

## **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND THE DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**

**Ekiyor Welson\***

\*General Studies Unit,  
Maritime University, Okerenkoko, Delta state,  
NIGERIA

Email id: ekiyorwelson@yahoo.com

**DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2021.02466.6**

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*We begin this research with a simple question. "Does Democracy engender Development? Democracy is ordinarily seen as a set of institutions and practices whose intention is to implement a certain kind of equal participation of citizens in the political process. Development on the other hand can be seen as argued by a few philosophers as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts seriously with narrower age-long views of development , such as identifying developments with growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advancement or with social modernization. As we shall see in this article, development goes beyond the physical accomplishments of a state to the ability for citizens to achieve more freedom to achieve their life goals. Specifically, it is stated in this article that it takes the institution of democracy to give citizens more freedom and this can only come through active participation of the citizens in the entire gamut of the democratic process. This is important because democracy as an institution is a product and a tool of the citizens to organise their society to achieve their goal of freedom and to make this happen, they must choose the kind of leaders and kind of ideology presented to them in a free, credible and fair democracy process. This paper reveals that the Nigerian populace is yet to achieve the dividends of democracy owing to the lack of participation by the people beyond coming out to vote on election days.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Engender, Accomplishments, Age-Long*

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

Before the advent of what is now commonly referred to as the 4<sup>th</sup> republic, Nigeria's historical development was one replete with coups and counter-coups as the country's elites fought for power via the barrel of the gun. There is an open in the country that every military coup in Nigeria was supported and funded by some civilian billionaire or a foreign power. The first coup in 1966, followed by a counter coup in the same year which eventually ended in a three year bitter civil war was characterizes by misgivings among the elite class and the trend continued till the birth of the 4<sup>th</sup> republic. What agitates my thoughts is the reason why the

---

military regimes were seen as forbidden and political anathema when facts have revealed that all the states of Nigeria, 36 of them were created by only the military. The entire major infrastructure in the country including roads and superhighways, railways, major water works and airports to mention a few were all built by the military. To some extent, there was law and order in the country.

The only cry was about freedom and the exercise of fundamental human rights. For this, many activists and academics declared war on the military until they were pushed out of government and into the barracks. Today, with freedom and rights guaranteed, nothing absolutely has changed in the country in terms of governance under civilians. Traditional and social media are awash with grim realities that democracy has actually not solved any problem in Nigeria. News of massive corruption by government officials, issues of crime and criminality, increase in the poverty index and so forth are daily reported. Observers and commentators would argue that the only probable change that is very conspicuous is that the elite class has been expanded; taking in more members and the local colonization has been perfected, to the point where the common good is now the good of the elite. In fact, all the institutions of the state are now for the protection and welfare of the elites. So what is the gain of becoming a democracy?

So, after a long spell of military beginning in 1966 with a brief civil rule in 1979-1983 therefore, Nigeria returned to civil rule again in 1999 and has remained so till now but political transition does not, however, translate to transition to democracy. The crucial question is, “can there be democracy without addressing the doctrine of basic individual liberties in society”? The diversity of doctrines and pluralities in Nigeria is not just historical reality that will not pass away but is also at the root of the political structure of the state; and people look up to democratic institutions to help the overall structure to ensure national cohesion. Larry Diamond [1] gives this idea some depth when he asserted that even if an authoritarian regime shows some commitment to human rights and collective goals; it does not make it democratic, ‘nor are all democracies, especially unstable democracies good for the people. But certainly, non-democracies are not likely to achieve those social and moral goals that require democratic institutions and freedom’.

He argued in 1998 that ‘...democracy is the only model of government with a broad ideological legitimacy and appeal in the world’. For this reason, the institution represents a very critical one in the social structure of Nigeria, because the idea of justice, which is the ultimate end of politics, cannot make any impact in any society without the existence of democratic structures. Wangari Maathai (2010) [2] also argued strongly that too often the term “democracy” has simply become a bromide, offered during voting rather than a means of enhancing the capacities of governmental and non-governmental institutions, providing basic services to the people and empowering them to be active partners in development. In this vein, one can seriously contend that for politics to be constitutional, it must be democratic and be firm on popular sovereignty and social citizenship. It must have the strong participation of the people in both the selection of candidates and election of leaders, as these underscore the very essence of the institution of democracy and the foundation for development.

From the perspective of political institutions, the structure of the Nigerian society may show that in theory there is a democratic ambience in place but in reality there is none, as the necessary ingredients of democracy such as the rule of law, mass participation, basic liberties

---

and rights in addition to free and fair elections are lacking. The implication of this is that development which is expected to thrive in a democratic environment and become its concomitant outcome in the long run, is stunted because of the reality of lack of true democracy. Over the years in Nigeria, it has been politics of the few, by the few and for the few; a case where few politicians in the corridors of power sit in a room and determine who gets what and who goes where. It has been argued vigorously that the political class in Nigeria, judged to have failed the people, carry out political activities without democratic fundamentals and necessary elements. True democracy in society will only be realised when the political class and the government involve the people in the political process. In a wider context, thus, the understanding of the concept of democracy itself would reveal the extent to which the social- political structure of the Nigerian society needs to transform to achieve stability and development.

So the situation is such that from 1999 till the current realities, Nigeria has experienced the longest stretch of democracy since independence and ordinarily, this should elicit some kind of literature on development and growth in all spheres of national life. The indices of human development by now should have been looking upward but the contrary is the case. Why are unemployment figures still high? Why is there still so much insecurity and criminality in the country? Why is the poverty level still high? These questions are urgently begging for answers, In the meantime, enormous resources have accrued to the state as usual, with no tangible evidence of them on ground. The question then would be what is the purpose of returning the country to civil rule if the welfare of the people would still remain the same? Another question waiting for answer is, why is Nigeria's democracy not leading to instant development? Are there things in Nigeria's democracy that are missing? Compared to other democratic countries, why is Nigeria's democracy not making the lives of the people better? Are there better freedoms among the people now? What are the people doing with the freedom procured through the change of regime from military to civilians? Has democracy actually made a difference in the lives of Nigerians? These are the issues waiting for deliberation as we draw our link between Democracy and development.

### **Democracy and moral development of the people**

The fundamental issue begging for analysis in this section concerning democracy, good governance, and moral development is how the people and their political leaders are expected to act? The next is what is the right thing to do in any given situation? The corresponding question in classical ethical and political thoughts is what a good life is for a human being and who determines that? A follow up is what is known as good governance or good government? An answer to these variants of questions would depend on the answer to the primary moral question, what is the good life for a human being which is in turn dependent upon an understanding of what a citizen is. The need to have an understanding that cuts across different understandings is very important in making any kind of assessment and without this common understanding, making judgements on the issue of democracy and development would be based on emotive reasoning. This thinking becomes more germane when you note how governments at different levels talk about dividends of democracy in rolling out their accomplishments in office.

Norton (1999, ix) argues that: “a good government is one that affords to the people who populate its constituency, the requisite social conditions for leading the best life possible”. This simply implies that the essence of government in any society is the people and their lives. He goes on to assert that modern progressives erroneously show little interest in the moral life and worthy living among the people but create: “more geographical exploration, emphasize the development of markets, pursue the growth of technology, and its material fruits, all conceived extra morally” (Norton 1999, 15). His argument continues that what should be paramount in governance is that the route to follow in striving for the just and good society is through good governance or put differently, the essence of government lies in the cultivation and the perfection of individuality, not in its suppression or extinction. In cultivating the individuals in society, there must be good governance and the point must be made that from the days of the state of nature transiting to the social contract, society has become a school for the cultivation of human character.

What is therefore, very necessary in any liberal and democratic society is the enthronement of principles that would make the state to deliberately and conscientiously provide the social conditions that would help citizens development their character and be able to live the life they so wish: “What becomes necessary to classical liberalism is the social contract that ends “war of all against all”, by establishing and preserving a social order consisting in protecting individual rights by consensual governments and just resolution of conflicts through impartial judicial decisions” (Norton 1991, 132). The job of government therefore goes beyond that of providing social amenities to that of establishing a just system that can solve problems both at the individual level and at the level of the society. The challenge here has to do with the kind of people that constitute governance and a situation where government is constituted by people who lack this basic understanding portends danger for society.

Downie (1964, 83) [3] contributes to the discourse by noting that it is not the function of any government to create societies that exemplify one idea of the good life to the exclusion of others. Rather government should concern itself with promoting the public good in a manner which encourages the active participation of the citizens, and in so doing create the condition in which a multiplicity of ideas of the good life may flourish side by side: “we judge a government through three criteria. 1. The extent to which it furthers the public intent where that is understood as a matter of protection, social welfare, and independent arbitration. 2. By the extent to which it allows participation by its citizens in the process by which they are governed.

3. By the extent to which it encourages the pursuit of ideas of the good life”. These assertions clearly show that democracy in Nigeria has no intent to involve the people beyond providing amenities and giving them freebies from time to time, an activity the military equally did and even more.

### **Democracy and Economic Development of the People**

The United Nations Development Programme releases a report in 2020 that the Human Development Index of Nigeria dropped three places to 161 in their latest report: “To allow for assessment of progress in HDIs, the 2020 Human development Report includes recalculated HDIs from 1990-2019 using consistent series of date. Nigeria’s HDI value for 2020 is 0.539, which put the country in the low Human Development category – Positioning it at 161 out of 181 countries and territories”. At the same time the report reveals that the HDI of Nigeria grew

---

by 58% between 1990 and 2021. This is definitely a phenomenal growth. With this kind of growth and exploit in a country, poverty reduction would have received a boost but that is not the case. The concern by World Bank in the own report is why this rapid growth in the economy in Nigeria has not generated greater poverty reduction? The other question is how could an economy of the size and wealth of Nigeria have such a high poverty rate? The answers to these questions are embedded in the argument of participatory democracy.

Poverty reduction in any society has become a more explicit objective of development policies; and economic growth as a measure of progress in society is now seen as more of a means to an end rather than a final objective in itself (Addison 2008). World Bank (2006) reported that there are more than a billion people living in extreme poverty. These are people having less than one dollar per day to survive and the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa is especially desperate as

almost half of the population is poor. It is also reported that 799 million people or 17% of the population in developing countries are undernourished and in sub Saharan Africa, one third of the population is undernourished, the largest of any developing region (World bank 2020, UNDP 2020). World Bank reports that: “recently announced rebased GDP figures that increased the estimated size of the Nigerian economy have again drawn attention to official poverty statistics. Data from the last comprehensive households survey (NHLSS) in 2009/2010 indicate that the official poverty rate remained stubbornly high at 46% of the population. The emphasis now is for effective states to apply the practice of participatory democracy to necessarily achieve development objectives by providing pro-poor services and infrastructure. Human development is taking the front burner as more countries become democratic as against the old idea of physical development at the expense of human welfare.

In the midst of the debate on the mind of most policy makers’ belief in physical development as against human development, Addison (2008) asserts that an ideal society must achieve absolute poverty reduction. On the other hand, some other writers on the subject favour state actions to reduce over-all income inequality as well among others. While Social and Political Philosophers such as Rawls fall into this latter category, others including Nozick (1974) vehemently oppose such egalitarian ideas, citing individual freedom, including the right to accumulate wealth. In a democracy, which Addison referred to when he talked about ideal societies, Public policy is normally based on debate and the decisions taken are always based on agreement. Whether the objective of the state is to create equality or not in any society would depend on the values and moral standards in that society and must all emanate from public participation in the process. Economic development is closely interwoven with democracy as the objective of democracy in the first place is freedom to pursue a desired life style by citizens.

If the advancement of society is measured by the barometer of how it’s poorest and most vulnerable live, then as recent figured released by UNDP (2020) show, Nigeria has a systematic structure of inequality and it is only the strong participation of citizens in policy formulation and implementation that can reverse this trend. This problem in the Nigerian society in spite of years of unbroken democratic rule translates to very limited opportunity for upward social mobility, few decent jobs, poor income and low purchasing power for the employed. Inequality means poor infrastructure and institutional failures in key sectors of the society. UNDP also reported that high inequality adds to conditions that prevent sustained growth by depriving a



substantial proportion of the population access to economic opportunities. Inequality in Nigeria gets worse as the years ago by in-spite of the advent of democracy, ranking the country among the countries with a relatively high inequality in the world. This grim data only affirms our earlier claim that mere taking the country from the soldiers is not enough to improve the lives of the people.

The tenets of participatory democracy places so much emphasis on the development of the people as they choose the best life style that suits their goals in life and as Ake argued in the writings of Efemini (2002) that development must focus on the people, asserting that it is man-centred or more like citizens-centred. The challenge at this point is how to define what we mean when we say development should be man-centred. Is it to give resources to man to further his growth or to provide the necessary structures and conditions that can create opportunities for the citizens or could it be a combination of both? We must be mindful in this

wise to acknowledge that there are citizens who are not ready to apply themselves to conditions for their growth but are only interested in free rides. Despite this, Ake continues that: “development is not a project but a process. It is the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values” (Ake, 1996, 125).

In line with our argument that the current structure of democratic governance in Nigeria has not really changed from the legacy of the military era simply because the kind of democracy practiced in Nigeria is Elitist in texture. For this, the intent of democracy which is the good of the people is still elusive, a point raised by Ake as he expressed frustration that while other regions in the world have experienced development in one way or another, the problem in Africa is not so much that development failed as that it never really began. That means, for Ake, Africa has not started the challenge of overcoming underdevelopment; and what is responsible for this, when almost the whole of Africa is now practising democracy? The missing link for me is the fact that the brand of democracy introduced to African countries is too much elitist by nature and is programmed to serve only the interest of the elites and until the people are integrated fully into the process, its main purpose would continue to be unattainable.

### **Public Opinion, Public Reason and Participation of the people**

The import of the participation of the people in their democracy cannot be undermined and overemphasized as its absence creates a malicious dichotomy between the elites and the general public and the elites against itself using the masses. In other cases, there is the dichotomy between the masses and itself, as instigated by the elites. Those are the sad outcomes of a democracy devoid of the people’s participation and this participation, it is argued by social scientists goes beyond attending political rallies and voting on election days. Weale (1999, 14) argued that: “important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend directly or indirectly on public opinion formally expressed by citizens of the community, the vast bulk of whom have equal political rights. In this definition, government policy ought to depend on some formal and regular way on the state of public opinion”.

One way citizens take part in a democracy to make it carry the toga of participatory democracy is through Public Opinion as moderated by Public Reason. It has earlier been argued that citizenship can either be direct or indirect. Indirect can be through the election of

representatives who ideally ought to hold consultations with them regularly but often times do not do so. Indirect can also be through the media which capture their views through interviews and vox-pops. In the case of direct participation, however, it can be in the form of formal small gatherings in the communities across the country with government officials in attendance to discuss policy formulations with the people. Research reveals that this is also conspicuously missing in Nigeria's democracy and it is the reason for the lack of impact of democracy in the country. Deliberating on the idea of Public Opinion, we may add carries inherent difficulties though, because of the problem of ignorance of critical issues on the part of most members of the public on the issues in the public domain.

Weale said this much when he asserted that it was precisely the idea or doctrine of dependence by government on Public Opinion that became the fundamental criticism of the Athenian democracy by Plato in the Republic, on the score that knowledge (Episteme), not opinion (doxa) should steer the ship of the state and this to my mind is perfectly in order. It is absolutely dangerous and disastrous to base Public Opinion on mere sentiments or emotions expressed by the public in the name of expressing themselves or adding their voice to an issue. In spite of this inherent contention, Weale (1999, 14) still opines that "if we came across a system of government in which there was no dependence at all in the all-important public choices or public opinion, then we would withhold the name, democracy from that system". For him, therefore, there is absolutely no democracy without the input of Public Opinion.

Weale (1991) goes further to explain his understanding of Public Opinion by asserting that the practice may either be direct or indirect. According him, it is direct when choices of law and policy are made by citizens through such routes as voting in a binding referendum and voting at general elections. Support for indirect public opinion for Weale, would be meaningful only when political representatives can effectively be turned out of office by reasonably regular elections, the political system is a democracy according to the definition that "democracy is a system of government in which the policies and decisions of government on all important range of issues depend to a great extent on Public Opinion as expressed or other forms of aggregating opinion" (Weale 1991, 15). Direct participation in contemporary times is becoming more and more unfashionable in large and complex societies where there is preponderance of multiplicity in tribes, ethnicity and religions and the easiest route is the voting of representatives who must be in regular contact with their constituencies.

## **Deepening Public Opinion with Rawls' Public Reason**

As we examine the virtue of Public Opinion which is seen as the core of participatory democracy and in reaction to some gaps in Weale as it concerns the uninformed opinion of citizens sometimes, our answer should be found in the doctrine of Public Reason in the conceptions of John Rawls [4]. Public Reason for Rawls (1971, 1993) has to do with how citizens of a society explain their political opinions and decisions to one another in reaching a consensus in opinion. In essence, Rawls expects public Reason to require citizens to be able to justify their political decisions to one another using publicly available values and standards. His Public reason can be seen as citizens engaged in certain political activities having a duty of civility to be able to justify their decisions of fundamental political issues by reference only in public values and public standards. This point is very vital in the understanding of public opinions in multi-ethnic, multi-moral, and multi-religious societies where public opinion is

tainted with such considerations. What Rawls recommends in aggregating Public Opinion on national values is that it must pass the test of public standards and public values.

In this understanding, Public Reason is not just one political value among others. It is about the other various elements that make up the ideal of a constitutional democracy. As it governs the political relation in which people ought to stand to one another as citizens. Public Reason cultivates public opinion and for public opinion to be useful, it must be tempered by Reason. Public Reason involves more than just the idea that the principles of political association should be an object of public knowledge. Its concern is the very basis of collective binding decisions of citizens. Public Reason becomes more useful when citizens bring their own reason into accord with the reason of others, espousing a common point of view for setting the terms of political life. The conception of justice by which citizens live then becomes a conception all participants endorse, not for different reason they happen to share but instead for reasons that count for everyone because people can affirm them together. This spirit of reciprocity is the foundation of a democratic society.

Participatory democracy in Nigeria, depending upon the doctrine of Public Opinion must be doused by the Rawlsian doctrine of Public Reason. A democracy that is characterized by Public Opinion based on ethnicity and religion cannot qualify to be participatory at all. For citizens to thus, participate fully in the governance activities in their constituencies, they must develop a Public Opinion that is tempered by Public Reason. This would require citizens to study and know public conceptions of morality, values, laws and policies before expressing their opinions and this must have the intent of the public good and not otherwise. A critical analysis of the idea of Public Opinion shows that if left unchecked, it could lead to wrong outcomes akin to applying an unscientific method to a scientific phenomenon. The opinion of uninformed and uneducated citizens on any issue is nothing but a deadly virus as it is based purely on ignorance and Public Opinion in a democracy must not be based on ignorance.

### **The imperatives of Citizen's Participation in the Democratic Process**

Organizing society in the 21st century is not different from what happened in the social contract and the main essence of extrapolating the Participatory Democracy theory as a way to organise the people, is the need for social and national integration and as social scientists would argue, political integration is relevant due to the existence of selfish and diverse interests in society where each group holds on to its own view and other self-conscious cultural qualities. Political integration is also germane when there is a political system that is composed of formally distinct independent political units that people identify with. In underscoring the process of political integration we can describe it as: 'a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation-state. From this accounts, social and political integration through the Participatory Democracy theory should be desirable in Nigeria. Just as Rawls (1993) argued that society is artificial, Maathai (2010, 184) in the same vein but dwelling on the subject within the African context equally argued that "the modern African state is a superficial creation: a loose collection of ethnic communities or micro-nations, brought together in a single entity or macro-nation by the colonial powers". The fact remains that at the inception of colonisation, many African countries such as Nigeria were multi-ethnic and multi-tribal societies. The problem, however, is that



nation-states are yet to emerge from these mosaic of people living together in one political nation.

The normal and usual thing to do therefore is for all stakeholders concerned to assemble and agree on some basic principles and institutions and this is where genuine civil society organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria have a lot of work to do. Political and social conflicts in Nigeria as recorded constantly have a direct bearing with failure to do this. For example, Maathai (2010, 216) relating the issues to the Kenyan perspective notes that “if at the outset of independence in Kenya, a conference had been held of the 42 micro-nations and they had all negotiated a constitution under which they agreed to co-exist and work together while honouring a set of agreed-upon rights, the community violence that has periodically wrecked Kenya since then might not have occurred”. The absence of such a practice rightly equates with the idea of state of nature and the need for a social contract of all the micro-nations involved. The idea of ‘state of nature’ which precedes the ‘social contract’ theory can be described as a symbolic representation of a thinking that articulates the myth that human nature before and without the advent of civilisation is predominantly and innately selfish and egoistic (Hobbes 1991) or peaceful but insecure (Locke 1980). The Hobbesian account suggests that man only seeks and protects his own interest resulting in a permanent rivalry among men. The Lockean account on the other hand suggests that man is by nature peaceful but lacked security of life and property.

In practical terms therefore, this condition of man in the social contractarians’ sense irrespective of its historical reality and truth should be interpreted to mean a situation where people live without ground rules or norms guiding their relations, behaviour and conduct. In this respect, it can be argued that a nation can be in a state of nature when the necessary contracts and agreements that would regulate the society of people forming a common union are inexistent due to forced emergence or as a result of conquest. This is made more real by the fact that about 100 years after the colonial experiments of making most African countries nation-states these agreements and contract are yet to be enacted. Based on this argument it can be alluded that Nigeria from the Hobbesian perspective is still in the state of nature so to speak and this is manifested in the ethnic and tribal selfishness and rivalry exhibited daily in the society. In the current democratic ethos, therefore, the application of the theory of Participatory democracy can kick start the process of national integration.

The fact of the country’s history when interpreted from the perspective of social relations and social union reveals that the absence of a social contract between the component parts of the geographical entity called Nigeria in 1914 validates the assertion of many scholars that Nigeria is yet to be a nation-state (Udogu 2005, David-West 2002, 2010 and Awolowo 1947). The literature on this claim can fill a university library as more and more individuals in Nigeria now call for restructuring or a national conference. The country, according to Awolowo (1968), is synonymous with a Hobbesian society as Hobbes in his theory describes this state of affairs as being a state of anarchy. But can this analogy be justified when Nigeria is not in a state of war and has a common political power? Nigeria in its sixty one years of independence fought a bitter war between 1967 and 1971, experiences ethnic and religious crises regularly and some opinions interpret this to be a reflection of the Hobbesian legacy.

It is noted that in the state of nature some fundamental requirements for civility are lacking and they include laws, authority, morality, sense of right and wrong, and justice. Everybody simply pursued the satisfaction of his self-interest and whatever satisfied anybody's appetite was for him good and he would pursue it; and whatever a person had aversion for was for him bad and he would avoid it (Hobbes 1991). This is the condition of the typical natural man. Only the preservation of the self mattered in this state according to Hobbes. Put in the proper perspective, the analogy captures the social-political heritage and situation of people whose moral norms and beliefs have been completely eroded by many years of state and institutional injustice. Awolowo (1968) argues that the Hobbesian description rightly fits Nigeria and the reason is not far-fetched, the people lack any national sense of morality after a forced nationalisation by the colonial masters leaving them with no common morality culture, religion, justice and nationality and encouraging private, relative and subjective morality. There is a common penchant most times for Nigerians in public service to think more of what they can amass for themselves than what will benefit society as a whole because their sense of justice revolves around self and tribal interest. This is the reason for the rampant cases of nepotism and tribalism in public service (Achebe 1984).

It is also argued that in the state of nature, man craves for and claims right for something or anything he likes and has no obligation to refrain. Every man has a right to all things and whatever gave man pleasure was pursued in his bid to preserve himself. It was the rule of might in the jungle. The common understanding in Nigeria today is the survival of the fittest and the legacy of institutional injustice has left the people fending for themselves basically because the unjust social-political structure of the society does not favour them. Here all men are equal not in terms of rights but as every man pursued his own liberty for his own sake but had the desire to have authority and dominion over others and this urge is dictated by the innate hunger for self-preservation. The resultant effect of this lack of political integration through the Participatory democracy theory is the full blown insecurity being experienced by different agents in the country, to a point where some have been confined to some tribal locations. This outcome was quite predictable as the people, left out the democratic process would one way or the other look for a way to survive in it.

This situation for self-preservation at all cost in Nigeria has thus given rise to social and political conflicts among the people on both religious and political grounds as these actions and desires are not exclusive to any one part of the country but identified in all parts. In a state of nature there is no property, no justice or injustice, there is only war; and force and fraud are, in war, the only two cardinal virtues. Though it may not be as graphic as it is being portrayed, the Nigerian society is predominantly non-liberal and still presents a situation similar to this and the reality is that where the views of liberalism are down played, this condition is inevitable. It was in the light of this that the US intelligence unit in 2005 predicted that Nigeria would be a failed state in fifteen years but they ignored the fact that Nigeria was already a failed state as it lacked every sense of statehood and had failed since 1914 when the British created a country from abroad (Nicolson 1969, Awolowo 1947).

The consequent implication of the continued state of nature in Nigeria is that in the condition of every man against every man, nothing is unjust and morality becomes personal. The idea of right, wrong, justice, and injustice become unnecessary as it is natural and commonsensical that where there is no common power, there will be no law, hence no injustice. Force and fraud

---

become the two cardinal virtues while justice and injustice are not part of the faculties of the body of the mind (Hobbes, 1991). It is obvious from this exposition by Hobbes of the state of nature that no peace or progress could be achieved and the individual, if left on his own with all his excesses and unchecked insatiable hunger for self-preservation, was a problem to his fellow man. Man became problem to man and to himself. To address these issues therefore, academics and patriots must embark on serious political education many months before elections and create the necessary ideological platform for choice as a prelude to getting ideological support base.

### **The People must drive Democracy in Nigeria**

Social Scientists from the 19th and 20th Century till contemporary times have argued that the driving principle, idea or philosophy in any organized society is responsible for the direction of that society, akin to the Hegelian Absolute spirit manifesting through different epochs. For instance Marx argued that the Social Condition of a people determines their consciousness and he ended up with the principle of class struggle. The social contractarians led by Locke and Hobbes believe that the idea of a social contract is the only solution to the horrible life in the state of nature. It is in this direction that societies are classified as advanced or backward. Societies that are guided by well-articulated principles of justice are described by Rawls (1970) as well ordered and we can infer therefrom that the opposite are disordered. Well-ordered societies hardly apply social coercion to get cooperation from their citizens and obedience or compliance is voluntary. On the other hand, coercion and force are applied for compliance in disordered societies where policing is more than normal.

Many African societies fall into this category of social organization which makes governance very difficult and ends up leading to weak social structures and ultimately weak governments. The resultant implications include social-political insecurity, crime, social injustice, proliferation of arms and armed groups and many social ills that can easily overwhelm the state. To solve this problem, different ideas, principles and philosophies must be employed to help the people and their governments articulate themselves and live to meet their life goals. For many, the day begins at dawn but to the wise, the day begins before dawn. The cocks in the villages crow at dawn and alert the normal and ordinary that it is time to rise and start the day. Countries that woke up before dawn outplayed and outgrew their contemporaries. For example, in 1960 when Nigeria got independence, countries such as Brazil, India, Singapore, China, Indonesia to name a few were third world countries but categorized as having great potentials. Their early consciousness has paid off with their citizens enjoying the best of the governments. It is not Rocket science to Organize Nigerian people and get them developed.

### **CONCLUSION**

Today, because these countries mentioned above and many more set forth before dawn and set up principles of social interaction and fair principles of association, they are among the most industrialized countries in the world while Nigeria is still groping in the dark, having systems that are at best medieval and building cities that are primitive. Look at Bayelsa and you get the picture. Nigeria stayed behind to sleep some more after dawn and the effect is where we are. With the foregoing, there is need for serious salvation. There is fire on the mountain set by politicians but definitely consuming citizens. Citizens must therefore set forth before dawn to quench the fire. Nigerians must, as matter of urgency set forth before dawn to pull the brakes on

the speed to destruction by the ship of state as captained by our Leaders. Our Leaders need help not to take the state into perdition. With the failure of the Elite Class to offer any hope of solution, the people must set forth to outline what are their strategic interests and plans for their future and that of the state. Leaving it for politicians alone cannot help the people. There must be a sharp departure from the past practice and module of being aloof and unconcerned about the issues that affect the state, bearing in mind that sovereignty lies with the people and not the politicians or the government. Reason being that the Social contract did not involve the government but is done by the people among the people. The people created the government as part of the Social Contract.

Nigerians must expeditiously set forth before dawn to seek and find the leader that has Character, Competence and Capacity urgently and rally round that person with the right and appropriate political structure to aptly apply the theory of Participatory democracy. It must be about Common Interest or the General Good and not the interest of the individual. There is no magic, neither is there any special potent prayer that can redeem the Nigerian state, high-jacked by the elites beyond conscious effort by patriots and lovers of the country who know that they are social and political animals whether they like it or not. People must rise above narrow and personal interests and embrace the bigger interest of the “common good”. Nigerians must set forth before dawn to explain and drum it into the psyche of leadership that the state is bigger than any individual and sacrifices should be the hallmark of leadership. As the people set forth before dawn, they must do what they must do to achieve social justice and political stability even if it means giving the leadership a Piece of Surprise.

After 21 years of democratic rule in Nigeria, the ideals of democracy are yet to manifest in the lives of the people and there is clear frustration among the people as they are unable to meet their life goals and the state is yet to provide the necessary conditions for them to tap into the opportunities that may be provided. What could be the missing link, if we all agree that democracy is about the people? The idea of agitating for the return of the country to a democratic system was based on the assumption that it was better than the military regimes even when it was obvious that the military regimes were providing some form of development. The answer to the puzzle can on be found in the lack of the most important ingredient in the democratic mix-the people. Democracy without the people amounts to pure Feudalism, where a small political and ruling class run the country at their whims and caprices, for their vested interest and dish out favours to the masses as it pleases them.

If therefore, enough people who understand the basic tenets of participatory democracy who are powerful enough and have direct access to power can act in an innovative way, their action may have the consequence of translating the real ideals of democracy into concrete realities and transforming the very structures that gave them the capacity to act. It is no accident that Giddens calls this theory “the theory of structuralism”, indicating by this neologism, that structure must be regarded as a process, not as a steady state. The theory simply implies that in a democracy with full participation of the citizens, the conception of human of citizens’ participation as knowledgeable and enabled people means that those citizens are capable of putting their structurally formed or forged capacities to work in concrete creative and innovative ways. The answer to the puzzle in Nigerian democracy is that the people must create the capacity and knowledge that empowers them to participate fully in the democracy process in the country.

---

**REFERENCES**

1. Larry D. Colonial Legacy & Post-colonial Experience in Nigeria. In: Larry D. Linz J and Lipset S. (Ed), Democracy in developing Countries. London: Lynne Reiner Publishers Inc. 1998.
2. Wangari M. The challenge for Africa. London: Arrow books, 2010.
3. Downie R. Government action and Morality. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1964.
4. John L. Second Treatise of government. (Ed). Macpherson C. Cambridge: Hacket publishing Company Inc. 1980.