribo et. al. *Window on Africa: Democratization and Media Exposure* (North Carolina Center for International Programs Publication No. 1, 1993), p. 1.

⁷¹ Quoted from *The Nigerian Guardian*, 2 August, 1998. Bako also shares Afigbo's view. According to the former "the basic reason why Western democracy has failed in Nigeria is because it has been externally imposed on us through the colonial and neo-colonial systems of domination and exploitation of our resources...Its major purpose is not to serve us, but to create local conditions for world-wide accumulation for multinational monopolies". Sabo Bako, "Problems of Democracy in Nigeria: Cultural Imperatives and Impediments" in Yakubu Nasidi and Iyortange Igoli (eds.), *Culture and Democracy* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1997), pp. 227-228.

⁷² For a detailed discussion of the development, growth and characteristics of democracy in the Greek City States, see Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa* (Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2000), chapter 1 but particularly pp. 8-9 and T.M. Okoh "What is Democracy?", *Nigerian Tribune*, 20 October, 1964.

⁷³ The Oyo Empire was a Yoruba empire that held sway in what is today western and northern Nigeria. Established in the 14th century, the Oyo Empire grew to become one of the largest West African states encountered by pre-colonial explorers. It rose through the outstanding organisational skills of the Yoruba, wealth gained from trade and its powerful cavalry. The Oyo Empire was the most politically important state in the region from the mid-17th to the late 18th century, holding sway not only over most of the other kingdoms in Yorubaland, but over several other nearby African states, notably the Fon Kingdom of Dahomey in the contemporary Republic of Benin to the west. The Oyo Empire ceased to exist as any sort of power in 1896. See Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa*. Revised 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 191,192.

⁷⁴ *Alaafin*, meaning ‘the owner of the palace’ was the title of the *oba* (king). He was the head of the executive arm of government.

⁷⁵ This was the title of the head of an eight-member Council known as the *Oyo Mesi*. Literally, *Oyo Mesi* means ‘Oyo people know the reply they would give’ presumably to a dictatorial *Alaafin*. Membership of the *Oyo Mesi* comprised the eight most senior chiefs in the capital city: Basorun, Asipa, Agbaakin, Laguna, Alapinni, Samu, Akinniku and Modeke. See J.A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 16. As kingmakers, Samuel Johnson described the *Oyo Mesi* as ‘the voice of the nation’. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of British Protectorate* (Lagos: C.M.S, 1921), p. 70.

⁷⁶ Quoted from W. Oyemakinde, “The Derivation of Traditional Power and Authority in Nigeria” *African Notes*, Vol. VIII, No, 2, October 1979, p. 31.

⁷⁷ Quoted from Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions With Thoughts Upon a Healthy Imperial Policy for the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 33. For a similar argument, see G.O. Oguntomisin “The Yoruba” in Bassey Andah et. al. (eds.) *Some Nigerian Peoples* (Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication, 1993), pp. 229-234.

⁷⁸ The Benin Empire (1170?–1897) was a pre-colonial African state in what is now modern Nigeria. The original people and founders of the Benin Empire, the Edo People, were initially ruled by the *Ogiso* (Kings of the Sky) dynasty. In the 15th century, the twelfth *oba* in the Eweka Dynasty (successor of the *Ogiso* Dynasty) popularly known as Ewuare the Great (1440–1473) expanded the city-state to an empire. The first European travelers to reach Benin were Portuguese explorers in about 1485. A strong mercantile relationship developed, with the Edo trading tropical products such as ivory, pepper and palm oil with the Portuguese for European goods such as manila and guns. In the early 16th century, the Benin Empire sent an ambassador to Lisbon, and the king of Portugal sent Christian missionaries to Benin City (headquarters of the Empire). The first English expedition to Benin was in 1553, and significant trading developed between England and Benin based on the export of ivory, palm oil and pepper. Visitors in the 16th and 17th centuries took to Europe tales of “the Great Benin”, a fabulous city of noble buildings ruled by a powerful king. However, for reasons not quite different from those responsible for the occupation and colonisation of other African societies, a Punitive Expedition was launched against the Empire in 1897. The British force, under the command of Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, razed and burned the city, destroying much of the country’s treasured arts and dispersing nearly all that remained. Several arts works and brass plaques of Benin origins were subsequently taken to Europe. Presently, more than 60 of the brass plaques on display in the British Museum Sainsbury Africa Gallery (gallery 25) came from Benin. See www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.

⁷⁹ Benin City, the headquarters of the defunct Mid-West Region, is presently the capital of Edo State, Western Nigeria. It would be recalled that the Benin Province was part of the defunct Western Region until 1963 when the former was split off from the latter to become the now equally defunct Mid-West Region which now roughly constitutes Edo State. The population of the defunct Mid-West Region, according to the disputed 1963 census figures, was 1,354,986. The percentages by religion are: Moslems 99, 993 (7.4%); Christians 788,936 (58.2%) and others 466, 117 (34%). See Philip Ostien “Percentages By Religion of the 1952 and 1963 Populations of Nigeria’s Present 36 States”, Nigerian Research Network, Oxford Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, NRM Background Paper No. 1 @ <http://www3.geh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/nrm/BP1Ostien.pdf>. According to the 1991 census figures, Edo State had a population of 2,172,005 while that of 2006 put the population of the state at 3,218,332. See S.A. Tanko Yakassai, “Appraisal of the 2006 Provisional Census Figures” @ <http://www.gamji.com/article6000/NEWS5701.htm>. Both sites were accessed on 16 April, 2013. See also National Archives Ibadan, CSO 14617 Vol. VIII ‘Annual Report on Benin Province for 1932’, p. 2 and CSO 26/2 ‘Annual Report on Benin Province for 1934’, p. 1.

⁸⁰ National Archives Ibadan, CSO 26/1: An Intelligence Report on the Ado District of the Ekiti Division, Ondo Province, November 1933, p. 6.

⁸¹ Sessional Paper No. 10, 1965.

⁸² K.A. Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 27.

⁸³ Kidane Mengisteab, “African Traditional Institutions of Governance: The Case of Eritrea’s Village *Baito*” in Olufemi Vaughan (ed.), *Indigenous Political Structures and Governance in Africa* (Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd., 2002), p. 208.

⁸⁴ See, for example, L. Markovitz, “Africa’s Dual Heritage: Imperialism and Precolonial Greatness” in I.L. Markovitz (ed.) *African Politics and Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1970) and Okon E. Uya *African History: Some Problems of Methodology and Perspectives* (Calabar: CATS Publishers, 2004) .

⁸⁵ For a fairly detailed examination of the historical importance of village democracy in Tanzania, see Issa G. Shivji, *Let the People Speak: Tanzania Down the Road to Neo-Liberalism* (Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa, 2006), pp. 45-48.

⁸⁶ Only recently, there was a row on the floor of the Federal Parliament over the operation of Special Funds Accounts by the Presidency. Members of Parliament alleged that as the representatives of the people, they were not aware of the existence of the accounts until the report of one of its standing committees made reference to them (the accounts). Upon investigation, it was discovered that the accounts were opened by the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo and have been in operation since. The accounts are the Development of Natural Resources Account; Derivation and Ecological Account (different from the popular account by that name) and Stabilisation Account. According to the report presented by a committee of the National Assembly, between 2002 and 2013, ₦1.5 trillion state funds were lodged into and disbursed from the accounts “at the [exclusive] discretion of the incumbent President”. *The Sun*, 9 May 2013.

⁸⁷ UNESCO, *All Human Beings...* (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), p. 18.

⁸⁸ Lt.-General Alani Akinrinade “Foreword” to Olawale Oshun, *Clapping With One Hand* (London: Josel Publishers, 1999), p. 10.

⁸⁹ *Daily Times*, 27 February 1952.

⁹⁰ Obafemi Awolowo, ‘Call to Rededication and Reconstruction’ in Olaiya Fagbamigbe (compiler), *Voice of Reason: Selected Speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (Akure: Olaiya Fagbamigbe Publishers Ltd., 1981), p. 210.

⁹¹ Quoted from Augustus Adebayo, *Power in Politics* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1986), p. 19.

⁹² ‘Editorial’, *Punch*, 1 May 2013.

⁹³ *The Sun*, 15 May 2013. The *Nigerian Tribune* of 18 May 2013 captioned the report thus “Nigerian leaders stole, laundered \$18.2b in 10 years’. According to the report, China occupied the first position with \$2.74 trillion; Mexico was second with \$476 billion; Malaysia was third with \$285 billion; Saudi Arabia was fourth with \$210 billion; followed by Russia with \$152 billion while Philippines was sixth with \$138 billion.

⁹⁴ *The Nation*, 29 April 2013.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 19 April 2013.

⁹⁶ *The Nation*, 30 April 2013. Justice Mustapha Akanbi is a former Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practises and other related offences Commission, ICPC.

⁹⁷ James Ibori was elected governor of Delta State in 1999 and re-elected in 2003 for another four-year term. His monthly credit card bills alone amounted to \$200 million.

⁹⁸ These are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practises and other related offences Commission, ICPC.

⁹⁹ Interview with S.A. Aluko. Interview held at No 30, Owo Avenue, Ijapo Estate, Akure, Ondo State, South-west Nigeria. Aluko was the leader of what could be described as the academic wing of the Action Group. He played prominent roles in the organisation and the day-to-day running of the AG particularly when the Leader of the Party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was in prison (see note 102 below). He served as the Chairman of Ado Council between 1954 and 1956. Most of the series of meetings that eventually culminated in the formation of the Unity Party of Nigeria in 1983 were held in his house. He was a reputable Professor of Economics. Interviews with Aluko were held on 15 January and 27 August 2010. He died in the United Kingdom on 7 February 2012 at the age of 83. Aluko was particularly emphatic that the president appoints the chairman and other members of the agencies and that he who plays the piper dictates the tune.

¹⁰⁰ See *Blueprint*, 1 May 2013.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Vanguard*, 20 April 2013. While Sango is the god of thunder; Ogun is the god of iron. Both deities are reputed for their on-the-spot judgement and punishment of offenders.

¹⁰³ For example, according to Nigeria's electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, the Federal Government spent the sum of ₦122.9 billion (\$800 million) on the conduct of the 2011 general elections. See *The Punch*, 9 May 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Alhaji Sheu Usman Shagari, (80). Alhaji Shagari was the NPN presidential candidate in the 1979 and 1983 general elections and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1 October, 1979 and 31 December, 1983. He was interviewed at No 6, Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi Lagos on 5 June, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Chief Akin Omoboriowo. He was interviewed at Christ's Villa, No 15, Akin Omoboriowo Way (formerly Oju-Oro Street), Ijero, Ekiti State, South-west Nigeria on 7 November 2009 and 23 July 2010. Chief Omoboriowo was the Deputy Governor of old Ondo State, South-west Nigeria between 1979 and 1983. Shortly before the 1983 general elections, he defected to the National Party of Nigeria and thereafter became its governorship candidate. He died on 10 April 2012 at the age of 81.

¹⁰⁶ For the names of the deregistered political parties, see *Premium Times*, 6 December 2012 and *Punch*, 7 December 2012.

¹⁰⁷ The ACN and the CPC are the arrowhead of opposition to the PDP government. These parties (plus the ANPP) are currently negotiating a grand alliance that will challenge the PDP in the 2015 general elections.

¹⁰⁸ Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo was born on 6 March, 1909. Commonly known as Awo, he was one of Nigeria's founding fathers. His first name, Obafemi, means 'The king loves me' and the surname Awolowo means 'The mystic, or mysticism, commands honour or respect'. A Yoruba and native of Ikenne in Ogun State, South Western Nigeria, he was trained as a lawyer. He became involved in politics in the 1940s and organised the Action

Group in 1951. He was premier of Western Nigeria from 1954 to 1959, when he became Opposition Leader in the Federal House of Representatives. An unyielding advocate of federalism, he was arrested in 1962 for allegedly plotting to overthrow the federal government. Imprisoned in 1963, he was freed three years later by General Yakubu Gowon, head of Nigeria's military government. Serving as federal commissioner for finance (1967-71), he resigned in protest over postponement of civilian rule. He ran unsuccessfully for prime minister in 1959 and president in 1979 and 1983. He died on 9 May 1987, at 78.

¹⁰⁹ Obafemi Awolowo, 'Call to Rededication and Reconstruction', *op. cit.*, p. 210.

¹¹⁰ Lt.-General Alani Akinrinade "Foreword" to Olawale Oshun, *Clapping With One Hand op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹¹¹ Nicolas Freville, *Let's Visit Nigeria* (London: Burke Publishing Company, 1968), p. 89.