

Autocratic Democracy and the Challenge of National Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The birth of Nigeria's fourth republic in 1999 was greeted with great optimism that the much-desired national development, denoted by a significant decrease in the rate of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, was to become a reality. This optimism was located in the belief that democracy provides the best condition for development to thrive. The study however observed that after over two decades of uninterrupted democratic rule, the desired national development remains a mirage. This is traceable to the autocratic nature of democracy in the country as indicated by elitist political leadership, disregard for the principle of the rule of law, and the noticeable disconnect between the leadership class and the masses in terms of responsibility and accountability. The study recommended, inter alia, the opening up of the political space and constitutionalism for the achievement of national development in Nigeria.

Key words: autocratic democracy, constitutionalism, democracy, elitism, national development.

Introduction

While some researchers see the relationship between democracy and development as tenuous (Bhagwati, 2002; Moore, 1995), mainstream literature avers that there is a significant nexus between democracy and development and that the former is a necessary condition for the latter (Donnelly, 1999; Leftwich, 1993; Oslon, 1993; Salhi & Bolle, 2007). This could have provided the basis for the euphoria that ushered in Nigeria's fourth republic in 1999 as the resuscitation of democratic governance was expected to be the catalyst for national development. Over two decades after 1999, the expected development seems unattainable and the country's experience seems to confirm the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between democracy and national development.

Many reasons have been adduced for the inability of succeeding administrations in Nigeria's fourth republic to match performance with developmental expectations. While some point to the structure of the global political and economic system as a limiting factor on the aspirations of Nigeria to overcome its developmental woes (Echa, 2013; Lawal & Olutoyin, 2011), many affirm that the internal political and socioeconomic dynamics of the country, including ethnicity, regionalism, religious intolerance and a culture of corruption, may well be the deadweight preventing it from employing democracy to rise from the doldrums of underdevelopment (Anazodo, et al., 2015; Fagbadabo, 2007; Ogundiya, 2009). A hybrid of the two positions explaining the country's developmental challenges in the fourth republic also appears in the literature (Asongu, et al., Ozonu-Suleiman, 2016).

The resurgence of the global appeal for democracy from the late 1980s and early 1990s, described as the third wave of democracy (Diamond et al., 2014), and the collapse of autocratic

regimes across the globe shore up the position that democracy, more than any other form of government, is seen as enhancing national development. Thus, while Western imperialism and socio-economic imperatives may be valid arguments in explaining developmental limitations, they may not provide sufficient grounds to explain the inability of democratic administrations in Nigeria's fourth republic to better the performance of previous military regimes in terms of national development. The quest of this study is to locate the failure of Nigeria's national development in the autocratic nature of her democracy. While this study lends support to the argument that democracy enhances national development, the Nigerian Fourth Republic's experience shows that democratic autocracy is inimical to national development.

Result and Discussion

Autocratic democracy and national development: A conceptual and theoretical discourse

Democracy can be described as a system of government in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives. In this system, the voice of the people is supreme and their wishes fashion the composition of government and dictates its activities. Arising from this description, it is seen as the government which guarantees the greatest possible degree of liberty, equality and fraternity for its citizens, and where common problems and interests are freely and fully discussed (Dahl, 2020; Fukuyama & McFaul, 2008; Ibrahim, 2003; Morlino, 2004; Pettit, 2004). Thus, in a democratic society, there is no room for despotism as the people, whether directly or indirectly through elected representatives, determine how the affairs of the state would be regulated.

Literature however distinguishes between democratic consolidation and transition. While the former is a feature of 'old' and 'mature' democracies, the latter is often used to describe nascent democracies (Diamond, et al. 2014). Democratic transition is described it as a passage from a non-democratic system to a democratic system with the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions, attitudes and values (Ibrahim, 2003; Kumar, 2005; Obi, 2000). It is, therefore, a phase between the period when a dictatorial regime crumbles and the period when democratic values are fully established (Rakner, et al., 2007). Thus, democratic transition is a process that involves three phases including the fall of a dictatorship, the establishment of democratic values, norms and institutions and finally the achievement of an enduring democracy (Majekodunmi, 2012; Oni, 2014).

However, the inherent danger in the classifications of democracy is that a state may stay indefinitely in the first and second phases of democratic transition and without the full establishment of democratic norms in a polity, there may be a relapse to dictatorship. In essence, the failure of a democracy is a failure to properly transit from autocracy to democracy. Democratic transition cannot end until the process of democratisation, which implies the full entrenchment of democratic norms, has been concluded. Thus, irrespective of a phase a state is, every attempt must be made to establish, strengthen and extend the principles, mechanisms and institutions of democracy (Ibrahim, 2003; Lucky & Mu'awiyya, 2017; Majekodunmi, 2012; Obi, 2000).

Autocracy can be described as the direct opposite of democracy (Grzymala-Busse, 2020; Miller, 2015; Yanov, 2020). While conventional knowledge sees autocracy as mostly associated with military regimes and civilian administrations characterised by one party systems and sit-tightism, most 'democratic' governments are also autocratic. Aside periodic free and fair elections to facilitate smooth transfer of power, other major criteria for determining how democratic a government is including a high level of representativeness, accountability on the part of the leadership, utmost transparency, the impersonalising of the institutions of the state and constitutionalism (Mattes & Rodriguez, 2014). In this wise, any government that emerges through a warped electoral process, which is elitist, highly unaccountable, lacking in transparency, whose leadership personalises the institutions of the state and where the rule of law is not the guiding principle of governance is

autocratic. Democratic autocracy is closely associated with the dominance of the minority and personalised institutions. Any government where the interests of the elites and that of the leadership override the interests of the masses is autocratic in nature (Cassani, 2017). In the same vein, any state where the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of few individuals is an autocratic state. While many democracies have high levels of political competitions as denoted in the numbers of political parties and aspirants jostling to occupy political offices, they often lack the involvement of the majority of the citizens in the decision-making processes (Ágh, 2015, 2016; Nur-Tegin & Czap, 2012; Tonizzo, 2008; Yanov, 2020). Thus, any polity, irrespective of its professed political ideology, could be tagged autocratic if decisions are taken by and for the minority.

Many autocratic governments are labelled democratic because of the many facades of democratic institutions, especially that of periodic elections and the seemingly division of governmental powers into the acknowledged three arms of government (Burnell & Schlumberger, 2010; Diamond, 2021; Grzymala-Busse, 2020; Schmitter, 2019; Yakouchyk, 2019). Many people have thus come to associate democracy with periodic elections while in essence what obtains in many countries are 'elections without democracy' (Levitsky & Way 2002). These governments are either referred to as autocratic democracies, electoral autocracies, electoral authoritarianisms or democratic elitisms (Adenuga, 2019; Ágh, 2015, 2016; Cassani 2017; Levitsky & Way, 2002; Miller, 2015; Zielonka & Rupnik, 2020).

Just as it obtains for most other concepts, there are as many definitions of national development as there are scholars in the field of development. Early definitions of development see it as the process of industrialising societies (Rapley, 2007; Tsai, 2006; Winkler, et al., 2011). For these early definitions, any society that has many industries and the trappings of industrialisation including the provision of basic and social amenities such as electricity, portable water, good roads, good health care systems and robust educational facilities is developed. This idea of development seems to be the most prevalent in the Less Developed Countries (LCDs) as the quest by most African governments, especially after gaining their independences, was to develop the infrastructure in their respective states to be at par with the infrastructure in European states and the United States of America (Ikejiaku, 2009; Meso, et al., 2009). Beyond infrastructure, national development is also characterised by noticeable and appreciable reductions in the poverty level, in the level of unemployment and in the level of economic inequality in the state (Abuiyada, 2018).

The argument that a significant relationship exists between democracy and development seems to be entrenched in the literature (Donnelly, 1999; Leftwich, 1993; Oslon, 1993; Salhi & Bolle, 2007). Democracy could be considered a basic precondition for development because of three main considerations. First, in democracies, the preferences of the masses dictate the constitutions and decisions of government creating the needed environment for political stability which is a major guarantee for development. Second, democracy makes provision for constitutionalism which ensures the security of property rights. This is a necessary condition for development because the absence of security, especially that of property rights, deters local and foreign investments. Democracy also ensures the impersonality of offices so that changes in governmental administrations would not affect the fortunes of local and foreign investments. Third, the notions of accountability and transparency inherent in democratic governance instils confidence needed for local and foreign investments.

While higher levels of democracy may result into better economic development, it is pertinent to note that there exist autocratic polities where appreciable developments have been recorded (Faust, 2007). A critical study of these autocracies would, however, reveal a high mimicry of democratic values needed for development (Faust, 2007; Leftwich, 1993; Meso, et al., 2009). In essence, a polity where elections are not regular but where property rights are assured and where the decisions of government are geared towards making life better for the masses may also

experience development. The saying that 'imitation is the highest form of flattery or compliment' holds true in this case. This indicates that democracy may be considered a necessary condition for development.

This study makes juxtapositions between national development and the premises of the above discussed nexus between democracy and development. It asserts that democracy is the only form of government in which the "barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives" (Abuiyada, 2018: 115) are removed thus paving the way for development. It also avers that any society that is characterised by noticeable and appreciable reductions in the poverty level, in the level of unemployment and in the level of inequality in the state has the attributes of the democratic values needed for development. It however points out that any state which wears a toga of democracy, most especially through periodic elections, but in which the wishes of a powerful minority become state policies and where the rule of law is subverted is an autocratic democracy and it would become a difficult enterprise to ensure the development of such a state.

Autocratic democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic

Nigeria has had a chequered romance with democracy with the failure of its first, second and the abortive third republics due to, inter alia, elections and the ambitions of young military officers to govern. As it has been averred, Nigerian politics since independence has always revolved around sheer autocracy (Obianyo & Alumona, 2022; Nwekeaku, 2014; Sandbakken, 2006; Yagboyaju, 2011). Nigeria, in its fourth republic, has achieved notable milestones that were unattainable in the earlier republics such as the transfer of political power from one democratically elected government to another and from one political party to another. However, the transition to an enduring democracy is being dogged with many manifestations of autocratic democracy which contributed to the failure of the earlier republics.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to restate the main features of democracy whose absence or deficiency denotes an autocratic democracy. First, citizens must freely and fairly elect their leaders and that the compositions of government must reflect genuine choice. Second, there must be an establishment of constitutional rule which promotes the principle of the rule of law. Third, there must be a wholesome development of a democratic culture structured around responsibility and accountability of the leadership class (Ibrahim, 2003). In the light of the above democratic features, how has the Nigerian fourth republic fared? Almost every election in Nigeria's fourth republic has been decried by both international and local observers as characterised by irregularities (Adebiyi & Raheem, 2022; Aluaigba, 2016; Amaramiro, et al., 2019; Omotola, 2021; Oyewole & Omotola, 2021). A big disconnect also appears between all the governments in the fourth republic and the Nigerian masses as a result of elitism in governance (Adenuga, 2019; Okeke, 2017; Temidayo & Okoye, 2020). Since 1999, all Nigerian governments have been elitist in nature ascribable to the cost and reward systems of politics in the fourth republic (Adenuga, 2019; Demarest, 2021; Onah & Nwali, 2018).

In the fourth republic, there seems to exist a closed class of people who recycle themselves in power irrespective of changes in administration. These elites' stranglehold on the country is not limited to the political arena but also extends to the economic sphere as they 'corner' juicy appointments and contracts for themselves, family members and associates. To continue to have unrestricted access to these 'spoils' of office, they frustrate the aspirations of others to contest and win elections by controlling the political parties in the state. For example, the cost of interest/nomination forms into elective positions is often put beyond the reach of the average Nigerian limiting the number of aspirants to the elites and their cronies. Tables 1 and 2 show the cost of procuring interests/nomination forms for the Presidential, Senate, House of Representatives, Governorship and House of Assembly elections in the 2015, 2019 and forthcoming 2023 general elections in the two main political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP).

Table 1 – Cost of Interest/Nomination Forms in the APC and PDP (National Level)

Political Party	2015			2019			2023		
	Pres.	Sen.	HoR	Pres.	Sen.	HoR	Pres.	Sen.	HoR
APC	N27.5M	N3.3M	N2.2M	N45M	N7M	N3.85M	N100M	N20M	N10M
PDP	N22M	N4.5M	N2.4M	N12M	N3.5	N1.5M	N40M	N3.5M	N2.5

Source: Author's Compilation, 2022.

Table 2 – Cost of Interest/Nomination Forms in the APC and PDP (State Level)

Political Party	2015		2019		2023	
	Gov.	HoA	Gov.	HoA	Gov.	HoA
APC	N5.5M	N550,000	N22.5M	N850,000	N50M	N2M
PDP	N5.5M	N1.2M	N6M	N600,000	N21M	N600,000

Source: Author's Compilation, 2022.

For an average Nigerian to purchase the nomination forms, he/she must literally break the bank or worm him/herself into the affections of a political godfather who will agree to sponsor his/her candidacy (Ayeni, 2019; Okoli, 2022). Such agreements are often premised on the promise of the political godson/daughter to give the political father de facto authority in his/her sphere of political jurisdiction. These elites also influence the electoral management bodies in the state to rig elections in their favour. The security agencies of the state are also used to harass perceived and real opposition to their continued dominance of the political and economic spheres of the state (Afolabi, 2018; Onapajo, 2014; Onuoha, et al., 2020; Oyewole & Omotola, 2021). The dependence of the Nigerian Judiciary on the political elites who occupy elective positions in the Legislative and Executive arms of government further entrenches autocracy in the Nigerian state (Ogundiya, 2010; Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2020).

The inability to ensure constitutional rule is also a main challenge confronting democratic rule in the country as succeeding administrations in the republic have not been able to strictly adhere to the principle of rule of law (Adebiyi & Raheem, 2022; Igwe, 2010; Unumen & Oghi, 2016). Right from 1999 till date, Nigerian leaders act as if they are above the law (Adebiyi & Raheem, 2022; Adenuga 2019; Nwekeaku 2014; Unumen, 2019; Yagboyaju 2011). In the same vein, civilian administrations in the fourth republic tend to be as unaccountable as the military regimes of the pre-1999 era (Adebiyi & Raheem, 2022; Adenuga 2019; Unumen, 2019; John, 2011).

An examination of succeeding administrations since 1999 would also reveal the burden of autocracy in the republic. There were allegations that the 1999 presidential elections were manipulated to ensure the victory of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The Obasanjo administration (1999-2003) has been described as one of the most autocratic in the annals of Nigerian politics with regards to the flagrant disregard for the rule of law (Isumonah 2012; John 2011; Joseph & Kew, 2008; Okafor, 2007). Some of these acts of the Obasanjo administration included the disregard for court judgments on the non-remittance of funds to Local Governments in Lagos State; review of appropriation laws without the inputs of the Legislative arms of government. Others include “illegal arrests, detentions, trials, banning of trade unions and popular organizations, harassment of civil rights campaigners; illegal proscriptions of media houses, extra-judicial killings as in Gbaramatu (in Delta State), Odi (in Bayelsa State), Zarki-Biam (in Benue State)” (John 2011, 213).

Though the Yar' Adua administration (2007-2010) fared better in its respect for human rights than its predecessor, it also flouted some principles of rule of law. First, it carried the heavy burden of getting into power through a flawed electoral process (Joseph & Kew, 2008; Omotola 2010; Ta & Zack-Williams, 2007; Yagboyaju 2011). Second, the administration sanctioned extra-judicial killings

in the Niger-Delta area in 2009 (John 2011). Third, the reluctance of the President to delegate powers to the Vice President in line with constitutional provisions when ill health prevented him from exercising presidential powers until he was stampeded to do so through the activities of the Civil Society was also a major low of the administration. The President also flouted constitutional procedures in the appointments of Service Chiefs without recourse to the Legislature (Eme & Ogbochie, 2013). Goodluck Jonathan, Nigerian President from 2010 to 2015, was also accused of disregarding the principles of rule of law. Some of these include killing and arresting people during the subsidy removal protests; flouting constitutional provisions by failing to remit over \$20 billion proceeds from the sale of crude oil into the federation account; and the refusal to adhere to courts judgments on the reinstatement of Hon. Justice Ayo Salami who had been suspended as the President of the Court of Appeal (Akinbobola, 2012; Ojenike, 2015). The Buhari administration (2015 to 2023) was also a major defaulter in terms of respect for the rule of law (Dajo & Akor, 2022; Jonas, 2022; Udenze, et al., 2021). The administration disregarded over 40 court rulings as depicted in the refusal of the administration to effect the bails granted to the detained former Security Adviser to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki and the prominent Shi'a Muslim leader in Nigeria, Ibrahim El Zakzaky (Obiorah & Onwughalu, 2018; Ogundipe, 2019; Olaniyan, 2019; Omilusi, 2018). The administration also received knocks for the way it handled the 'Anti-SARS' protest in 2020 and the self-determination protests in the Eastern and Western parts of the country (Dajo & Akor, 2022; Chukwudi, et al., 2019; Olawale, 2021).

National development in Nigeria's fourth republic

While different indicators of national development abound including economic growth, poverty levels, state of infrastructure, Gross Domestic Product, this study adopts the position that development is best evaluated by considering the levels of unemployment, poverty and economic inequality in the state. These factors mutually reinforce one another as a high level of unemployment leads to a high level of poverty resulting into the exacerbation of inequality in the state. In the same vein, high level of poverty in a state also denotes a high level of unemployment and it is a major indication of inequality. High levels of economic inequality in a state may also indicate high levels of unemployment and poverty. (Akinbobola & Saibu, 2004; Galbraith, 2009; Martinez, et al., 2001).

Unemployment significantly affects development as higher unemployment stifles development and development is evidenced by lowering levels of unemployment (Adebayo, 2013; Tsaliki, 2009). Figure 1 gives the data on unemployment in Nigeria between 1991 and 2020.

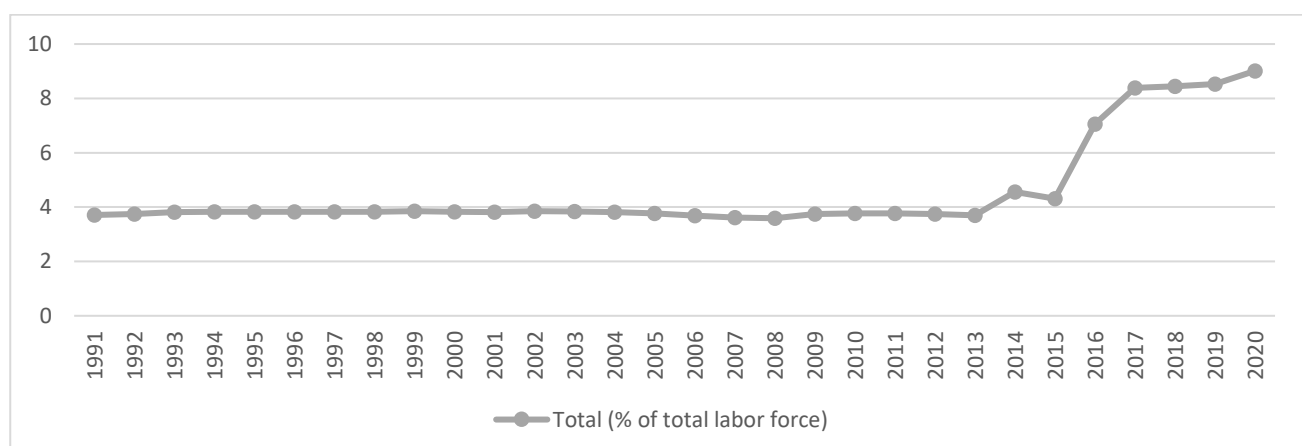


Figure 1 – Percentage of unemployed labor force in Nigeria, 1991-2020

Source: Designed with data extracted from World Development Indicators

Figure 1 shows that while unemployment recorded a percentage rate of 3.6 and 3.9 between 1991 and 2013, it started increasing from 2014 and spiked alarmingly from 4.6% to 9% between 2016 and 2020. This goes against expectations that democracy was going to reduce unemployment and it indicates that successive administrations in the fourth republic have not made the needed effort to significantly reduce unemployment as a strong correlation exists between government policies and the rate of unemployment in the country (Matthew, et al., 2020; Nwosa, et al., 2020).

The poverty level in Nigeria is also a major concern. Poverty is a direct consequence of denying the people the access to services that can make life more meaningful for them and a direct consequence of not making adequate policies to promote employment opportunities (Ngara, et al., 2014). Figure 2 shows the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and population growth rates between 1991 and 2020.

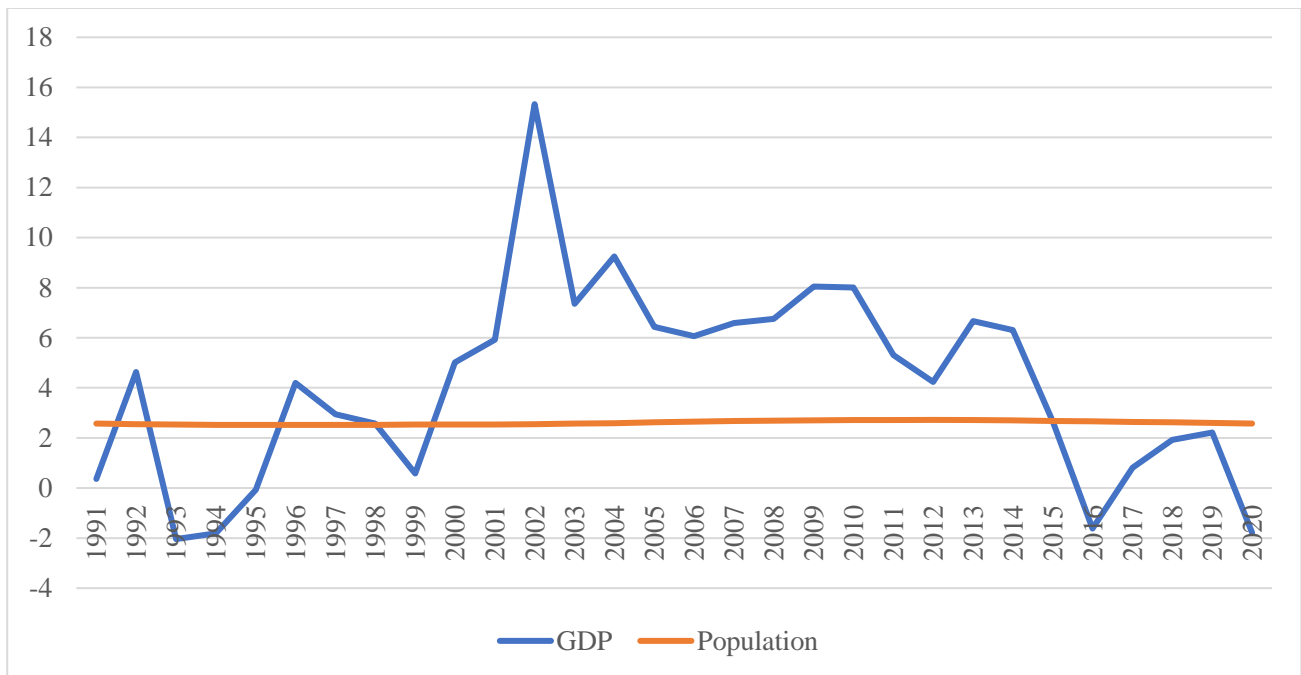


Figure 2 – Nigeria's GDP and population growth rates (%), 1991-2020

Source: 2010-2022 Macrotrends LLC

Figure 2 shows that at 1991, the GDP growth rate stood at 0.36% while that of the population was at 2.58%. As at 1999, when the fourth republic commenced, the GDP growth rate had dropped to 0.58% while the growth rate of the population dropped to 2.53%. The GDP growth rate rose sharply to 15.33% in 2002 while the population growth was at 2.55%. The significant rise in the GDP could be ascribed to global expectations that democracy was going to create a conducive environment which could have fuelled foreign and local investments. However, over the years, the GDP has gradually decreased to -1.8% in 2020 while the population growth rate stood at 2.58% meaning that the latter has outstripped the former which is a pointer to loss of investors' confidence in government's ability to secure their investments.

The above data portends grave implications for the standard of living and, by extension, development in the country. Globally, it has become accepted that any individual that has less than a minimum daily personal income of \$1.9 lives below the poverty line. Using this indicator, it is estimated that about 80 million Nigerians (about 40% of the country's population) live in poverty (World Bank, 2022) and it is a pointer to why the country attained the unenviable status of the poverty capital of the world (Elomien, et al., 2016; Jaiyeola & Choga, 2021). Nigeria is a paradox of sorts as the country is blessed with immense human and mineral resources and the fact that millions of Nigerians live in poverty in the midst of abundance is a pointer to bad governance which accrues

from the autocratic nature of the Nigerian political class (Ewubare & Okpani 2018; Ngara, et al. 2014).

There is a general consensus that economic inequality is best viewed from the distribution of a country's national income among its population (Cowell, 2011; Ferreira, et al., 2015; Solt, 2015). Figure 3 gives the proportions of Nigeria's national income held by the different classes of people in the country in some selected years.

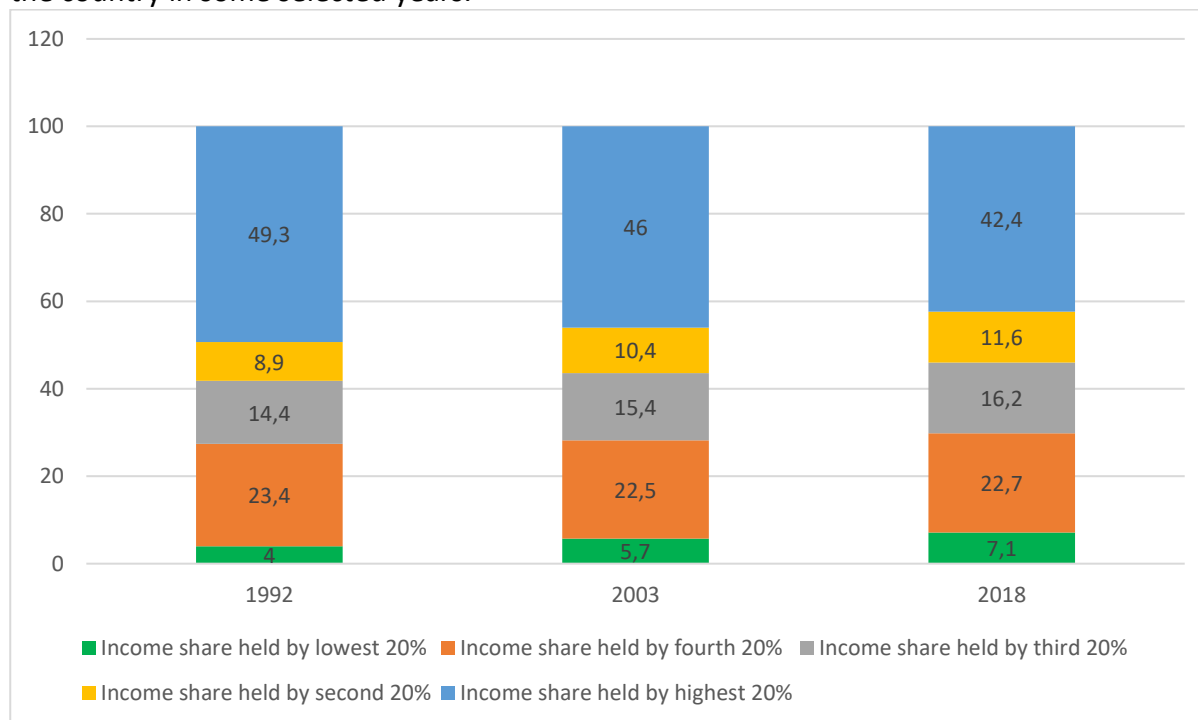


Figure 3 – Proportion of national income held by classes of Nigerian population

Source: Designed with data extracted from World Development Indicators

Figure 3 shows that in 1992, the highest 20% of Nigeria's population controlled 49.3% of the national income while the lowest 20% controlled 4%. In 2003, the proportion of the national income controlled by the highest 20% decreased to 46% while that of the lowest 20% increased to 5.7%. By 2018, the proportion of the highest 20% further dropped to 42.4% while that of the lowest 20% rose to 7.1%. While there seems to be a decrease in the economic inequality in the country, the gap between the highest 20% and lowest 20% is still estimated at over 175 million Nigerians (Omotola, 2021). The wide disparity in the control of the national income and continual control of over 40% of the national income by 20% of the population run contrary to expectations that democracy would lead to significant reduction in economic inequality and it portends grave implications for development in the country (Archibong, 2018; Omotola, 2021).

Democratic autocracy and development in Nigeria's fourth republic

Given the noted nexus between democracy and national development, the Nigeria's fourth republic has not lived up to expectations as indicated by rising levels of unemployment and poverty and continued economic inequality. This study juxtaposes between the nature of democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic and these determinants of national development to show that autocracy is the albatross of development in the country.

As it has been shown, elections in the fourth republic are often rigged to bring in the preferred candidates of the elites. Studies have revealed that since 1999, occupiers of major elective and appointive offices at all levels of administration in the country were either major actors in the

country's political past, their immediate family members and political cronies and associates (Adenuga, 2019; Ekundayo, 2017; Ogundiwin, et al., 2021). Thus, the system of meritocracy needed for formulating and executing developmental policies has become supplanted by a system of nepotism and favouritism which is detrimental to national development. Ineptitude of the political leadership leads to faulty policy making and implementation inimical to national development. As shown in the section on the state of development in the country, rising unemployment, decreasing GDPs with rising poverty and skewed national income generation could be attributed to the failure of governmental policies. An incompetent leadership also mismanages available funds and stifles national development.

The manipulation of the electoral process to circumvent the wishes of the people in favour of the Nigerian elites also creates a 'patron-client' relationship between the sponsors and occupiers of public offices. The astronomical cost of vying for political offices in the country also ensures that only the elites and their associates occupy public offices. Thus, instead of being accountable and responsible to the masses, public officials tend to make the wishes of the elite class their guide for policy formulation and implementation which compromises their capacity to create the greatest good for the greatest number. Hence, the inability of the political leadership to check spiralling unemployment, reduce the poverty rate and ensure equitable distribution of the country's resources.

Disregard for the rule of law has adverse impacts on national development. The three pillars on which this principle rests, supremacy of the law, equality before the law and respect for fundamental human rights, which could be summed up in the concept of constitutionalism, has implications for development as they ensure political stability and provide security for local and foreign investments. When the government is selective in the application of regulations and in respecting legal injunctions, instability ensues, investments are compromised and national development is stifled. As this study has shown, disrespect for constitutionalism has been a defining feature of succeeding administrations in the Nigeria's fourth republic and this arbitrariness in governance, which discourages investments, could account for the decrease in GDPs, increase in the rate of unemployment, worsening poverty rate and significant economic inequality.

Human rights are many and diverse but could be grouped into three VIZ: civil/political, economic and social rights. The right to vote and be voted for is a fundamental civil/political right as it grants citizens the opportunity to determine policies to promote their security and welfare. Where this right is denied, governments become elitist and policies are made to favour the minority with negative implications national development. In this wise, the subversion of popular choice of the political leadership in Nigeria's fourth republic has created elitism of governance and led to significant increase unemployment and poverty rates. The failure of governments in the fourth republic to address the inequitable distribution of national incomes in the country could also be attributed to the inability to guarantee free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Economic rights revolve around the ability of government to enhance the ability of citizens to be productive and meet their basic needs. The prevalence of unemployment, poverty and economic inequality in Nigeria signifies the inability of government to promote the economic rights of citizens. Social rights require the government the government to help citizens enjoy the good life by making available basic social amenities such as electricity and good roads. These amenities also constitute the infrastructure without which development becomes impossible (Dalibi & Bello, 2017; Frolova, et al. 2016; Olaseni & Alade, 2012). In Nigeria however, these infrastructure in short supply. The country generates between 4,000 and 10,000 megawatts of electricity which is far beneath the social and developmental needs of the citizens and less than half of the roads in the country are paved (Dalibi & Bello, 2017). The state of these developmental infrastructures have made many of the Transnational Companies in Nigeria to move to other countries where these infrastructures are

in better supply.

Failure to entrench the democratic culture of transparency and accountability also stunts national development. It is a given that corruption defines a government that is not transparent or accountable to the people and it is instructive that Nigeria has consistently maintained its unenviable status as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. A corrupt leadership misappropriates, expropriates and embezzles funds meant for developmental projects and thwarts expected national development.

That Nigeria's fourth republic as a cesspool of corruption is evidenced by the fact that top officials in succeeding administrations in the republic have been mired in corruption charges. Some cases across the different administrations would suffice to show the rot in the country and how corruption has limited national development. The Vice President under the Obasanjo administration, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, was alleged to have misappropriated about \$40 million from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund which is meant to develop human capacity and technology to maximise benefits for country from its oil and gas industry (Ojo, 2016; Otusanya & Adeyeye, 2022). Nenadi Usman and Femi Fani-Kayode were also alleged to have committed a fraud of N1.5b under their watch as Minister of Finance (State) and Minister of Aviation respectively under the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (Adegboyega, 2020; Omotayo, et al., 2019). Many of the Ministers appointed by the Goodluck Jonathan administration also allegedly misappropriated funds meant for developmental projects in the country. Stella Oduah, the Minister of Aviation under the administration, was fingered in the misappropriation of about N5 billion naira meant for the construction of airport terminals and she was also accused of diverting public funds amounting to N255 million for the procurement of luxurious vehicles (Eke & Tonwe, 2016; Ivungu, et al., 2020). Diezani Alison-Madueke, who held different portfolios under the Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan's administrations as Minister of Transportation (2007-2008), Minister of Mines and Steel Development (2008-2010) and Minister of Petroleum Resources (2010-2015) was alleged to have used her offices to embezzle billions of Naira from the National Treasury (Mlambo, et al., 2019). The Muhammodu Buhari administration, which rode to office on the promise to combat corruption, did not fare much better than its predecessors as allegations of corruption defined the administration. The Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, was arrested and investigated for allegedly embezzling over N80 billion (Amadi, 2022). All these monies could have gone a long way to provide military regimes of the pre employment, reduce poverty and ensure better equitable distribution of resources in the country.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study argued that succeeding civilian administrations in the fourth republic have been as autocratic as the -1999 era. This therefore shows that democracy is yet to be fully consolidated in Nigeria and the establishment of an enduring democracy still remains a mirage. Autocracy in Nigeria's fourth republic has also impacted negatively on national development as witnessed in the levels of unemployment, poverty and economic inequality in the country.

As noted in the study, elitism seems to be the bane of democracy and development in Nigeria. To discourage this trend and widen the political space, pitfalls to mass political participation should be removed. In the first instance, reasonable limits should be set for the purchase of nomination forms across all political parties. In the second instance, reasonable limits should also be set to the reward system of elective positions, especially in terms of remuneration. The Electoral Management Body must be made independent to ensure free and fair elections.

As a corollary of the above, corruption should be given zero tolerance. Nigerians, through enlightenment campaigns on various mass media platforms, should be re-orientated to vie corruption as the usage of one's position to get undue advantages in the allocation of the resources

of the state which include employment opportunities and errant public officials should be made to face the full wrath of the law.

Constitutionalism should also be made the guiding principle of governance in the Nigerian state. The acts of impunity which have come to characterise governance in the country must be shunned and the rights of citizens must be protected and promoted. Above all, the constitution must be supreme and made binding on all institutions and persons in the Nigerian state.

The civil society should also be empowered to instill democratic behaviour among Nigerians. The political class should be encouraged to see good governance, as characterised by the principles of transparency, accountability, responsibility and inclusiveness, should be seen as the only route to development in the country.

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