

## Democracy, the Electoral System and Development in Nigeria

Dr Ibrahim Adamu  
*Department of Public  
Administration,  
Ahmadu Bello University,  
Zaria, Nigeria*

### Abstract

Democracy, as Black (1979:388) put it, is “that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in and is exercised by the whole body of free citizens directly or indirectly through a system of representation as distinguished from a monarchy, aristocracy or oligarchy.” Thus the central issue in democracy is the promotion of the interest of all the members of a politically organized community as opposed to advancing the interests of, in most cases, some irresponsible, deceitful and self seeking minority groups. In Nigeria, however, democracy has come to mean oligarchy, decorated with beautiful flowers of democracy seen at a distance. All politically democratic structures are beautifully put in place but consciously or unconsciously, they are not allowed to function normally. Thus, the business of government keeps on circulating among a few click of political maneuverers who almost totally neglect the interest of the populace for their own selfish gain. Nigeria, as such, ends up with the ironical situation of being the 'Giant of Africa', very rich but the citizens are poor. The paper intends to identify and analyze the causes and consequences of abuse of democracy in the country through the electoral system and the impact on national development. As a phenomenological, qualitative study, the research is much more concerned with how the electoral system is used to turn democracy into oligarchy and how political actions and inactions constitute a barrier to national development and deter the realization of the dividends of democracy in the country. A combination of both questionnaire and random interview is conducted in the six geo-political zones in the country. The questionnaire involves electorates in, at least, two capital cities in each of the six geo-political zones while the interview involves the electorates in selected rural local governments in each zone where the true picture of development can be assessed. The data gathered are subjected to content analysis to establish causality among the relevant variables. The discussions came out with the real actors behind the political scene in Nigeria from independence of 1960 to 2014.

Keywords:  
*Democracy  
Nigeria  
Electoral System  
Development  
Oligarchy*

### Background to the Study

Individuals and nations all over the world always aspire to develop in terms of changing conditions of life - economically, politically, socially, administratively and technologically, from a state of human dissatisfaction to a state of relatively higher satisfaction. These wishes and aspirations generate multiples of actions and interactions, mostly political, among individuals and nations in order to achieve the desired developmental goal.

Democracy leads to the development of a political system when it encompasses the following: honest and competitive elections in which opposition parties have a realistic chance of winning; universal suffrage; widespread opportunities for political participation; free and open mass media; and government respect for human rights including minority rights. (Dahl, 1989). Hence, democracy with some degree of social justice, honesty and sincerity of purpose must be understood as integral parts of political development. Political development equally leads to other aspects of national development generally. For example a responsive and legitimate government, constrained by competitive elections, are more likely to educate their people and to make informed economic decisions. On the other hand an economic threshold is a somewhat necessary, but not sufficient, condition for democratization. (Handelman, 2006). What we have discussed so far indicate that, there is a symbiotic relationship between elections and development. Elections bring about governments and governments bring about development.

In Nigeria, however, democracy has come to mean oligarchy, decorated with beautiful flowers of democracy seen at a distance. All political democratic structures are beautifully put in place but consciously or unconsciously, they are not allowed to function normally. Thus, the business of government keeps on circulating among a few click of political maneuvers who almost totally neglect the interest of the populace. Nigeria, as such, ends up with the ironical situation of being the 'Giant of Africa', very rich but the citizens are poor. The paper identifies and analyzes the causes and consequences of abuse of democracy in the country through the electoral system and the impact on national development.

### Conceptual Literature

#### Democracy

Democracy has been viewed by both scholars and political actors from various perspectives – from the perspectives of free and fair election; mass participation; pursuing popular interest etc. Democracy conceived from these perspectives, however, has been found to have failed the realization of the total ideals of democracy in some countries despite much more emphasis placed on free and fair elections.

The literal meaning of "democracy" comes from a combination of two Greek words, demos (people) and kratos (rule), and at its core, "Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule". The term originated in Athens and was a part of the standard classification of regime forms that distinguished rule by one (monarchy), several

(aristocracy), and the many (democracy). However, beyond the literal meaning of democracy, there has been considerable debate over the criteria that distinguish democracies from non democracies. (Kenny, 2015).

Democracy, as Black (1979) put it, is “that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in and is exercised by the whole body of free citizens directly or indirectly through a system of representation as distinguished from a monarchy, aristocracy or oligarchy.” Thus the central issue in democracy is the promotion of the interest of all the members of a politically organized community as opposed to advancing the interests of, in most cases, some irresponsible, deceitful and self seeking minority groups.

In respect of the above, Handelman, (2006) classifies democracy as follows:

i. Semi Democracy – an electoral democracy whose government repress civil liberties and otherwise breaches the principles of a free society. The elections may be relatively free but the societies are not. Bolivia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Singapore have been cited as countries associated with semi democracy.

ii. Full Democracy or Liberal Democracy - a political system in which most of the country's leading government officials are elected; there is nearly universal suffrage; elections are largely free of fraud and outside manipulation; opposition party candidates have a real chance of being elected to important national offices; and minority rights as well as general civil liberties are respected, including free speech and a free press. Democracy defined in this way “suggests that competitive elections have limited value if unelected individuals or groups who are not accountable to the public (such as military officers, organized crime bosses, business elites, or foreign powers) control elected officials from behind the scenes.

iii. Substantive Democracy – a higher standard of democracy that goes beyond fair elections and proper government procedures, but also includes fair and just government policy outcomes, with citizens having equal access to public schooling and health care regardless of their social class or ethnicity. India and Brazil have been cited as countries lacking substantive democracies irrespective of their procedural democracies.

iv. Liberal Democracy - is a political ideology and a form of government in which representative democracy operates under the principles of liberalism. It is characterised by fair, free, and competitive elections between multiple distinct political parties, a separation of powers into different branches of government, the rule of law in everyday life as part of an open society, and the equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, and political freedoms for all people.

#### Electoral System

Electoral system, as we define it here, is a complex interaction between: the electoral policies, guidelines, processes and procedures in a country; the electoral agency/commission; the ruling political party; political office holders; political

godfathers; security agents; the judiciary; and the electorates. It is the nature of interaction between these political stakeholders that determine how good or how bad the electoral system is. Election involves a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in position of authority in a given nation. It is the process by which the people selection and control their representative, i.e election gives an electorate the sovereignty power to decide who will govern, (Kenny, 2015).

### Development

Conceptualizing Development, Seers, (1967), sees development as inevitably a normative term and that we must ask ourselves what are the necessary conditions for a universally acceptable aim – the realization of the potential of human personality.

The following words of Dudley Seers explain further.

*“If we ask what is an absolute necessity for this, one answer is obvious – enough food. Below certain levels of nutrition, a man lacks not merely bodily energy and good health but even interest in much besides food. He cannot rise significantly above an animal existence. Studies show that under-nourishment of children leads to permanent impairment of both their physical and their mental capabilities”.*

Seers conclude that, income, job, education and health are important aspects of development that contribute to the provision of food to the individual. Hence they are considered as key indicators of development.

Human Development according to Mahbub-ul Haq, (1971), is the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. It is all about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. Political development involves the creation of specialized and differentiated government institutions that effectively carry out necessary functions, such as collecting tax revenues, defending national borders, maintaining political stability, stimulating economic development, improving the quality of human life, and communicating with the citizenry. (Handelman, 2006). Fundamental freedoms and civil rights are equally key components of political development.

### Literature Review

In both theories and practice of democracy, elections are found to be the central elements. There is, therefore, a pathological link between free, fair and credible election and democratic governance, peace and development since it is free, fair and credible election that provides the basis for emergence of democratic accountability and legitimate governments with the capacity to initiate, implement and articulate clearly development programme. (Kenny, 2015)

Election has been identified as the major feature of a democratic state to the extent that Election and Democracy are considered as two sides of the same coin. As such, free, fair and credible elections become the tools of the electorates that empower them to hold the government accountable and to demand strong credentials and feasible development

agenda from the prospective government officials. In this respect, Kenny, (2015) considers free, fair and credible election as what bestow on government, the legitimate authority to initiate and implement policies on one hand, while on other hand, they empower the citizens to hold governments accountable for their actions and inaction.

Democracy is a system of government where the opportunity to participate in an authoritative decision making is opened to all who are willing and interested to share. It is a system that recognizes individual rights, a system of representation and electoral system based on the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In Nigeria, the fourth republic has witnessed regular elections as from its beginning in 1999 to 2014. This included the elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which has conducted four constructive general elections 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 including bye elections up to 2014. However, the quality of these elections is a matter of grave concern to both the actors and observers. As Kenny put it:

*2003 and 2007 elections were particularly marked by dissatisfaction by candidates, voters and observers. The flaws that characterized the conduct of 2007 elections severally dented Nigeria's image and electoral integrity. This gravity of electoral offences committed during 2007 elections led to soul searching among the Nigeria leadership, this reflected in the public acknowledgement by former president Umaru Yar'adua that the election that brought him to office fundamentally flawed. In a similar vein, the open declaration by President Yar'Adua, shortly after the inauguration of his administration in 2007, that the process of his election was faulty and the establishment of the Uwais Electoral Reforms Commission before Yar'Adua's death also helped to confirm that the INEC did not sufficiently perform its role. However, the European Union Election Observer also witnessed many cases of election fraud including ballot box stuffing, multiple voting, intimidation of voters, alteration of official result form, stealing of sensitive polling materials, vote buying and under-age voting etc. (Kenny, ibid)*

This situation places Nigeria on a narrow path towards sustainable political development. Political godfathers and election financiers are equally not left out.

*While the governorship tickets of the party in Edo and Ekiti States were, for instance, given to those who did not win the primaries before the 2007 elections, the candidacy for the same office in Rivers State was awarded to a candidate who did not participate in the exercise. In the latter case, Honourable Rotimi Amaechi, who was illegally prevented from contesting in the 2007 exercise, was declared the governor by the elections tribunal about a year after. (Kenny, ibid).*

Freedom House, (August 2012), considers many of the officially democratic governments in Africa and the former Soviet Union to be undemocratic in practice, usually because the sitting government has a strong influence over election outcomes. In Nigeria, for example, the research by Kenny, (2015) reveals that:

*The results of the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States were later overturned in 2010 in favour of Dr. Kayode Fayemi and Rauf Aregbesola respectively. It should also be noted that in all of these, the police as an institution is also constantly indicted for its ineffective role that compounded whatever challenges the INEC probably encountered from the exploitative acts of the political class. (Kenny, ibid)*

### Some Criticisms against Democracy

#### Those Lacking Direct Democracies

As liberal democracy is a variant of [representative democracy](#), it does not directly respect the will of average citizens except when citizens elect representatives. Given this that a small number of elected representatives make decisions and policies about how a nation is governed, the laws that govern the lives of its citizens, [elite theorists](#) such as [Robert Michels](#) argue that representative democracy and thereby liberal democracy is merely a decoration over an [oligarchy](#), (Elliott, (2006),

#### Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie

Some [Marxists](#), [Communists](#), [Socialists](#) and [anarchists](#), argue that liberal democracy, under [capitalist ideology](#), is constitutively [class](#)-based and therefore can never be democratic or [participatory](#). It is referred to as [bourgeois](#) democracy because ultimately politicians fight only for the rights of the bourgeoisie. According to Marx, representation of the interests of different classes is proportional to the influence which a particular class can purchase (through bribes, transmission of propaganda, economic blackmail, campaign 'donations', etc.). Thus, the public interest, in so-called liberal democracies, is systematically corrupted by the wealth of those classes rich enough to gain (the appearance of) representatives.

Thus, according to Marx, parliamentary elections are no more than a cynical, systemic attempt to deceive the people by permitting them, every now and again, to endorse one or other of the bourgeoisie's predetermined choices of which political party can best advocate the interests of capital. Once elected, this parliament, as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, enacts regulations that actively support the interests of its true constituency, the bourgeoisie. (Tabor, R.)

#### Media

Critics of the role of the media in liberal democracies allege that [concentration of media ownership](#) leads to major distortions of democratic processes. That the corporate media limits the availability of contesting views, and assert this creates a narrow spectrum of elite opinion. This is a natural consequence, they say, of the close ties between powerful [corporations](#) and the media and thus limited and restricted to the explicit views of those who can afford it. (Curran, et al, 1997)

#### Limited Voter Turnout

Low voter turnout, whether the cause is disenchantment, indifference or contentment with the status quo, may be seen as a problem, especially if disproportionate in particular

segments of the population. At some point low turnout may prompt questions as to whether the results reflect the will of the people, whether the causes may be indicative of concerns to the society in question, or in extreme cases the [legitimacy](#) of the electoral system.

#### Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

For historical reasons, many states are not culturally and ethnically homogeneous. This may result from sharp ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural divisions. Some groups may be actively hostile to each other. A typical example can be given of politics in Kogi State of Nigeria where the Igala and the Eburna tribes appear to be sharp enemies in both political, social and administrative arenas. One's chance of winning election is mostly determined by tribal, religious and cultural affiliation rather than by merit.

#### Majoritarianism

The [tyranny of the majority](#) is the fear that a direct democratic government, reflecting the majority view, can take action that oppresses a particular minority; for instance a minority holding wealth, property ownership, or power. Theoretically, the majority is a majority of all citizens. If citizens are not compelled by law to vote it is usually a majority of those who choose to vote. If such of group constitutes a minority then it is possible that a minority could, in theory, oppress another minority in the name of the majority. However, such an argument could apply to both [direct democracy](#) or [representative democracy](#).

#### Positive Aspects of Democracy

##### Political Stability

One argument for democracy is that by creating a system where the public can remove administrations, without changing the legal basis for government, democracy aims at reducing political uncertainty and instability, and assuring citizens that however much they may disagree with present policies, they will be given a regular chance to change those who are in power, or change policies with which they disagree. This is preferable to a system where political change takes place through violence.

##### Better Information on and Corrections of Problems

A democratic system may provide better information for policy decisions. Undesirable information may more easily be ignored in dictatorships, even if this undesirable or contrary information provides early warning of problems. (Morton H. et al, 2005).

##### Corruption

Research by the [World Bank](#) suggests that political institutions are extremely important in determining the prevalence of [corruption](#): (long term) democracy, parliamentary systems, political stability, and freedom of the press are all associated with lower corruption. (Lederman, D. et al, 2001). [Freedom of information legislation](#) is important for [accountability](#) and [transparency](#).

### Human Development

Democracy correlates with a higher score on the [human development index](#) and a lower score on the human poverty index. Democracies have the potential to put in place better education, longer life expectancy, lower infant mortality, access to drinking water, and better health care than dictatorships. This is not due to higher levels of foreign assistance or spending a larger percentage of [GDP](#) on health and education. Instead, the available resources are managed better. (Morton H. et al, 2005)

### Mass Murder by Government

Research shows that the more democratic nations have much less [democide](#) or murder by government. ( [Rummel](#), (1997). Similarly, they have less [genocide](#) and [politicide](#), (Harff, (2003)

### Freedoms and Rights

The freedoms and rights of the citizens in liberal democracies are usually seen as beneficial

### Methodology

As a phenomenological, qualitative study, the research is much more concerned with how the electoral system is used to turn democracy into oligarchy and how political actions and inactions constitute a barrier to national development and deter the realization of the dividends of democracy in the country. A combination of both questionnaire and random interview is conducted in the six geo-political zones in the country. The questionnaire involves electorates in, at least, two capital cities in each of the six geo-political zones while the interview involves the electorates in selected rural local governments in each zone where the true picture of development can be assessed. The data gathered are subjected to content analysis to establish causality among the relevant variables. The discussions came out with the real actors behind the political scene in Nigeria from independence of 1960 to 2014.

### Discussions and Findings

For years, the electoral system in Nigeria has had impact on both political and economic development in the country. Most political actors come into politics with the sole aim of enriching themselves at the cost of general development that affect the majority of the populace. With that goal in mind, they go to any extent to manipulate the electoral process in order to win elections. This includes all sorts of electoral malpractices, kidnapping of opponents, influencing the electorates - majority of whom are poor - with money, etc.

The Effects of Electoral Malpractices on Nigeria Democratic Consolidation is examined by Ebirim from 1999 to 2013 as follows:

*After a long military rule that almost cripple the socio-economic of the country, Nigerians launched a new democratic dispensation on May 29, 1999. Although, this was highly embraced by the citizens thinking that the new era will bring development to individuals and the country at large. But the political system seems*



*to have internalized more the ethos of impunity rather than suavity and civility that will thrive and consolidate democracy in the country. Even elections that are considered to be the minimum requirement of any political system, if it is to be admitted into the exclusive club of democracies have been grossly manipulated by political elites such that their outcomes hardly reflect the wishes of the people. (Ebirim, 2014)*

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is among the countries that have never attained free and fair election as a mark of both electoral and liberal democracies throughout the Fourth Republic as given by Freedom House World survey, 2015.

To qualify as an "electoral democracy", a state must have satisfied the following criteria:

1. A competitive, multiparty political system;
2. Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offenses);
3. Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and the absence of massive voter fraud that yields results that are unrepresentative of the public will; and
4. Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.

Freedom House's term "electoral democracy" differs from "[liberal democracy](#)" in that the latter also implies the presence of a substantial array of civil liberties. In the survey, all free countries qualify as both electoral and liberal democracies. By contrast, some Partly Free countries qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies. (Yvonne 2001). Each pair of political rights and civil liberties ratings is averaged to determine an overall status of "Free" (1.0-2.5), "Partly Free" (2.51-5.5), or "Not Free" (5.51-7.0). (Yvonne S., 2001)

Key: \* - In the Electoral democracies (as described above),

PR - Political Rights, CL - Civil Liberties,

Free Status: Free, Partly Free, Not Free

Table 1: Country Status – Electoral Democracy, Liberal Democracy, Political Rights and Civil Liberty

Country	2010			2011			2012			2013			2014			2015		
	PR	CL	Free	PR	CL	Free	PR	CL	Free	PR	CL	Free	PR	CL	Free	PR	CL	Free
Angola	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	5	Not
Benin	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free
Botswana*	3	2	Free	3	2	Free	3	2	Free	3	2	Free	3	2	Free	3	2	Free
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly	5	3	Partly	5	3	Partly	5	3	Partly	5	3	Partly	6	3	Partly
Burundi	4	5	Partly	5	5	Partly	5	5	Partly	5	5	Partly	5	5	Partly	6	5	Not
Cameroun	6	6	Not	6	6	Not	6	6	Not	6	6	Not	6	6	Not	6	6	Not
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
Namibia*	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free
Niger*	5	4	Partly	5	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly
Nigeria	5	4	Partly	4	4	Partly	4	4	Partly	4	5	Partly	4	5	Partly	4	5	Partly
Rwanda	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	5	Not	6	6	Not	6	5	Not	6	6	Not
Brazil*	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free
Canada*	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
Chile*	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
Colombia*	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly	3	4	Partly
Finland*	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
France *	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
Germany*	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free	1	1	Free
Greece*	1	2	Free	1	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free	2	2	Free

Source: Freedom House, 2015

An asterisk (\*) indicates countries which are "electoral democracies".

In Table 1 above, Nigeria could not score points up to the minimum of 5.51 to qualify her as a country with liberal and electoral democracy, political rights and civil liberty. Hence the status of partly free is what the country qualifies to be.

#### Factors against free and Fair Election in Nigeria

Out of our survey, the following factors are considered inimical to smooth electoral process for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

#### Low level of Civilization and lack of Political Education

It is common with many Nigerians to find them unmindful of political actions and interactions two to three years before any election, until some few months before they wake up from their slumber. By then, the political actors had already planted their evil plans for winning the election by any means. Thus lack of political consciousness make them accept money in order to vote for a particular candidate and when he/she is declared the winner, he/she considers the whole exercise as a trade-off, he came to the office by the power of his money rather than by the real mandate of the people. So he owes them neither duty nor responsibility. The first thing is to think of how to recoup his money back and probably, pay for the loans he took for financing his rigging activities. Even at primary elections within the same party, money is used to influence the election. The trend in Nigeria is that, whoever is given the position of Minister or Commissioner of Finance, he uses the position to illegally amass wealth in preparation for contesting for a

higher office. In addition, the ruling party uses state funds to manipulate the election in its own favour. This becomes obvious but no pressure groups can be found fighting that practice, instead officials of such pressure groups are bought with the same illegal money. Thus in Nigeria the best candidates are not necessarily those who image Nigerian affairs.

#### Poverty

Related to 5.1.1 above, poverty is identified as one of the basic factors hindering the success of credible election and democratic practice in Nigeria. Many Nigerians see the election period as an opportunity to demand from the office seeker a slice of their wealth. Thus, their participation in the election process is only influenced by how much they could attract from the contestants rather than by deliberate decision based on prevailing issues and national interest.

#### Military Chemistry in the body of Key Political Actors from 1999 to 2007

Obasanjo, as the first president in the Fourth Republic has never favored a multiparty system for African countries. He is quoted as saying "In my native tongue, Yoruba, the word for 'opposition' also means 'enemy'". He added that "Throughout much of Africa there is one party rule, and opposition is generally regarded as being almost treason. Perhaps a partial cause of this is language" Eigen, (2007).

One party system is a typical characteristic of the military where one party will be commanding everybody in the country. That apart, Obasanjo in person, of course as a retired military personnel, disgusts opposition in his daily political life as Mr. President. This was manifested in his sour relationship with his then Vice President Atiku and Speaker of the House of Assembly, Gali Na'abba and, of course, many Nigerians when he wanted to manipulate the constitution to pave his way for third tenure after being on the seat for two consecutive terms of eight years. (Herskovits, 2007)

#### External Political Influence

In the past, Washington had promoted democracy in Nigeria only as far as doing so had served its immediate purposes. Nigeria's stability has mattered to the United States partly because the country is the key to stability in West Africa but mostly because multiplying political uncertainties in the Middle East make Nigeria's oil increasingly important to Washington. The most obvious nonhuman casualty of Nigeria's electoral crisis could be crude oil supplies.

#### Vote Rigging

This takes many form and shape. It includes manipulation of registration exercise to prevent candidate(s) or party or community from being registered; including fictitious names in voters register; illegal compilation of separate voters list; illegal printing of voters' cards and electoral materials; deliberate refusal to supply election materials to opposition wards; sudden change of the list.

The official results of Nigeria's elections in April, 2007 showed overwhelming victories for the ruling party. The presidential winner, Umaru Yar'Adua, received 70 percent of the vote; his nearest opponent had 20 percent -- a margin of victory exceeding that in 1983, when discontent over extensive rigging led to a coup ousting the just-elected civilian president.

*According to international and domestic observers alike, the process was deeply flawed. It was unclear until just days before each election -- for state offices on April 14 and for the presidency and the National Assembly on April 21 -- who the final candidates would be. On election day, the names of some contenders who had been reinstated by the courts were not on the ballots. The elections themselves were disastrous, with even more rigging and violence than during the previous presidential election, in 2003, when stolen ballot boxes and bogus vote counts marred the polling. All told, there were some 700 violent election-related incidents between November and March, among them the assassinations of two gubernatorial front-runners (Herskovits, 2007),*

This shows the extent to which democracy is bastardized in Nigeria which eventually retards the economic progress of the country. Almost throughout the Fourth Republic, Nigeria lacked some ideal political values which led to a lot of negative world records against the country. For example, using ₦65.00 as the minimum amount spent per person per day, instead of the United Nation's minimum of \$1 per day, the record of the percentage of Nigerians who were poor was given by the Senior Special Adviser to Mr. President and Coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as follows: 1980 – 28%, 1985 – 46%, 1992 – 42%, 1996 – 65.6%, 1999 – 70% and 2004 – 54.4%. (Kpakol, 2009).

This existed in Nigeria in the midst of huge oil revenue. The worst record was in 1999 when the Fourth Republic started although there was an improvement barely five years after with a lower record of 54.4% probably as a result of NAPEP. Despite this improvement, the World Bank Human Development Index (HDI) which ranks nations according to their *citizen's quality of life*, rather than by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or other statistics, gave a record of Nigeria, with an HDI value of 0.470, and ranked 158th out of 177 countries, below Gambia (155th), Zimbabwe (151st), Togo (152nd) and Cameroun (144th). (World Bank HDI Report, 2007/2008) The implication of Nigeria's poor ranking is that the country is one of the "least livable" in the world characterized by high rate of poverty and unemployment.

To express the devastating socio-economic conditions in the country, Obasanjo, (2003) states thus:

*The social conditions in Nigeria present a startling paradox; in spite of a robust endowment in natural and human resources, the level of poverty of her people stands in contrast to the country's vast wealth. For decades, the country- has struggled with the issue of socio-economic development, which has remained in decline in the face of increasing revenue from crude oil.*

*The deepening incidence and dynamics of poverty in Nigeria have stratified and polarized the Nigerian society between the haves and have-nots, between the north and the south, between the educated and uneducated; poor parents beget poor offsprings (creating a kind of dynasty of the poor). The resulting tensions and social conflicts have eroded the fabric that held society together. (Obasanjo, 2003)*

Nigeria got itself in this condition despite the liberation of the country from the dictatorship of the military by democracy which implies that the much needed dividend of democracy in terms of development is yet to be attained.

### Findings

Manipulation of the Political Process in Nigeria has great consequences on Development. As discussed earlier, political manipulation in the country takes many forms and this includes deliberate attempt (mostly by incumbent superior political office holders or political godfathers) to elect nonentities, unqualified persons or persons with low level of education into key political offices under their supervision or control and who can be easily manipulated. This is the scenario in Nigeria since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999. Right from the Presidency, Mr President would like a governor, mostly belonging to his party, at the state level who can easily be manipulated. If such a candidate is identified, all efforts are made by the president to assist him/her to win. This effort is exerted during both the primary and national elections. The same situation happens between the Governor of a state and the Local Government Chairmen in the state. The line follows down to Local Government Chairmen and Their Councilors.

When the preferred candidate is given all the necessary supports to emerge as the winner against all his party contesters at the primary election level, he is then given full assurance of winning the national election against all his opponents. Such a candidate is quite convinced that he is never the best within his own party but he has been made to win and at the national or general election level, he is not necessarily popular, but he emerges as the overall winner. This is what cripples the freedom of the person elected to serve his people. Instead, he will be serving the interest of his political godfather.

The above situation, no doubt, constitutes a threat to democracy and it is inimical to national development. Since the aim of all the manipulations in favour of the preferred candidate of his boss is to get a free reign without opposition, the President or Governor ends up distorting many political and administrative processes for personal self interest. The assisted candidate does not have the gut to oppose any of such actions. As such he allocates all his loyalties including sovereignty to the political boss instead of to the people. Some monies meant for projects for the people are paid back to the political godfather as compensation.

In Nigeria, over the years, the situation became worst between state Governors and their Local Government Chairmen. Most Governors used that opportunity to control fully all funds coming from the Federation Account into the State Joint Local Government Account. These are funds totally meant to be used by the local governments to develop

their areas but they hardly have power (physical but not constitutional power) to manage the funds according to their designed plan. Right from Budget preparation and budget execution, the Governor has the total control. The Local Government Chairman would be left with managing staff salary only instead of embarking on developmental projects fully designed and implemented by the Local Government itself.

#### Conclusion

Any democracy where political loyalty and sovereignty is removed from the people and placed on a political godfather, such democracy has a narrow chance of attaining sustainable political development.

#### Recommendation

In reality, Nigerians need political education in order to improve in their electoral system and democratic practices, the people should learn to abhor tribalism, factionalism, election malpractice in order not to mortgage their rights and future. Here political scientists have the role to play in conjunction with National Orientation Agency (NOA), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigerian Security Agents and Religions Organization. However, they have a responsibility to cultivate the political awareness at the grassroots through the well planned programme of political education. By embarking on political Evangelism, it will make people to be well political active and oriented during the election period.

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