DEMOCRACY, POVERTY AND THE SEARCH FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper sets out to examine why there is poverty in Nigeria despite the reality that the country is presently practicing and enjoying democracy which is globally adjudged to be the best system of government owing to it progressive and inclusive nature. It is a misnomer for poverty to exist in a democratic state as democracy translates to progress, development and advancement. The existence of poverty indicates that there is no development in the state. So the important question is what is responsible for the profound poverty in Nigeria even as a democratic one? This study will adopt the analytic a priori approach in the exploration of the phenomenon called poverty with a view of determining its cause(s), implications and challenges for the Nigerian state and how to get around this seemingly horrific issue threatening to cripple and tear the nation apart. The work will also focus on exploring the salient elements that characterize good and qualitative governance. Put differently, what is good governance and how can it be attained in a democratic state like Nigeria so much so that poverty can be completely eliminated.

Keywords: Democracy, Poverty, Good Governance, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria had always craves and aspired to be a democratic state since she became a sovereign political entity on October 1st 1960. This desire, however eluded her for over 3 (three) decades owing to the frequent military intervention in the country's political process. Each of these military juntas always claimed that they had to intervene so as to clear up the mess created or made by the civilian government they took over from and would repeatedly promise toreturn political power to civilians within the shortest possible time. This never happened until May, 29th 1999 when a civilian president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces was sworn into office after a general election that was considered free and fair was held.This government was led by Gen. Olusegun Aremu, Matthew Okinkinola Obasanjo(Rtd.) (Osaghae, 2011)

Sequel, Nigeria have been practicing democracy for the past twenty-three (23) years-1999 to 2022. Meanwhile, poverty and other socio-economic and political challenges had plagued the nation and have threatened to tear the country apart. One of the far reaching implicationsis that the country have not enjoyed the, so much acclaimed, dividends of democracy. Besides poverty, other challenges bedeviling the country range from armed banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, ritual killings, kidnapping for ransom, killer herdsmen rampage, sabotage, general insecurity, widespread and profound corruption among others. (Odey. 1999)

The above is against the back drop that democracy is regarded as the most preferred system of government owing to its liberal and progressive nature. The numerous benefits of democracy, which is famously referred to as 'dividends', often overtly reflect in the lives of the people and this means that democracy impacts directly on the people as they advance positively. The puzzling reality in Nigeria is that democracy seem not to be having any positive impact on the people and the land seem to be on a sharp decline. The cost and standard of living in Nigeria is very high and many people find it very difficult, in most cases impossible, to put three (3) square meals on their table daily. A lot of Nigerians cannot afford decent clothes, shelter, quality and affordable healthcare, good and qualitative education, etc. In fact, most of the basic amenities required for a fairly comfortable life are far beyond the reach of most Nigerians.

The salient question, among others, include, who or what is/are responsible for the many woes staring Nigerians and Nigeria right in the face? These and questions this study will attempt to proffer answers to. Offor (2014) blames the problem on faulty governance-poor policies and poor implementation of these policies.

> The existence of any government is justified solely in terms of its ability to bring about development. Although the concept of development has been subjected to multidisciplinary interpretation and usage, these various perceptions only contribute to showing the richness as well as problems associated with the concept. Whereas economists conceive of development in quantitative terms, development sociologists interpret development using various qualitative tools. Both the economics and sociologists, therefore, conceive of

> development either in terms of increase in gross domestic product, personal incomes, industrialization, technological advancement or social engineering. (Adeigbo, et al., 2014)

If poverty is prevalent then it invariably means that development is far from the state and its people. Poverty and development cannot coexist. If development is inherent then poverty does not exist and if poverty exist then development is completely absent. Some economists blame the profound nature of poverty prevalent in Nigeria on inflation while some political analysts blame it on the insensitivity of the government-those left with the care of the state.Olu-Owolabi and Ekanola, 2013) observes that the poverty persistent in Nigeria has a historical dimension, thus, his advice is that any solution or way out of the predicament must involve comprehendingthe matrix of these entire trajectories that got the country to where she is presently otherwise such recommendations would end up addressing the symptoms rather than addressing the core issues. Odey (1999) blames the poverty in Nigeria on past and present leaders. Kukah (1993)contends that the crave for material wealth among those in authority is responsible for the nation's woes. Kukah further argue that the society worship and recognize those who acquire wealth, no matter the source, and urge them on ignoring the long term ramifications is responsible for a large percentage of the problem facing the seemingly hapless state. Hence, those in authority represents the proverbial symptoms while the society, who worship and has awe for materialism, represents the real disease. Odey and Kukah also assert if the country must get out of this thickset then the entire society require a serious over haul or revolution otherwise she will meet her waterloo. Both analyst explain that the country must be rescued from the few individuals who hijacked her. For them these individuals see themselves as the best things that has ever happened to Nigeria. These few consider themselves as elites who have the sole right to leadership as they are the only people who have the answers and solutions to the nation's advancement.

For the benefit of the doubt and for the sake of clarity the concept of democracy will be revisited alongside the notion of poverty.

Democracy Defined

"Democracy" is one of the 3 (three) major systems of government adopted by any state or civil society. The civil society-state, emergedshortly after the primitive society (state-of-nature) was wilfully abandoned by men. It is pertinent to state that all other kinds or sorts of governments are subsumed under Democracy, Aristocracy and Monarchy. Democracy is noted to stand out among these two other systems basically because of its principles and tenets as prescribed by its founding fathers. The question, therefore, is what is democracy, what are its tenets and how does it advance the course of the social society, that is, why is it referred to as a progressive government? (Ikelegbe, 2005)

Scholars, political scientists and philosophers define democracy from diverse perspectives especially according to their orientation, personal beliefs, influences, and background. This translates to the position that there is no singular, universal,timeless andcross cultural definition. These scholars, however, concur thatan etymological notion of democracy is possible.Etymologically, democracy is derived from two Greek words, "Demos" which means "people" and "Kratia" which

means“rule” or to “rule” (Hohari,2007). Put together, thus, democracyis that system of government where the people rule or lead the state.Democracy is known to have originated from ancient Greece, in the City-States of ancient Athens.

Direct Democracy was practiced way back in ancient Greek-City statedue to her relatively small population but had to be abandoned as the population increased. Direct democracy was replaced by **Representative Democracy.** Representative democracy is where a few individuals are either elected or selected to represent the interest of the generality of the people-the contractors, because everybody can no longer be allowed to contribute or participate directly in the running of the day-to-day affairs of the state. (Stumpf, 1994). Representative democracy is obtainable in Nigeria’s current dispensation.

Meanwhile, among the other diverse notions of democracy furnished by scholars and political scientistsis the one that maintains that“democracy is the government of popular participation”. “It is the rule by the sundrysocial contractors who created the civil society. (Ikwuemesi, 2012)

For Rousseau, the surrounded power, liberty and freedom should be left in the charge of allthose who collectively and willingly entered into a tacit consent which saw to the emergence of the modern state. (Russell, 1997). It is that system that encourages the minority to be heard but see to it that the majority have their way in the long run.

There is also the perspective that democracy is the rule of the majority over and above the minority. A situation where the minority’s voice would be heard loud and clear but the majority’s decisions eventually carries the day. This definition clearly suggests that the domicile of political power should be in the hands of the sundry contractors. One basic nexus of all the definitions sited above is that the citizens reserve the right and opportunity to actively participate or have a say in the day-to-day running of his state’s affairs. Such an individual gets to be directly involved as a decision or policy maker if he were among the majority because it is the demands-final decision, of the majority that matters.

Besides the above definitions, one stands out and it is the definition furnished by a one-time-Americanpresident-Abraham Lincoln,who defined **“democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people”.** This definition simply insists that democracy is a “people oriented government”, that is, the government begins and ends with the people. Itceases to be democracy if and when the people do not constitute the core of the government.Democracy is peoples centered. (Omoregbe, 2007)

Rousseau, Locke, Mill and others, insists that if the surrendered powers, liberty and freedom are put in the hands of a single individual (or a few individuals) then it is bound to be corrupted and abused. “Power corrupts and absolute powers corrupts absolutely” (Iroegbu, 2000). When political power is corrupted, it invariably means that the people will be corrupted, abused and oppressed. The oppression of the people in democracyliterally amounts to the defeatof thevery essence of democracy-the civil society.

Political scientists have identified various types of democracy to include (1) Direct democracy (2) Representative Democracy (3) Constitutional Democracy (4) Monitory Democracy, (5) Presidential Democracy (6) Parliamentary Democracy.

However, two of the above will interest us for the purpose of this study: **Direct Democracy** and**Representative Democracy.** At the inception of democracy, the ancient Athenian society practiced Direct Democracy and this was possible, then,owing to the relatively small population of the City-States in ancient Athens. (Adeigbo, Ibid) Representative Democracy replaced Direct Democracy as the population of the

states increased and got to a point where it became practically impossible for everyoneto participate directly in the running of the day-to-day affairs of the state.

Democracy has become the most desirable system of government because of its progressive and dynamic tendencies.Many nations of the world aspire to democratize and consolidate its dividends.Some scholars see it as the best form of liberalism, Socialism, Marxism, anarchism, etc.

> As democracy has become more and more widely praised, it has become more and more difficult to pin it down. John Dunn has noted that 'all states today profess to be democracies because democracy is what it is virtuous for a state to be'. (Hoffman and Graham, 2009: 45-64)

In democracy, unlike Aristocracy and Monarchy, everyone is equal in the sight of the law irrespective of one's economic, (financial)social or political status. This is not so in Aristocracy, for instance, the right to rulership or governance largely depends on an individual's social, political and economic status.

> All Athenians were equal before the law and enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom as part of the meaning of democracy. In democratic Athens one man might be richer and more prestigious than another but this does not confer any special privilege nor any special right on him should he find himself in the assembly or court. All had an equality-what they called ***isegoria***-that is an equal right to be heard in the sovereign assembly of the state before public decisions were taken. (Irele, 1998: 83-84)

In democracy the people make and take decisions as it concerns and affect their state rather than having these decisions made for them by others or by a minority because they are economically,socially and politically viable. This is what happens in aristocracy or monarchy.(Odimegwu, 2006). The founding fathers of democracy did not provide any room for the classification of the rich or poor, the religious or non-religious, slaves or masters, etc. Every contractor in the tacit consent were/are equal no matter their status. (Cottingham, 2000)

When democracy is conceived in it raw and original form,it might appear, in many ramifications to, be a hybrid of socialism or liberalism. It is a situation where each citizen in their collective majority can freely manifest their creativity, innovation, abilitiesand talents towards the advancement of the society without any fear of persecution or punishment.

In every ideal democracy the government is accountable to the people. Put differently, every democratic state answers to the people whom, they one way or the other,represent.Every ideal and functional democracy always has an opposition on the look-out, to scrutinize the policies of the seating government with a ready alternative, should the policy be found wanting or defective-anti-people. Political scientists have insisted that the existence of an opposition does not vitiate the true essence of

democracy but in lieu strengthens it. In fact, the beauty of democracy lies in opposition.

Despite the fact that Nigeria is practicing democracy, a large number of her people, especially her youths, still live from "hand-to-mouth"-Poverty. Unemployment has reached an all-time high, inflation and high cost of living are making the lives of Nigerians very miserable.The situation is getting worse as a great percentage of Nigerians live in abject poverty. People, especially the youths are prepared to do anything to survive in contemporary Nigeria, not giving a two-bit hoot about the moral implications. Those conducts condemned by the traditional ethical principles have become norms in the Nigerian society.

What is Poverty?

Poverty simply refers to an absence, inadequacy, lack, emptiness, shortcoming, imbalance, insufficiency, unavailability, etc. of thatis required for the sake of achieving a specific goal.Poverty depicts negativity in all ramifications and there is nothing positive about it. Poverty is the inability to enjoy, experience comfort and satisfaction, as fairly as possible as a human being or society. It is a condition characterized by the inability to break even or record meaningful progress and achievement. Poverty robs humanity the essence of true existence. One salient question at this point is what is the way out of or around this quandary? Humanists respond and posit that the only way the human condition can improve is laced in the ability of man (humanity) to evolve himself. In other words, humanists argue that the answer and solution rest in the hands of humanity itself. They caution against the expectation and belief that a supernatural (super power) who has all the answers and solutions will come down one day and take away all the problems of men. Humanist strongly believe that humanity will find the answers to their problems when they look inwards. (Smoker, 1994)

Further, there are basically two (2) types of Poverty: material (physical) poverty and ideological (idealistic) poverty.Material (physical) poverty is when an individual(s) finds it very difficult, if not impossible, to provide the basic necessities (material needs) of life for himself, and in many cases his family. Basic necessities like good food (balanced diet), decent clothes, comfortable shelter, good and qualitative education, etc. Marx insists that poverty is that condition where an individual puts or commits a great deal of his efforts, time and energy in his work (job) yet ends up receiving an outcome that is not commiserate with his efforts simply because he does not own or have access to the means of investment/production-capital. Marx refers to these group of people as the proletariats who engage in 'servile labour' believing that God will one day reward all their hard work. (Kamenka, 1979)

On the other hand, ideological (idealist) poverty is when a person or group of people lack the ability to reflect, make and implement policies that will make their lives meaningful and resourceful. It is the inability to make adequate ideals that can aid the interpretation, relevance and meaning of reality. It is argued that ideological poverty is more profound and devastating than material (physical) poverty because even if a man can free himself from material poverty he would not know how to make sense out of the alternatives available to him when he is plagued with ideological poverty. It is possible that he lacks the ability of self-determination and focus. Ideological poverty might also imply the absence or none existence of the will.(Olu-Owolabi and Ekanola, 2013)

One of consequences of ideological poverty is that the individual or society lacks focus, diligence and determination. Ideological poverty ultimately results in the misplacement of

priorities: putting "Square pegs" in round or rectangular "holes". An individual can be rich but not wealthy because he lacks the ideology of investment. There is a high propensity of wasting his resources-riches, and ending up in penury. For the purpose of this examination our focus shall be on material poverty but with the clear knowledge ofideological poverty at the back of our minds. (Allen and Thomas, 2000)

Poverty, frustration and despair go hand-in- the hand. Poverty can obviate a man's of discovering his potentiality and this in turn can in turn affect his orientation and attitude negatively for the rest of his life. The inability of one of the striking member of ASUU from Uniben chapter led him to take his own life as a result the embarrassment, frustration and despair that took over him on 8th September, 2022. ASUU Strike commenced on 14th February, 2022 and lasted for less than 10 (ten) months to protest many of the inequalities facing university education across the country. (www.tracknews, 2022)

The Way Out of Poverty and the Path to Development in Nigerian

Despite the magnitude ofpoverty and suffering in Nigeria, all hopeis not lost, the country can still get itself out of the mess but this does not come easy or cheap by any means.Getting out of this quagmire is indeed a gigantic rescue mission which must involve the collective and concerted efforts of the sundry contractors.The surest way of fixing Nigeria is sacrifice, and more sacrifice, planning, dedication, hardwork, commitment, selflessness, relentlessness, patriotism, honesty and absolute sincerity from all the stake-holders (the Nigerian Government and the Nigerian people), otherwise the situation will continue todeteriorate until the worse happens.Without missing words, a special package heavily laced with a high degree of moral education is the fundamental element needed to succeed. The youths must be specially targeted in this package and the reason is that study have revealed that the youths are the worse hit by the wave of poverty. A holistic development programme involving massively in the youths is the best and only promising option.

> The size and youthfulness of population offer great potential to expand Nigeria's capacity as the regional economic hub of Africa and globally. A young large population could be an economic assert because population growth and urbanization go together and economic development is closely correlated with urbanization. (Akinyemi and Jacob, 2022)

Nigerian government should rise to the occasion of repackaging the youths and her democracy. Nigerian youthsneeds to be "well nourished" so that they can be properly prepared for the challenges that face them in the future. Two things become obvious when the nourishment of the youths is given top priority: that the country acknowledges her youths as important and that they acknowledge them as theleadersof tomorrow. Thisnourishment will not be automatic, it requires a systematic, critical and consistent process. This process require plenty of time, energy, resources and timeless planning.This transformation requires building institutions that can and willstand the test of time. Institutions that will outlive not less than ten generations of those who erected them. These institutions must be long term rather than short lived institutions. This progression involves different phases like postulated by Chardin (Omoregbe, 1996)) who suggest that the process will terminate at the Theosphere phase. The

programme design must be such that brings out the best from the youths, go a long way bringing out the best from these youths and help get to realize that there are a large reserve of potentials left in them.

The underlying principle of this reformation should tailored along the lines of combating poverty corruption, unpatriotism, immorality, crime and criminalityin the society and the building of moral doctrines both in and outside school. A reorientation and reestablishment of the universal traditional ethical principles must elaborately taught.This project is long overdue as Nigerian youths have left to themselves for far too.

An elaborate androbust moral education curriculum which should begin at the most elementary level of academic training should be established to make the youths, as they will the ones to occupy public officers, abhor and reject all materialistic, unpatriotic, immoral, pervert, ineptitude, etc. tendencies as leaders of tomorrow. The focus should be on making and implementing quality policies that can survive for the next two or moregenerations. The youth should become a sector that must be well budgeted for when the blueprint of development is being drawn or considered. The interest and welfare of the youths should be a priority to the government.There are four (4) sure aspects which can help liberate Nigerian youths from the shackles of poverty, stagnation and decay.These are*Education, Health, Training and empowerment*. Among them all, moral education is the core hub towards the holistic development of the youths and the Nigerian society at large.The point is that the education of a morally upright individual is the creation of a progressive and advanced state/society.

Education (Moral)

If the three (3) levels of education were to be tied up with sound moral education the bottom line is that people (citizens) with high moral rectitude will eventually saturate the society, individuals who will not compromise no matter what will get to occupy public offices. This is the first step to getting competent people to run the affairs of the country.

Critique

Corruption is Nigeria's major problem because a large number of people who have held one public office or the other are corrupt and basically aspire into those offices because of what they stand to benefit, a large number of them see it as an "opportunity to access and take their share of the national cake". The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC)have been reported to have successfully persecuted a large number of Nigerians who have been found guilty of embezzling public funds left in their custody meant for developmental projects.The list of public officers that have been found culpable is indeed long. So far the most notorious of them all is a one-time head of state, military head of state, late General SaniAbacha. (Newswatch, 2000) While the latest case is that of the Accountant General of the nation, Malami, who was discovered to have stolen over 80,000,000,000 (eighty billion naira)

The challenge of corruption does not only involve executive public office holders but every single individual and group left with the charge of caring for the collective interests and welfare of Nigerians. Corruption is when one refuses to carry out his/her duty for which he is paid until he is persuaded to do so.This desire to steal funds is fueled by the increased crave for the assessment of material possession-wealth. The norm now is

that only those who have something to offer or know people in high places get adequate attention. When you don't have gratification to offer or don't know anyone in high places the possibility is that you will be treated like trash.Gone are the days when people (the society) take interest in knowing the source of your wealth/income.What matters in Nigeria today one's ability to make things happens. At this point the end justifies the means. (Machiavelli, 1982). Parents who use to be known disciplinarians have made automatic U-turns, singing the praises of their children who areable to provide for the family without giving a two bit hoot about the source(s) of their income. Nigerian parents have become pragmatic parents who are only interested in what works immediately and have practical consequences. These parents justify Pierce, William James, John Dewey and other American pragmatists who accept every truth that works and have practical consequences. (Warburton, 1996).

Again contemporary Nigerian parents concur completely with Fletcher that the "new age morality" should be preferred over and above the extant universal ethical principle that judgehuman conducts. Fletcher and others contend that the situation and circumstancesprevalent at a particular time justifies the rightness or wrongness of an action. Hence, stealing is no longer always bad. The prevailing situation determines when stealing is right or wrong.The same goes for killing, injustice, oppression, etc. (Edogiawerie, 2004)

Situation ethics seem to have provided the rationale for fraud which is rampant among Nigerian youths who have totally embraced immorality, perversion and vice,as conventions. "Advanced free fraud" aka 419, is the trend in Nigeria today and the atmosphere is ubiquitous with innocent and hardworking individuals being swindled of their hard earned money. Cybele crime aka interment fraud is one of the avenues through which people are scammed. Recent reports have it that advanced free fraud-419, have advanced into fetishism which is a further boost adopted in ripping people off, it is called "YahooPlus"Their victims are hypnotized to comply and don't regain their senses until after the entire episode.

The Nigerian social society have completely gone haywire and every sense of morality and virtue seem to have beenthrown overboard.It seems like the youths have taken up the challenge and have decided to take it to a new level by diving in head on into perversion and immorality like it means nothing. Nigerian youths appear to have accepted the devil's deal of having more than enough money to play around with. A large number of Nigerianyouths are prepared to do whatever it takes to get rich overnight. Otherwise, how can anyone explain where an undergraduate would be able afford acar or SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) worth between ₦8,000,000:00 (eight) and ₦15, 000,000:00 (fifteen) million naira. (Benz products like GLK, 4Matric, Venza, Lexus jeeps, etc.)Let it be stated that these youths pay very steep prices for their choices but they care about it provided they become rich quickly and suddenly.There are despicable conditions that are better imagined. An average young Nigerian will tell you that there is no tangible reward for being moral and decent.Omoregbe argues that there are rational reasons why men must be moral. He insist that men ought tobe moral for the following reason:

- Men are rational beings
- Men are social beings-the categorical imperative of Kant
- It is the path to happiness-the desire of the soul
- Because God hascommanded it and
- Because of the laws of nemesis or Karma. (Omoregbe, 1997)

Meanwhile,Socrates insists that immorality and perversion can never do the society any good.He contendsthat any society that is progressive is one that have citizens with high level of moral rectitude. Morally deficient men translates to morally deficient society/state. The fight against corruption must be attempted with resolve otherwise there would be serious consequences. When you fight corruption, corruption fights you back and even fiercer than you fight it. If corruption is not combated fierce fully it might be thefinal undoing of the political entity called Nigeria.

Humanitarian thinkers strongly believe that corruption and poverty are two inseparable siblingsof the same mother. Humanists thinkers insists that there is no absolute being who can take away the suffering, pains and poverty from Nigeria save Nigerians themselves. It amounts to saying thatno prayer or ritual will solve the problem of poverty except Nigerians decides that corruption must die.Kurtz and other humanists contend that mankind can improve the living conditions of mankind so long as he is willing to do so and this applies to Nigeria. (Ozumba, 2010) Put differently, the contention is that only Nigerians (humankind) can decide to make the future beautiful, bright and promising if they so decide.

Conclusion

The worldometer reports (October, 2022) that over 130,000,000 (One hundred and thirty million) Nigerians live in abject poverty, that an average Nigerian lives and survives on $1 (one dollar) per day. Many families cannot afford to have three (3) square meals par day. A large number of Nigerians struggle desperately to eat twice a day and such families are considered very comfortable otherwise only a few can afford two meals per day. The purchasing power of the Nigerian naira is so poor that when compared with other currencies (like the United States dollar) it is shamefully worthless. The exchange rate of the Nigerian naira and the US dollar is N750:00 (Seven hundred and fifty naira) to 1 (One) American dollar. (NTA Net News, 2022)

Many Nigerians are daily paid workers and if they do not come out every day to work, they will have nothing (food) to put on the table for the family.An indubitable illustration should be able to paint a fairly clear picture of what obtains in Nigeria. For example, an egg that use to sell for ₦30 (thirty naira) now sells for between N100:00 (one hundred naira) and N150:00 (One hundredand fifty naira)while a bag of rice that use to sell for between ₦10,000:00 (Ten thousand naira) and N12, 000: (Twelve thousand naira) now sells at N40,000:00 (Forty thousand naira) and above.The puzzling thing about it all is that these prices that go up never comes down. Poverty is when an individual is unable to provide the basic necessities of life, such as good clothes, comfortable roof over the head, pipe borne water, health care, etc. for himself (Omoregbe, Ibid)

Having said so much about poverty and the escape from poverty, attention will now turn to the need for fixing the shortcomings which characterize democracy in Nigeria. Despite the fact that no state can attain perfect or ideal democracy, it is never the less not a good reason to attempt achieving ideal democracy as suggested by its founding fathers.Making concerted efforts at achieving an ideal democracy will go a very long way in perfecting democracy in any society, especially as far as Nigeria's consolidation of democracy is concerned.A juxtaposition ofNigeria's democracy and American democracy will reveal a sharp contrast in many ramifications. The democratic era in Nigeria appears not to be for everyone but a select few who can afford it. Nigerian politics involves money and plenty of it at that. Only the rich can afford to venture into politics. The 'poor

common' mass whom democracy is meant for can't afford to aspire to any public office in Nigeria.

The brand of democracy obtainable in Nigeria could be best describe as 'Aristodemocracy". Democracy which only the rich can afford. This is against the backdrop that the founders of democracy pointed out that democracy must be an all-inclusive kind of government. Meanwhile, a vast majority of Nigerians are poor and can hardly put decent food on the table everyday.(Ada, 2006) No average civil servant can afford to go into politics with a view of serving his nation/father land. The ruling class feel that they own the country and have raised the stakes so high that no salary earner in Nigeria can afford to participate in politics. Sometime in the early days of 2022, the ruling Party-All Peoples Congress (APC) announced that the amount for the collection of "interest form" for presidential candidates was N100,000,000:00 (One hundred Million naira) An amount a vast majority of Nigerians have not seen or had since they began to work and fend for themselves. This amount is outside the amount needed for campaign and other logistics.

When the 'not-too-young-to-rule' bill was passed the intentions was to allow a lot of Nigerians the opportunity to participate in politics on a level playing field. However,raising the stakes so high amounts to a mockery and travesty to and against the Nigerian people. If the above were not the case, then how many (especially young) Nigerians-salary earners, decent and honest businessmen, etc. can afford to purchase an interest form at the amount stated above and still be able to carry on with their normal lives and businesses?This is one of the ways of permanently keep other Nigerians, especially the youths, away from politics.The point here is that the youths who areinterested in participating in politics in Nigeriado not have the means to do so. For the youths to participate in politics a"level playing field/ground" must be provided for both the young and old otherwise it will only amount to deception and callousness. Nigerian youths are at a disadvantage because no one represents or fight for their interests and welfare at the federal level-National Assembly, House of Reps, etc.(Agada, 2015)

The greatest problem in Nigeria is the "money politics" factor.The recklessness with which Nigerian politicians steal public funds has wrecked the havoc of poverty on the people so much so that a vast majority of Nigerians struggle to survive, to get their daily bread. Like pointed out above 3 (three) square meals is luxury for many Nigerians. Quality healthcare, good education, electricity power supply, good and motorable road, decent accommodation etc. (Kuku, 2012) are all luxuries that the average Nigerian pray for frequently yet many Nigerians never experience what these things are likeall through their lives before theydie.

Money politics, such as vote-buying, ballot-paper snatching and manipulations, thuggery, godfatherism, etc. account for a vast majority of the political irregularities in Nigeria's political landscape. Thesefactors mar and contort the political climate in the country and this is highly unhealthy for democracy in the country. It has been argued that the end of money politics has the high propensity to end the numerous irregularitieswhich is responsible for political instability and political instability is a present and imminent threat to democracy.If the electorates vote for their preferredcandidates, without external influence or duress, then there is a very strong possibility that moral,selfless, devoted, dedicated, honest, disciplined and visionarypeople will eventually take over the mantle leadership and lead Nigeria out of the woods.

Nigerians knows who is who among them, hence, they know those who will perform (do well)adequately and represent their interest at all times when they get into office. To conclude that

the youths do not participate in politics amounts to amisunderstanding of the actual situation.Nigerian youths are often noticed in the political process when elections time come. Poverty will remain if political instability, corruption, underdevelopment and other daunting issues are not considered and expediently addressed.So to eliminate poverty corruption must stop, the celebration of immorality must end. Ending corruption and immorality automatically eliminates poverty. Developmental projects needs to be created

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