Democratic Governance and Human Development: Examining the Impediments to a true Development process amidst Democratic Ethos in Nigeria.

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Abstract.

The paper examines democratic governance and human development in Nigeria, with specific objectives to: assess the democratic and human development practices in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule to present; and identify the impediments to a people-oriented development process despite the pursuit of democratic culture in Nigeria. To achieve these objectives, qualitative and quantitative data were employed in its methodology. The qualitative data employed content analysis of UNDP's, NBS's, Oxfam's, and the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA) reports, alongside peer-reviewed journals on democratic governance and human development. Also the study employed observational data drawn from documented case studies in Nigeria (including inferences from Euro-American nations). While the quantitative data employed numeric data on HDI,

with bar graphs showing the progress of human development in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule to present. A few findings were made: there have been uncommitted adherence to the principles of democratic governance and human development practice in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule to present; inter alia. In view of the findings, the paper concludes thus, there is non adherence to democratic ethos and human development practice in Nigeria; and hence, Nigeria is not a full-fledged democratic nation as yet. The paper therefore recommends: first, there should be a collective effort among Nigerian citizens (the civil societies and adult suffrage youths) to use the means of general elections and civil protests to vote out and recall incompetent political leaders not committed to democratic culture and human centered development initiatives; among others.

Keywords: Democratic Governance; Development; Ethos; Human Development; Impediments.

1.1. INTRODUCTION.

A Background:

"It is not enough for citizens to live in a democracy if they do not enjoy minimum standards of living; if poverty and inequality are not significantly reduced, if justice system continues to serve the powerful; if we cannot travel peacefully around the territory; if cities are chaotic, unsafe, and polluted, or if margi--nalization and discrimination continue to be present in our societies".

----- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2021:9).

To be sure, it is quite axiomatic to affirm that, in any democratic culture, human development is not usually lacking. This is because, as Lateef et al (2020) rightly observed, democracy is a major path to national development. Thus, the twin variables of democratic governance and human development are inseparably akin to each other: Democracy presupposes a 'people-oriented' sort of government, which is in tune with human development principles. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2019), human development entails

expansion of the richness of human life and not simply the richness of the economy in which people live, with emphasis on enabling people's access to education, health facilities, and access to means of income and livelihoods. Similarly, democracy, in its age-long definition, is articulated as, 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' -- that is, the "people" are the focal point of any democratic governance, which shares nexus with human development ethos. It is noteworthy here, that at the level of policy, the idea of democratic culture has historically not been blatantly denounced by African States (Ninalowo, 2004:127). The kernel of the matter is that, at the level of praxis, it is completely a different story: the realities in the African nations, including Nigeria, are fraught with discontents of socio-economic and political anomalies that are antithetical to democratic ethos. For instance, the so called development strategies over the years have quantitatively been oriented [or skewed] in favour of the political class and the economic elites (Ninalowo, 2004), where the rich aristocratic class continues to grow richer, and the poor continues to grow poorer. Typically, the scenario portrays one where the majority of the masses are trapped in hardship in terms of lack of access to human centered development facilities, such as quality education, health care, adequate nutrition, transport facilities, and adequate means of income and livelihoods, etc. At the obverse, the political class are living with ease, enjoying the abundance of these needed but lacking facilities among the poor masses. For instance, according to Oxfam's 2024 report, the wealthiest 10% of Nigerians control 32.5% of the nation's wealth, while the poorest hold only 2.3% of the national income (Oxfam, 2024). Hence, the consequences of this inequality gap are evident in the widespread poverty affecting millions of people: for example, additional data from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) revealed that 133 million people (63%) of the Nigerian population are multidimensionally poor, with 82.9 million living below the poverty line of N137,430. This scenario is antithetical to true democratic culture!

Nigeria in contemporary times, acclaims itself as a democratic nation. Ironically, there is a great void and rupture between her professed democratic ethos and actual commitment to human development projects in her self acclaimed 'democratic status'. Thus, the discerning question remains: why are there no evidence of positive human development outcomes amidst the touted democratic

pursuit in Nigeria? What are those impediments preventing Nigeria from embracing a true development process that is people-oriented in spite of her supposedly pursuit of democratic ethos? And how can these impediments be mitigated? To find answers to these questions remains the raison d'etre of the paper.

From a global perspective, in the advanced nations (e.g, USA, Britain, Canada, etc), the pursuit of democratic ethos equally reflects in their commitment to human development projects more than in a developing nation (like Nigeria). This is due to structural institutional resilience existent in the advanced nations more than in the developing nations. That is to say, the structural institutions in the advanced nations are well articulated: an improvement in one sector reflects in other sectors; unlike in the developing nations whose structural institutions are disarticulated: an improvement in one sector doesn't reflect in other sectors. In USA, for instance, the government spends a large portion of its GDP on health care (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020), hence reflecting her gains in the economic sector on the social sector (health care). On the contrary, in developing nations like Nigeria, health care and education (the social sector areas) receive minimum budgets of its national income. Example, the revised 2020 national budget, where education and health care sectors were allocated paltry sums of N25.5 billion and N51.1 billion (Punch 3, 2020), respectively; vis-a-vis the huge sum (N115.2 billion) allocated for the National Assembly maintenance (Punch, June 3 2020). Besides, in the USA, its democratic governance is committed to protection of the individual rights and freedom which is akin to human development principles of human freedom and social justice; but in developing nations like, Venezuela, Hungary, Turkey (African nations inclusive), democratic principles [that uphold human development ethos] are increasingly undermined by authoritarian leaders (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Therefore, it remains the epistemic thrust of this study to investigate the immanent impediments militating against true development process that is people-oriented in Nigeria amidst her pursuit of democratic governance since 1999; and to proffer actionable recommendations, as a way forward.

1.2. Objectives of the Paper.

The general objective is to examine the impediments to a true development process in Nigeria in spite of her pursuit of democratic governance. However, the specific objectives designed to guide the study towards accomplishing the main objective include as follow:

1. To assess the democratic and human development practices in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule;
2. To identify the impediments to a people-oriented development process despite the the pursuit of democratic culture;
3. And to suggest actionable programs that can help the nation chart the path of a true democratic nation committed to a people-oriented development process, by way of recommendations.

1.3. Methodology.

The paper was designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data employed content analysis of UNDP, Oxfam, NBS, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)'s reports, along with peer-reviewed journals on democratic governance and human development. Observational data were drawn from documented case studies in Nigeria (including inferences from Euro-American nations). While the quantitative data employed numeric data on HDI, with bar graphs showing the progress of human development in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule to present.

1.4. Conceptual Clarifications.

For the sake of epistemic clarity, certain terminologies (key words) employed in the discourse are hereunder clarified. These include: Democratic Governance; Development; Ethos; Human Development; and Impediments. We shall address them in sequence:-

Democratic Governance.

First, democracy is a people-oriented sort of government, often described as 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people'. In this definition, the recurrent word is "people"; meaning, any democratic agenda is people focused! Governance, on the other hand, is the manner by which a nation or organisation

manage or administer its affairs. According to the World Bank (1993), it is the manner by which power is exercised in the management of a nation's economic and social resources for development. In this context therefore, we shall view 'democratic governance' as, the manner by which a nation manages its affairs or exercises power for a people-oriented sort of development.

Development.

Historically, after the Second World War; there was attempt by mainstream development thinkers (e.g, the modernizationists) to view development from the frame of reference of income growth. But true development is beyond income growth. According to Sen (2005), income growth is only an instrumental freedom - that is, it provides a means for the achievement of other constitutive freedoms that encapsulate true development process. There is no development in a nation, where its income growth soars, while inequality, unemployment, and poverty indices are still prevalent. Hence, income growth may be a pre-condition for development, but not a sufficient one. Thus, true development process is multidimensional: it can therefore be defined as, a sustainable multidimensional improvement of the quality of life of the people and their national institutions, that cuts across the social, political, economic, psychological, technological, geographical, and cultural spheres.

Ethos.

Etymologically, the term "ethos" is a Greek word originally meaning character or personality. It is the root word of 'ethics', which is a person's code of behavior (that determines what is right or wrong). In modern usage, it is analogous to: principles, way of behavior, ethics, beliefs, culture, disposition, etc. According to Merriam-Webster (2022), it is a Greek word meaning 'character': guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community, nation, or ideology. For the purpose of the study, we shall view ethos here, as 'guiding beliefs', principles, values or culture of a people.

Human Development.

The concept of human development transcends beyond a nation's income growth or economic development. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 12 September 2022), human development is the process of enlarging

people's choices, allowing them to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living as well as political freedom, and other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self respect. Thus, human development is holistic in nature, and approximates a true development process. It focuses on the enrichment of human lives and not just the enrichment of a nation's economy, with emphasis on enabling people's access to education, health facilities and means of income and livelihoods. In concrete terms, it is the improvement of the quality of life that is sustainable. Therfore, for the purpose of the discourse, we shall equate a true development process to mean human development. It is usually measured by the Human Development Index (HDI). UNDP (2019) classified it as follows: 0.800 – 1.000 (Very High Index), 0.700 – 0.799 (High Index), 0.555 – 0.699 (Medium Index) and 0.350 – 0.554 (Low Index). In this paper, we shall adopt these parameters for the interpretations of a nation's human development levels.

Impediments.

The term refers to something that makes progress, or movement difficult or impossible. It is synonymous to: hindrances, obstructions, barriers, limitations, drawbacks, challenges, or obstacles, etc. In this context, we shall address "impediments to a true development process", as factors that hinder, obstruct or pose challenges to a true development process.

At this juncture, having accomplished the clarifications of salient terminologies used in the discourse, we shall now embark on the next task, the literature review.

2.0. Literature Review.

Corpuses of literatures (like, Awojobi et al, 2014; Jamo, 2013; and Amit, 2012; etc) have tended to provide constructive epistemic insights into the subject of democratic governance and its relationship with human development. However, fewer literatures have dwelt on what could be possible factors or impediments obstructing a true development process in a nation that upholds democratic ethos. Therefore, it is the purpose of the paper to contribute to knowledge, and fill up the knowledge-gap in its analysis. To achieve this purpose, relevant sub-themes outlined as follow shall be addressed: Democratic Governance--An Overview; Development and Human Development Concepts-- An Overview; Democratic

Governance and Human Development-- The Praxis Situation in Nigeria (with a quantitative review of Human development progress since 1999 transition to democratic rule); Impediments to true Development process amidst pursuit of Democratic Ethos in Nigeria.

It is hoped that these adumbrated thematic outlines shall enable us accomplish the study purpose. In what follows, we shall attend to them, *et seriatim*. To that we now proceed.

2.1. Democratic Governance--An Overview.

Democratic governance is a political strategy where institutions carry out activities in line with democratic ethos or norms. In simple terms, it refers to a system of administration where political power is exercised for the benefits of the people. Properly conceived, in any nation where democratic governance is practiced, there are usually evidences of people-oriented sort of government where values like, responsiveness to the people, strict adherence to the rule of law, institutional accountability, social justice or equity, free and fair elections, and respect to fundamental human rights, etc are inevitably prominent. According to Amit (18th September, 2012), democratic governance is an attempt to institutionalise the ambience for the expression of the voice of the people. Supporting this, the United Nations Missions in Timor-Leste (UNMIT, 31 December 2012) affirmed that, a state which identifies with the culture of democratic governance is one which welcomes a wide scope of political participation embracing a pluralistic system of political parties, active civil society and the media/press including integration of women and minorities in all levels of government and society as a whole. Similarly, Zreik (2024) in his own persuasion affirmed that, democratic governance is a system of government based on democratic principles, including citizens participation, rule of law, transparency and accountability. By the same token, the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA, 2021) in its frame of reference observed that, democratic governance is nurtured by social and material progress which encourages trust in democratic institutions. That is to say, there is no true democracy where there is no evidence of the provisions of human centered development facilities (health, good roads, communication support systems, education, transportation, etc) for the amelioration of the human

condition. In strict terms, absence of these welfare facilities portends a legitimation-crisis of its existence.

To be sure, in any political society where the ethos of democratic governance is fully observed, its success is contingent on two formidable pillars: these include; one, a legitimate political institution; and two, a guaranteed social contract. By a legitimate political institution, we mean a credible institution that is truly responsive to the people, and whose goodwill and service to the people encourage popular participation; and hence, political aparthy or passivism is reduced to the barest minimum. On the other hand, by a guaranteed social contract, we mean a legitimate symbiotic arrangement or agreement between the state versus the citizenry built on absolute trust. Thus, in the socio-political matrix of relationship between the state and the citizenry; ideal-typically, there should be a *quid pro quo* arrangement between the two parties: whereas the state *qua* state on one part of the agreement (holds the political power on behalf of the citizenry) should provide socio-economic facilities that promotes basic living conditions for the people -- like, employment, universal health care, quality education, housing, security, communication support systems, and transport facilities, etc; by the same token, the citizenry on the other part of the contract, owes allegiance to the state -- via their obedience to law and order, payment of their taxes, and give their popular support to the government of the day, etc. Thus, where the state rises up to its part of the bargain, popular support and participation of the citizenry are guaranteed; and resistant activities of the civil society is tamed -- Hence, a true democratic governance is evident as praxis, and not just existing only in principle (in the ethical declaration of a nation's constitution). As an ancillary to that, Miktash (2024) pontificated that, [democratic] governance is built on 4Ps: that is, 'People', 'Purpose', 'Process', and 'Performance'. People, because any democratic governance should be people-oriented (not for the aristocratic class interest); purpose, the focal goal in the social contract between the state versus the citizenry should be geared towards meeting the interests of the generalty of the people; process, in the social contract between the state versus the citizenry, there should be processes of law enactment, interpretation and enforcement of laws that guide the rules of engagement of the social contract; and performance, there should be measurable results that establish the legitimacy of the state *qua* state in its governance role.

2.2. Development and Human Development Concepts: An Overview.

According to Sumner and Tribe (2008), the definition of the concept of development has been a major area of controversy. This definitional controversy is due to the complex and multidimensional nature of the concept. It is complex, because it has nuanced shades of meanings to different people; and multidimensional because, it cuts across various spectrum of the political, social, economic, psychological, geographical, technological, and cultural spheres. In concrete historical terms, the concept of development, in its modern sense, first came into official prominence when it was used by the United States former President, Harry Truman, in 1949. It served as part of his post-Second War reconstruction policy on the issues of providing international financial assistance to the underdeveloped areas of the world -- especially, the poor newly independent nations of the Global South countries (Lewis, 2005). During this period, mainstream development thinkers equated the meaning of development concept with that of economic growth. However, there was also a growing recognition that while the growth of an economy may form a pre-condition for development, it is not a sufficient one: attention also needed to be paid to other issues such as, wealth redistribution, equality, human freedom, and capabilites (Lewis, 2005 and Sen, 2005). This brings into proper perspective the real meaning of development concept that favours reduction of inequality, support for human rights, social justice, and people's welfare. The re-thinking of development concept became an imperative, especially as it was discovered in the early 1970s that the economies of most of the newly independent poor nations of the world experienced economic growth, yet huge inequalities and poverty levels have worsened within and between these nations: the so called development (measured by income growth) was not equal as the population of these nations were still living in abject poverty! For instance, despite the fact that Brazil in 1970 attained economic growth, yet the poorest 40% of her population received only 6.5% of her total national income, while the richest 40% of her population received huge 66.7% of the national income (Dokpesi, 2016). Certainly, this doesn't reflect a true development process. This is because the real wealth of a nation is her people; and the key objective of any true development process should be to provide an equitable enabling environment for the people to achieve what they have value and reason to achieve (Nussbaum, 2000 and Sen, 2005). That is to say, development should be human centered and address the

amelioration of the human condition. Recognising this fact, by 1990 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in an attempt to address the human dimension element of development brought the 'human development concept' and its measuring index (HDI) into the focal space of development discourse. Subsequently, at the turn of the 21st century, the concept of development further embraced the notion of 'sustainability'; that is, sustainable development concept. Sustainable development refers to the ability of a nation to meet the needs of its present generation without compromising the needs of its future generations, and without harming the environment in which people live. Therefore, a true development concept is a multidimensional concept that embraces sustainable improvement and transformations in the social, political, economic, psychological, technological, environmental, and cultural spheres of a nation. To be sure, true development concept can better be appreciated within the context of human development concept, as we shall see shortly.

The concept of human development in contemporary development discourse transcends beyond a nation's economic development. As Felipe (2024) observed, since the mid-20th century, international organisations like the United Nations and the World Bank have utilized human development concept as a holistic approach to evaluating a country's progress by putting into perspective its living conditions, social relations, individual freedom and well-being, including standard measure of income growth. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 12 September 2022), human development is, the process of enlarging people's choices, allowing them to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living, as well as political freedom and order guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self respect.

Although, UNDP promoted the human development concept in the nineties, a quick historical reference should be made to earliest scholars or philosophers whose ideas served as an intellectual springboard upon which the human development concept was built. For instance, the ancient philosopher of antiquity, Aristotle, noted that "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for something else" (Felipe, 2023: 102 - 117). That is, Aristotle recognized the fact that a nation's income growth is not an end in itself, but a means

to an end. Similarly, Adam Smith in his 'Wealth of Nations' recognized equitable distribution of wealth among all. Furthermore, the concept of human development, in the process of time received a growing recognition in the 1980s with Amartya Sen's classic on 'Human Capabilities approach' (Felipe, 2020). In fact, it was the early works of Sen and his colleagues like, Mahhub Ul Haq and Uner Kirdar (Felipe, 2020) that formed the basis upon which UNDP developed its Human Development Index (HDI) (Bassam, 2013). Other contributors include Martha Nussbaum whose publications in the late 1990s to 2000s influenced scholars to pay adequate attention to the "human" dimension of the concept, essentially its psychological aspect (Nussbaum, 2000). Moving forward, UNDP popularised the human development concept while building on the foundation of the precursors, especially Amartya Sen's human capabilities approach; and proceeded to pursue its principles with its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) project of 2000 - 2015; subsequently with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 - 2030. With the UNDP's approach, emphasis is usually laid on enabling people's access to education, health facilities and means of income and livelihoods.

At this juncture, we shall like to explore the praxis situation of democratic governance and human development in Nigeria. To that, we now proceed.

2.3. Democratic Governance and Human Development -- A Review of the Praxis Situation in Nigeria (1999 to Present).

Perhaps, the best starting point under this rubric is to examine how human development process has fared in Nigeria since her 1999 transition to democratic rule. In concrete terms, the pursuit of democratic process in Nigeria can be charted to have begun with the transfer of power from the military junta to a democratic civilian elected president Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999. Prior to the transition to democratic rule in 1999, the nation of Nigeria has struggled with governance crisis under several military regimes since the overthrow of the first civilian Executive President (late Alhaji Shehu Shagari) by the military junta on December 31st 1983. With the military rule in place (both that of Buhari that took over, and other regimes succeeding him), there was suspension of the Nigerian constitution replaced by draconian military decrees and edicts. There was total disregard of the rule of law and fundamental human rights, and worsening socio-

economic conditions. Thus, it was a welcome relief and a good riddance to the loathsome military regimes when the nation transitioned to democratic rule with the handing over of power to democratic civilian government in 1999. Welcome relief, because it was believed that democracy facilitates the rule of law, free choice, and political participation, including the enhancement of socio-economic development (Awojobi et al, 2014).

Therefore, at the inception of democratic governance in Nigeria with the swearing in of President Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian Executive President in May, 1999; his first term was used to stabilise the new democracy. His second tenure witnessed the implementation of his democratic programmes like, the inauguration of a development policy tagged, 'National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy' (NEEDS) (Awojobi et al, 2014). The main target of the policy was to reduce poverty via popular empowerment. Moving forward, as late Yar'Adua succeeds Obasanjo in 2007, he maintained the ongoing democratic programmes by granting amnesty to the Niger Delta Militants, hence reducing instabilities in the Niger Delta region (Awojobi et al, 2014). Late Yar'Adua also initiated the "Seven Point Agenda" to enhance development outcomes in Nigeria. At the event of his death, the former President Goodluck Jonathan succeeded him. He maintained the already set democratic protocols for national development, and initiated his own development programme tagged the "Subsidy Reinvestment Programme" (the 'SURE-P'). Yet, inspite of all these democratic initiatives geared towards the nation's development process, there still exist great vacuum in the improvement of the socio-economic well-being of the people. Evidences of unemployment, high poverty levels, insecurities, infrastructural decay, non adherence to the rule of law, low life expectancy rates epitomized by low and sluggish human development index are still prevalent over the years, since the 1999 inception of democratic governance in Nigeria. The crisis of democratic governance in Nigeria are legion! Thus, it is quite conceivable to ask, what has prevented true development and/or human development process in Nigeria amidst all these democratic programmes? Indeed, the nation has witnessed critical issues of governance that are antithetical to the promises of democratic ethos. And many wonder in awe, is this the democracy we asked for?

According to Jamo (2013), in any nation where there is evidence of democratic culture, (as praxis); there is usually a legitimacy of government that is truly representative, and responsive to the desires of the citizenry; a competitive free and fair elections, plurality party systems that provides alternative choices for the adult suffrage, freedom of speech and of the press. These democratic ethos equally interlink with human development principles of equity, social justice, and human welfare. However, the situation in Nigeria since her transition to democratic rule till hitherto posits a dissonance or rupture between the expectations of a democratic culture that is human development oriented versus the actual performance. In all intents and purposes, the whole scenario signifies a lip-service to a true democratic practice by the political class! To demonstrate this position, the following data, showcasing the human development index (HDI) in Nigeria (from 1999 to present), reflects an unpalatable and contradictory situation of human development indices amidst the putative democratic governance in Nigeria.

TABLE 2.3: HDI IN NIGERIA 1999 - 2024 (IN A SCALE OF 5-YEAR INTERVAL).

YEAR	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019	2024
HDI	0.419	0.461	0.486	0.513	0.537	0.548

Source: Researcher's adaptation (from, UNDP HDR 2008-9, 2023/24, Country-economy
(2022), Researchgate (2014)).

HDI KEYS (UNDP 2019 METRIC CALIBRATION):

0.800 - 1.000 (Very High Index)
0.700 - 0.799 (High Index)
0.555 - 0.699 (Medium Index)
0.350 - 0.554 (Low Index).

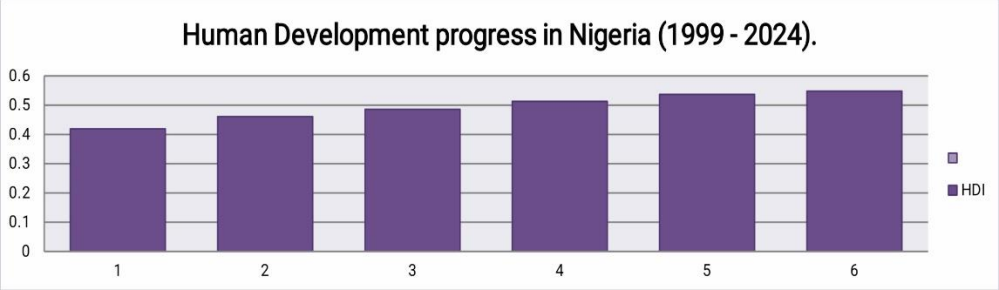


Fig 2.3: A Bar Chart Representing the HDI Situation in Nigeria as per the above table 2.3. (1999 - 2024).
Source: Researcher's Construct capturing the progressive trend of Nigerian HDI (1999 - 2024) with Bar graphs.

Keys: X axis (Representing the years: 1999 -- 2024 (scale of 5-yr interval): 1(1999); 2(2004; 3(2009); 4(2014); 5(2019); & 6(2024)).
Y axis (Representing the HDI figures as per table 2.3 above).

Taking a cursory glance at the data (table 2.3 and fig. 2.3) above, the data signify that despite the pursuit of democratic agenda since 1999 till present, there has been low human development index in Nigeria. This means, there has not been any meaningful improvement on people's welfare, especially with regard to access to education, health facilities and means of income and livelihoods in spite of the touted democratic governance since 1999. Even where there is any slight upward movement of the indexes (like in 2004 to 2024), the slight progressive trend is very sluggish, and quite insignificant as the HDI (from 1999 - 2024) still remained within the threshold of low HDI metric calibration (<0.554) as established by UNDP (2019). Thus, in what follows, we shall like to x-ray the possible impediments militating against a true development process amidst democratic governance in Nigeria. To that we now turn.

2 4. The Impediments to a True Development Process amidst Democratic Ethos in Nigeria.

As mentioned ab initio, democratic ethos approximates a people-oriented sort of government. It equally interlinks with human development principles which

centers on improving the quality of life of the people. However, in a praxis situation, with inferences from Nigeria, there is a contradiction or dissonance between the expectations of a true democratic culture that is development-oriented and the actual performance. Several factors can be adduced to this anomaly. These include (but not limited to) the following: lip-service to democratic ethos; leadership-crisis; disarticulated structural institutions; and weak institutions, et cetera. We shall address them in sequence:

1. Lip-service to democratic ethos.

To be sure, a vital component of democratic culture is social justice (Ninalowo, 2004). The prefix, 'social', is contextually significant, in the sense that justice can only be conceived within the context of human beings. That is to say, democracy is pro-human or people-oriented. Thus, whereas democratic culture is interlinked with human development (evidenced by social justice or equity, social welfare, popular empowerment, freedom, etc); by the same token, absence of democratic culture will equally constitute absence of a true development process that is people-oriented. To wit, for there to be pursuit of democratic culture in Nigeria since 1999, and yet there is little or no evidence of human development process; it suggests that proper democratic ethos is not committedly followed, and its permissiveness not yet rooted in Nigeria's political culture. There is, to a large extent, lip-service to democratic culture in Nigeria in spite of its facade projected to be a democratic nation. In real terms, democratic governance and human development approximates each other. As praxis, the apparent dissonance between the two, manifested by sheer lip-service to democratic ethos constitutes an impediment to true development process in Nigeria. The situation in Nigeria is pathetic: it portrays a situation where the individual rights of expression is eroded, freedom of press hamstrung, and non adherence to the rule of law. We have a nation where the executive authority can rig an election and at the same time ask the victim to go to court! Meaning, the judiciary has been compromised, a mere puppet of the executive! In such situation, human freedom is lacking. There is neither true democratic culture nor true development process that is people-oriented. The same political class that claim to be in pursuit of democratic agenda since 1999 are the same political class contravening the democratic ethos they claim to uphold. A case in point may here be very constructive: during the 'EndSars protest' by the irate

Nigerian youths in October 2020 who were exercising their political rights of expression against police brutality, insecurity, and bad governance; Nigerian government used her repressive apparatuses (the police and the military) to suppress the protest in which many youths lost their lives. Some sustained near-death injuries. Besides, the bank accounts of the suspected 'protest ring-leaders' were thereafter frozen by the Nigerian government. Furthermore, in the recent 'End bad Governance' protest led by the civil society (Nigerian Labour Congress)in August 2024, triggered by the rising cost of living, with high inflation rate at 40% (Al jazeera, 25 November 2024); the government, again, engaged its repressive apparatus (the police) to suppress the protest as they police personnel 'tear-gased' the unarmed civilians protesting for their political rights at Abuja, the federal capital territory as well as in other parts of the nation. Thus, the scenario is a concrete evidence of a sheer lip-service to democratic ethos in Nigeria by the same political leaders that claim to pursue democratic governance. And this, to a large extent, constitute an impediment to true development process in Nigeria.

2. Leadership-crisis.

In simple terms, leadership-crisis refers to a mismatch, rupture, distortion or immanent contradiction in the expectations of a true leadership. According to Farida (2009), effective leadership is one that pursues programmes that are sustainable for the people, granting the citizenry access to basic amenities. Contrariwise, where there is a contradiction in the actual performan of true leadership: where a leader instead of leading in the interests of the generalty of the people rather leads for his own vested interest; such a situation approximates leadership-crisis in the structure. That is to say, by popular standards, there is a 'crisis of confidence' in the so called leader and his performance. Under this circumstance, people are apt to question and challenge the legitimacy of the social and political arrangements providing such unpopular and inimical conditions. Thus, where leadership has failed in its expectations, it amounts to leadership-crisis! In Nigeria, leadership-crisis constitute serious impediments to true development process in spite of the professed democratic culture. In fact, this leadership-crisis can further be distilled into various forms of immanent antinomies, namely: corrupt practices, leadership-myopia, extractive/partisan leadership style, and insecurities resulting from anti-state resistant movements. For

clarity purposes, we shall like to briefly put into context here, the above adumbrated immanent antinomies:-

i). Corrupt practices: Corruption presupposes the erosion of moral rectitude. Thus, sharp practices ranging from money laundering, embezzlement of funds, over padding of national budget, et cetera have posed serious impediments to true development in Nigeria. Corruption reached its monumental proportion in Nigeria when our leaders embezzled the national funds and alleged "snakes and monkeys" to have swallowed the funds. This is not farfetched: Vanguard (18th February, 2018) and Vanguard (21st February, 2018) reported how snakes swallowed N37 million naira at the office vault of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), while monkeys swallowed N70,000 million (NSF money) at the farm of Senator Adamu (former Northern Senators Forum (NSF) chairman) in 2018. These were funds that should have been used for human development projects, but were "swallowed" by our leaders masquerading as "snakes" and "monkeys"!

ii). Leadership-myopia: Myopia simply means, short-sightedness. Literally, it implies that we focus on what is near-by, while disregarding what is a bit farther. Thus, myopic leaders focus on what suits their immediate needs rather than the needs of all. Our political leaders manifest a limited or myopic knowledge of what true democratic governance that reflects true development process entails. They often focus on one limited dimension, the income growth! -- Which holds more opportunities for them to embezzle funds and enrich themselves. Typically, the "Vision 20:2020" economic plan to attain a GDP of $900 billion USD to be classified among developed economies by end of 2020 (Premium Times, January 2020) attests to the leadership-myopia of the Nigerian political class. Income growth alone is a defective measure of true development process as it doesn't translate to 'growth with equity' or redistribution of growth for the interest of all. Over time in Nigeria's post-independence political and economic development plans, the leaders have always prioritized the oil sector (or another sector) for immediate income generation to grow the GDP. Human centered development areas like health and education sectors are usually relegated. A quick case study of the "2020-Revised Budget" may here be put into context: during the 2020 revised budget, the federal government allocated minimal budgets of N25.5 billion and N51.1 billion to

education and health sectors, respectively (Punch June 3, 2020). This is comparatively low vis-a-vis the National Assembly maintenance allocation budget of N115.2 billion (Punch, June 3 2020). This is at its best, gross distortion of reality and a myopic view of an ideal-typical development plan that is people-oriented. It is quite different in what obtains in advanced nations like UK, USA, Canada, etc. In USA, for instance, the government prioritizes areas of human welfare (like health, education, etc) above all else. For example, according to Kaiser Family Foundation (2020), the USA government spends a large portion of its GDP on health care. The different scenario between Nigeria and USA, signifies where the interest of Nigerian leaders is, and how myopic our leaders are in coming to terms with what really matter in a true development process. True development is beyond income indices, nor is it for the parochial interest of the aristocratic class. The political class should re-define their approach to development plans and embrace ideas that impact on the current socio-economic realities on ground.

iii). Extractive/Partisan leadership style: Extractive or partisan leadership style is another consequence of leadership-crisis. This refers to a divisive leadership style that fuels the embers of favoritism. By way of a retrospection on the checkered political history of Nigeria, especially since the inception of the so called democratic project of 1999 to present, Nigerian political class can be attributed with an extractive leadership style that falls short of inclusiveness. The political body language of the leaders exudes that of ethnic, tribal or party favoritism, where others outside of their affiliations are marginalized, and denied the rights of certain socio-economic privileges. This manifests itself in crises of employment, and discriminatory access to political positions, etc in the nation. Supporting this, Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2019), affirmed that the selection and recruitment processes into the Nigerian public service have often been compromised and skewed towards prefered persons along blood and friendship ties.

iv). Insecurities resulting from anti-state resistant movements: Certainly, anti-state resistant movements and its attendant insecurities, is another offshoot of leadership-crisis that stifles true development process in Nigeria. Where the masses lose confidence in the leader, especially an aberrant leader who for long dominated or superimposed his selfish interests over the interests of the generalty of the

people. Such situation triggers moments of resistance from the subaltern class (the subjugated masses). Typical examples are the rise of some resistant movements in Nigeria like the Niger Delta Militants, IPOB, etc who felt marginalized in the Nigerian nation. To be sure, such moments of their resistant activities or revolution reproduce itself into other vices and insecurities (e.g, kidnapping, insurgencies, vandalization of public properties etc) -- a revolutionary strategy employed by them to get the attention of the erring political class. Thus, making the nation a high risk area for foreign direct investment (FDI).

3. Disarticulated Structural Institutions.

Conceptually, a disarticulated structural institution refers to a particular social structure where an improvement or positive impact on one sector does not reflect on other sectors within the same system or structure. Typically, whereas the structural institutions of advanced nations of the Global North are articulated, the structural institutions within the developing nations of the Global South are disarticulated. In advanced nations, a growth or improvement in their economic sector reflects on other sectors, especially on the social development sector which impacts on the well-being of the citizenry. Hence, most of the advanced nations like USA, Canada, UK, and other European countries have social securities, health insurance, free education, housing schemes for the poor and aged, etc -- and these are funded from the economic gains accruing from the economic sector, reflecting on other sectors (wealth redistribution)! In contra-distinction, in a developing nation like Nigeria, the scenario is the opposite: in come growth from the economic sector doesn't reflect on other sectors due to the corrupt practices and extractive vested interest of the political class who diverts the funds to their own benefits (money laundering, embezzlement, and over invoicing, etc by Nigerian leaders are cases in point) while the masses suffer: for instance, in 2014; Nigeria's economy made a significant increase in its rebased GDP to a huge $510 billion USD (from $270 billion USD based figure, previously), making Nigeria the biggest economy in Africa that year (Bryan, April 9, 2014). But its HDI in 2014 (0.513) remained sluggishly low, making little or no progress from the 2013 HDI (0.504) (UNDP, 2025). Thus, signifying that, no impact on the social sector in spite of the improvement on the economic sector -- a pointer to a disarticulated economic structure in Nigeria. According to the World Bank (2011:1), "economic growth

enhances a country's potential to improve the socio-economic conditions of its people. This is because, economic growth by increasing the total wealth of a country, provides the resources required to permit sustained human development improvements". Contrariwise, economic growth in Nigeria doesn't permit sustained human development improvements due to disarticulated structural institution challenge in the nation.

4. Weak Institutions.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs No. 16) advocates for strong institutions (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 11 August 2021) as a way forward for all democratic nations to ensure true development -- particularly, the developing nations. A weak institution connotes a system or structure that fails to perform the functions it is created to perform. Indeed, institutions in Nigeria have compromised their values for which they are created to uphold: At the political institution, the political class in their corrupt practices exercises power for their vested class interest and not for the interest of the generalty of the people. Supporting this, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) affirmed that, weak institutions foster corruption which diverts public resources from productive use. That is, instead of investing in critical infrastructure or social programmes, funds may be siphoned off by corrupt officials hence limiting the effectiveness of development projects. As an ancillary to that, Rodrick (2008) observed that, weak political institution disrupt economic and social development; resources are spent on addressing immediate crises rather than building the foundation for sustainable growth -- (again, this confirms the leadership-myopia discussed ab initio). At the economic institution, growth at the economic sector is disarticulated and doesn't reflect at other sectors. At the legal institution, the judiciary, supposedly adjudged to be the "last hope of the common man" now compromises justice at the expense of the common man (e.g, the recent incaceration of the human rights lawyer, Dele Farontimi for criticizing the judicial system in Nigeria, the protracted incaceration of the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, and denial of his freedom influenced by the rigmarole trial of his case by the judiciary, etc; are cases in point). Institutional rupture incourages inequity; and where there is no equity, social justice is lacking; where there is no social justice, freedom is lacking. And where there is no evidence of freedom, there is no democracy nor human development!

Thus, in spite of the touted democratic governance in Nigeria, weak institutions and the other foregoing factors endemic in Nigerian social structure pose impediments to true development in Nigeria.

3.0. Findings.

In line with the specific objectives of the study, the following findings were made:

1. The study in its assessment of the practice of democratic governance and human development principles in Nigeria revealed that, there have been uncommitted adherence to the principles of democratic governance and human development in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule. Typically, there have been evidences of non adherence to the rule of law, corruption, lack of human freedom, equality and justice; unemployment and worsening socio-socio-economic conditions, etc: and these are antithetical to democratic and human development ethos. Supporting this, Hoffman and Wallace (11 May 2023) affirmed that, there is a popular opinion that Nigeria is currently not a true democracy due to its entrenched corrupt political class, its dwindling electoral participation, crisis of confidence in the ruling class, shrinking civil liberties and weak democratic institutions.

2. Additionally, the findings revealed that certain factors pose as impediments to a people-oriented development process in Nigeria despite the pursuit of democratic culture since her transition to democratic rule. These impediments include as follow: lip-service to democratic ethos; leadership-crisis (with its attendant antinomies like: corruption, leadership-myopia, extractive or partisan leadership style, and insecurities); disarticulated structural institutions; and weak institutions. Supporting this, Allen (24 January, 2024) affirmed that, Nigeria has a democratic deficit; and lip-service to democratic culture, weak institutions, corrupt practices, and misalignment of Nigeria's economic policies and actual needs of the people contributing to widespread poverty and unemployment, are to blame.

3. Ultimately, the paper in its assessment suggests actionable programs that can help Nigeria chart the path of a democratic governance that is committed to people-oriented development process. These are underlisted in the recommendations that follow, shortly.

Summary and Conclusion.

From the onset, the paper informed that Nigeria, since her transition to democratic rule in 1999, has been touted as a democratic nation. Democracy and human development practice are inseparably interlinked. The two concepts are people-oriented. Thus, the study in its objectives aimed to, assess the practice of democratic governance and human development principles (as praxis) in Nigeria since 1999 transition to democratic rule to present; and to identify the impediments limiting a people-oriented development process amidst her pursuit of democratic culture. These tasks were accomplished, as the findings revealed that: there have been uncommitted adherence or lip-service to the principles of democratic governance and human development ethos since her transition to democratic rule. Certain impediments were adduced to be responsible like, leadership-crisis, weak institutions and disarticulated structural institutions, etc. The paper therefore concludes that, there is non adherence to democratic ethos and human development practice in Nigeria; and hence, Nigeria is not a fulfledge democratic nation as yet. Actionable programmes toward mitigating these impediments are highly imperative. The paper therefore recommends, as follow:

Recommendations.

First, there should be a collective effort among Nigerian citizens (the civil societies and adult suffrage youths) to use the means of general elections and civil protests to vote out and recall incompetent political leaders not committed to democratic culture and human centered development initiatives. These strategic actions shall serve as a deterrent to both the incumbent and prospective leaders to eschew vested class interest, and give their utmost commitment to a democratic governance that is people-oriented.

Additionally, Nigeria's institutional structures should be strengthened. This can be achieved via value re-orientation across Nigerian institutions or sectors. Such will help minimise the impediments to true development process arising from Nigeria's weak institutions.

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