

## Democracy: A Challenge to Sustainable Development in Nigeria, Focusing From 1999 – 2024

Chinnah Promise Chinwe

Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration and Governance

World Innovators University, Nigeria

Email: [chiwepcc@gmail.com](mailto:chiwepcc@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Democracy and development are concepts that have generated several discussions and arguments among scholars, politicians and academicians. Sustainable Development has been a matter of serious concern on the best way and means it can be achieved by international organizations, regional organizations, Non Government Organization, political actors, gladiators, policy makers and the academia in both developed and developing nations of the world. There are series of studies and postulations on how sustainable development can be achieved it seems this is illusive mostly in African nations as the gap between developed and developing nations gets widen on daily bases despite the rich resources that are found in African nations mostly Nigeria. There is high level of poverty in Nigeria despite all human and natural resources, internally and externally generated revenue yet she is tagged 47 with GDP per capital of 6.148, Gopal finance (2024) Poverty Index. The survey gave a conceptual clarification of democracy and sustainable development. Structuralist functionalist theory was used as the theoretical framework, data collected through secondary sources. The study revealed that democracy as practice in Nigeria is responsible for all the woes of underdevelopment and high level of pathetic poverty in Nigeria. It unveils that circumvention of democratic principles and values marked the underdevelopment of the nations and planting of pandemic sustainable underdevelopment. Democracy midwife governance system and in a monolithic economy like Nigeria, where the political structure determines other substructures which give birth to poor governance, corruption, unemployment, insecurity among others. In conclusion, the paper recommended for strong institutional framework that will drive democratic dividends to the people, accountability, restructuring, attitudinal change, and review of the constitution, electoral reforms, and independent of the judiciary to mention but few.

**Keywords:** Challenge, Democracy, Development, Sustainable development.

## **Introduction**

Democracy as a concept if strictly adhered to its principles and ethos will lead to development or what is popularly referred to as dividends of democracy. The concept has been grossly abused as the worst tyranny confesses to be democratic in nature and in one nomenclature or the other with one benefit or the other as dividends of democracy. There are basic fundamental principles which are used as indices for assessment to ascertain whether a government is democratic in nature and in practice or not.

Nigeria right from pre-colonial era adopted democratic system of government and federalism as form of government, which was clearly stated in 1922 constitution. The Clifford constitution of 1922 introduced elective principle which was followed by the formation of political parties in Nigeria. Late Herbert Macaulay in 1923 formed Nigeria National Democratic Party NNDP as the first political party in Nigeria. The elective principle gave rise to practice and adoption of democracy in Nigeria. Development has been a subject for national discuss and concern for any government say civilian, military or others. The basic function of any government is the allocation of available resources based on people's needs, provision of security, welfare and transformation of lives of people for better and sustained environment.

Democracy is good for pluralistic and heterogeneous society like Nigeria. It is believed to foster unity, growth and development of any nation where ever it is practiced mostly when it is combined with federalism as we have in Nigeria. This seems illusive in Nigeria content and context as the nation is ravaged with poverty and plagued with endemic excruciating underdevelopment features.

Democracy and federalism makes for speedy development of the nation, states and other components part in the country. Despites all these reaties as seen practically in many developed western countries that adopted federalism and democracy, Nigeria is yet to have an iota of democratic benefits and federalism dividends irrespective of her long democratic experience from colonial era till date, coupled with her numerous human and natural resources available. This study will examined the following, why democracy has been fruitless in Nigeria despite her huge wealth from natural resources. Why Sustainable development has been illusory in Nigeria irrespective of all development initiatives and policies taken by government at all levels to

develop the nation. The result is nothing to write home about as development is still a mirage in Nigeria.

It is disheartening to note that the Nigeria as a nation sinks deeper in term of underdevelopment as her resources increases. This is dramatic irony of political and socio-economic underdevelopment of Nigeria development, a paradox of parody, Chinnah (2021). The questions are thus, what are the force that negates democratic dividends and development in Nigeria? What are the features of Nigerian democratic system of governance? How can democracy be used to achieve sustainable development? This study will interrogate the above questions and establish in clear terms the nexus between democracy and sustainable development, and proffer probable solution on how sustainable development can be achieved using democracy as a tool?

### **Conceptualization**

**Democracy:** The definition of democracy as a concept has been a subject of controversy as it is surrounded with arguments by scholars, academicians and philosophers. There are many definitions of democracy all depending on author's perspectives and understanding of the concept. The most popular and commonly known definition of democracy is the from one time American president, named Abraham Lincoln he state that democracy is "government of the people by the people and for the good of the people" ( Ake 1992,p 1 ). The definition simple means that democracy is government that is purely initiated by the people. Appadorai (1975) Describes democracy as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power, either directly or through representative, periodically elected by themselves. Dahl (1989) defined democracy as a political system where individuals have the opportunity for effective participation, citizen's equality in voting, enlightened understanding and control of the agenda. Democracy is process rather than am outcome gave a comprehensive definition of democracy by stating some vital elements for democracy to function which includes

- (a) High level of civil liberties
- (b) Political pluralism (extensive competition by contestants including individuals, groups or parties for government.
- (c) Political participation that provides the choice of the electorate to select candidates in free and fear election.

Elaigwe (2004) sees democracy as a concept that has five different characteristics which must be used to understand its full meaning.

They are:

- (a) The locus of authority in a democratic polity. He maintained that the political authority in a democratic polity must originate from people. This point to the fact that the leaders must be chosen by the people through a free and fair process.
- (b) The second characteristic according to him is that democratic system/government must be based on rule of law. This talk of due process, obedience to the rule and regulation. It ensures that the law rules rather than men. That arbitrary abuse of power should not be tolerated in any form anywhere in a democratic system.
- (c) Thirdly, that in a democratic system, there must be legitimacy. This means that leaders' election must be through a legitimate action and process. The leaders have the mandate from his people and must rule rightly to satisfy his people. Satisfaction of the masses welfare must be the interest of leader/ruler, bearing in mind why he/she was elected.
- (d) Choice is the fourth characteristics. This means that there must be alternatives for one to choose from. The existences of multiparty system were candidates should be provided for the electorate to choice from. Besides, it also connotes that the people should have right to effect change in leadership through periodic election that goes with free and fair election. Change of policy through public opinion pool too.
- (e) Transparency and accountability is the final characteristics as postulated by Eliagme (2004) it behooves on leaders/rulers in a democratic system to be transparent and accountable to the people in discharging their duties. Leaders should be held accountable for all their action and inactions. There should be room for evaluation of their policies and programs of their action.

Akinyemi (2006) summarized his conceptualization definition of democracy as he anchored it on the following mainstay, for him democracy devoid of the following is another form of government not democracy.

1, sovereignty of the people, 2. Government based on the consent of the governed, 3. Majority rule, 4. Minority right guaranteed, 5 Guarantee of basic human rights, 6 Free and fair election, 7, Equality before the law, 8 Due process of the law, 9. Constitutional limits on governance, 10,

Social, economic and political pluralism, 11 Values of tolerance pragmatism and compromise. The above mentioned points are also the features and principles of democracy.

Oludayi (2006) view democracy as a system that allows people to decide when, where and how to choose their leaders, such decisions are not end on themselves but based on the need for leadership to perform well, be ready to subject themselves to free and fair elections as at when due, and when necessary will be willing to accept the outcome of such election in good faith. He further postulated that the democratic system goes with assessment; good leaders should be rewarded through re-election, respect and obedience and honored by the people while bad rulers should be sanction either legally or morally.

Siegle (2005) Democracy means governance system in which leaders are selected through free and fair election with institutions that fosters, distribution of powers and citizens have extensive opportunities to participate in political life. Oyovbaire (1987) defined democracy as a system of government seeks to realize a generally recognized common good through a collective initiation and discussion of policy questions concerning public affairs and which delegate authority to agent to implement the broad decision made by the people through majority vote. Akudo (2008) posited that democracy is a system of government that gives preference to strengthens citizen's decision –making, and thereby promotes equal participation of local citizens in seeming and building their nation for collective goods of while upholding the principle of justice, peace, and rule of law. Calhoun et al (1997) defined democracy as a system in which the law guarantees extensively civil liberties, including the freedom to associate with whomever one chooses, freedom of speech and the press and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure. The definition highlights more on the features and principles of democracy.

There are procedures for those aggrieved to seek redress and reclamations of lost / stolen mandate. There comes the election tribunal and court. All these process and procedure are contained in the constitution of the country or Act of parliament

Democracy is a system of government determined by the people through a credible accepted norms and values of the people with the modalities to change the system vested on mases and enshrine in the constitution of the people ,(Chinnh 2024) There are principles that guides and regulates the operations of democracy in any place it is operated, which includes, existence of

written or rigid constitution, popular participation in politics, periodic election, separation of power, checks and balances, existence of political parties, equality before the law, rule of law, due process, fundamental human rights, independence of the judiciary, existence of functional institutions, existence of strong opposition to mention but few.

The definitions of democracy above put me in serious pensive melancholic cogitation and conceptual dilemma to ask myself what system of government that is practiced here in Nigeria, or does democracy in Nigeria has its own unique characteristics peculiar to Nigeria environment. This brings to light that environment, mentality and attitudes has a role to play in the functionality of any democratic system in Africa.

From the journey so far since independence till date, Nigerians have never practiced true liberal democracy with its principles, features strictly adhered to in its operations and observance from the electioneering processes to the governance stage. There are so many democratic aberrations in Nigerian democracy. No wonder Kolawole (2004) posited that democracy is not the absence of military rule nor it is necessarily the presence of colonial administration, but a situation where political actions and institutions of the state are oiled in democratic values, names and ethos.

## **Development**

Development as a concept has so many definitions by various authors according to how they conceptualized it, despite the difference in semantics there is a meeting point to what development is all about. It is a complex and multidimensional concept as it has varying meanings. For example, Rodney (1972) said that development in human society is a many-sided process that occurs at three levels namely the individual, social group and the society. At individual level it has to do with increase in skill and capacity greater freedom creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Nnoli (1982) posited that development is a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with the physical biological and inter-human environment transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. The lesson and experience gained in the process are passed on to future generations enabling them to improve their capabilities to make further valuable changes in their inter-human relations and their ability to transform nature. Seer (1979)

in an attempt to conceptualize the concept of development raised three important questions; they are what have been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality. From his analysis the three indices are (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at relatively high rate, there is absence of development and vice- versa. This means that for a nation to be tagged developed there are certain requisites to be met by such nation in measurable terms which are poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Furthermore, Naomi (1995) averred that development does not only involves economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Gboyega (2003) posited Development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the condition of human existence in all ramifications. This means improvement in material well-being of all citizens not only the most powerful and the rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today consumption does not imperil the future'

Rodney (1972) Nnolin (1981) agreed that development shares the following things in common.

- (1) Human-centered rather than artifact-centre
- (2) Dynamic process rather that static
- (3) Involves a complex interactive relationship between individual and the society.
- (4) Predicated essentially on production rather than consumption

Tadaro (1985) viewed development to be multi-dimensional nature focusing on re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. Oghator & Kobo (2000) posited that development goes beyond the increase per capita income or economic growth, but also includes sustainable improvement in the living standard of the people which is guaranteed through the provision gainful employment coupled with the presence and availability of social; and economic infrastructure. Sachs (2005) averred that development is journey from poverty to posterity, from vulnerability to security, from exclusion to inclusion, and from lack of dignity and opportunity to full dignity and opportunity.

Oransaye (2006) defined development as change or transformation from one lower state of well-being into a higher one. Adedeji (1999) cited in Oransaye (2006) posited development as a

process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in the society embracing such things as the quality of life, social justice, justice of opportunities for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and demands. Society for International Development (2024), defines development as a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical economic, environmental, social, and demographic components. The goal and purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities without damaging the resources of the environment.

Odo (2017) assert that development entails the process of expanding and adopting capacity of the society in satisfying the materials and cultural needs designed to achieve among others, increase productivity within a balanced economic system, the eradication of poverty and disease and the liberation of individuals from their constraints. He further stated that development has moved from modernization to economic growth to popular participation and presently to Human Capital Development. This has to do with continuous improvement in the quality of life in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

It is a naked truth that Nigerians wallows with high poverty and other agonizing torturous condition of underdevelopment despite all her richly endowed and exploited natural resources, namely, oil and gas, arable land and others too numerous to mention. No good road, no good pipe-born water, no employment, low per capita income, high infant mortality, no hospital, no infrastructural facilities and social amenities, the worst is that the natural environment is been destroyed every day Chinnah (2019).

The point raised above has degenerated to insecurity, frictions and crises, call for secession, formation of ethnic militia, kidnapping, cattle rustling, abduction of school children, and the society engulfed with social vices and other anti-social practices been perpetrated on daily bases as a result of failure from the existing democratic system to produced desired fruits of democracy which include, equity, justice, citizen participation, rule of law, employment, lack of social amenities and infrastructural amenities, welfare and sustainable development, Chinnah (2020). Development has been illusory an imaginary despite resources sank on developmental policies and programs.



## **Sustainability**

Stoddart (2021) viewed sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra –generationally and inter –generationally within the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of fitness ecosystem. Thomas (2015) posited sustainability brings into focus human activities and their ability to satisfied human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resources at their disposal. The National Town Meeting on Sustainability (1999)in Detroit, Michigan averred sustainable development to mean new technologies and new ways of doing business ,which allows us to improve quality of life today in all economic, environmental and social dimensions without impairing the ability of future generations to enjoy quality of life and opportunity at least as good as ours.

Sustainable development has three components namely, environment, society and the economy. , Bein-Eli (2015) sees sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the caring capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effect on the caring capacity of the environment upon which it depends.

Sustainable development recognizes the interdependence among economic growth, environmental protection, and social well being.

Daly & Cobb (1989) described sustainable development to be far more than simply growth, it requires a transition to qualitatively better growth, designed to enable human economics to continue to increase the goal they serve but to do so within a system that functions as a steady – state system rather than a drive for expansion. World Commission on Environment and Development (UNO) in 1984 under the chairmanship Gro Harlem Brundtland, in October 1987 submitted a report which contained the definition of sustainable development. In that report, it defined Sustainable Development “as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”.

This definition is measurable and focuses on two main points, namely the environment and human beings. In qualifying and quantifying growth and development, the two must be taken into consideration in terms of developmental projects, programmes or policies aimed at

improving the life of the people and a better natural environment for the present with the future generation not put in jeopardy, Chinnah (2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Structural functionalist** theory was adopted for the study as the theoretical framework. Study.com (2022) states that the structural – functional approach is a perspective in social sciences that sees society a complex whose parts work together to promote stability and solidarity. This theory emphasis for harmonious working relationship amongst the component parts in the society. The society is seen as an entity with various parts such as (government, institutions, individuals, culture, traditions, norms among others) all working towards the larger goal of maintaining the society. It views society through a macro-level adjustment based on social structure and social functions that works in harmony to shape the whole society. The theory centered on exploring and maintaining order, stability and cohesion based on independency, socialization and systemic change.

Spencer (1899) Durkheim, (1916) Mahnowski (1922) Powson (1939) Marton (1949) and Radcliff-Brown 1935, theorized on structural functionalism and other political scientists too numerous to mentioned. They introduced structural functionalism theory into political science and public administration in comparing and analyzing political system, (study.com 2021)..

The theory states that each organ /sector within a system must perform their respective functions effectively for the betterment of the general political/economic system. Performing a function in a ruptured fracture system will be action in futility. The system controls the function in any given society. Sustainable development can only be achieved in Nigeria if all the institutions, ethnic nationalities, groups, states, geographical zones, states, local government areas and other components subordinate units within Nigeria federalism functions in a restructured system that can usher in peace, growth and development as restructuring is imperatively needed if the nation must grow.

The political class actors, gladiators and their cronies must do the needful and leave the wasteful for growth and sustainable development to be achieved. Politics in Nigeria determines every other sector in the polity and they use the state resources to better their life and that of their

associates undermining the masses and other sector in the nation. The ruling class is only interested in their welfare and betterment. They don't consider other sectors.

Functions and duties can be performed by all and sundry when there is unity, equity with authority and responsibility delegated to all the components units in the federation with the needed resources for them to function optimally, coupled with strong functional independent institutions to seek for redress. This directly connotes the devolution of powers to all the components, structures, institutions and units against the over centralized federal system we have in Nigeria.. When justice and equity are at play obedience are not solicited but surfaces naturally not forcefully orchestrated. It will overtly swallow and gets rid of all agitations; clamor for succession, banditry, kidnapping and insecurity among other and usher in sustainable development, Chinnah (2019).

The basic thrust of structural functionalism includes:

- (a) Society consists of both structure and functions that are interconnected and interdependent and ultimately, focused on maintaining or mediating society equilibrium (Red-Cliffe Brown 1935).
- (b) Social systems consist of both structures and functions that are necessary for the ongoing health or survival of that system, ( Chilcolt1998)
- (c) Structural exist to meet the functional needs of a society (Merton1949).
- (d) Systemic functionality across and within structural services to reinforce and maintain the stability of the system's structures in the content of an ever-changing complex and unpredictable system.

The practically application of the structural functionalist theory in Nigeria is that the system must ensure that all the structures, sub-structures and super- structure must perform their respective functions efficiently and effectively for the betterment of the entire society. There must be cordial and mutual relationship, interaction and interdependence of all the structures and functions for the benefit at the society. All the ill-functional structures must be restructured through restructuring via dialogue and mutual agreement. Proper leadership and will power ensured through democratic process and intuitions based on equity will lead to development. This can only be achieved through mutual dialogue via restructuring and general overhauling of

the fragile tensed fractured system. Chinnah (2019) A bad structure cannot produce good output no matter how efficient and effective is the input, the rotten structure must get input infected to produce bad output, it is a vicious circle

### **Methodology**

The study made use of secondary data, which include textbooks, journals, periodic publications, newspapers, and other relevant documented literature, both soft and hard copies; while content analysis was used to analyzed data objectively.

### **Features of Nigerian Democracy and Governance System in the Fourth Republic**

The journey of democracy in Nigerian began as far back as 1946 when the first political party was formed by Herbert Marculey based on the introduction of elective principle by the Richard Constitution. Democracy as practice in Nigeria from the colonial era till date has never benefitted the masses in any form rather the few political elite lives in absolute affluence while majority of the population suffers in abject poverty. Politics in Nigeria ushered in starvation, underdevelopment and class system in Nigeria.

Ajayi & Ojo (2014) identified four outstanding features of Nigerian democracy namely; (1) spend thrift: Democracy that spends much to accomplish so little.(2) It invest in the comfort of officials rather than human and material resources (3) Nigeria democracy is plague by hydra-headed and pathological corruption that ensures that the impact of any seeming good policy is either extremely negligible or almost exactly nil. This in clear term ex-rayed the feature of Nigeria democratic system based on apparent realities on ground.

Democracy as the driving engine of the political voyage has plagued the Nigerian nation into endemic underdevelopment despite the huge wealth of the nation fourth republic is the worst as the level of poverty cannot be quantified both in national and at international scenario. Nigeria tagged first in the world with highest number of people living in extreme poverty. This is paradoxical a paradox considering what the nation is endowed with and the numbers of billionaires and millionaires we have in the country and billions paid to political office holders and their cronies.

Akosile (2010) posited that Nigerians have never experienced any good governance since 1999 and that for the citizens to have any sense of belonging, there should be provision for social amenities and infrastructural facilities, employment, health, security and constant power supply. The above are seen as a mirage in a wealthy nation with the poorest infrastructure, a nation with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty in the whole world despite her wealth.

Democracy has failed Nigerians from all indications against its practical ostensible realities predicated on citizen's welfare, equality and freedom. Okeke (2014) Ijere (2015) Chinnah (2019) Ojokorotu & Allen (2009) in their respective studies asserted that democracy neglects the welfare of the citizens as observed in Nigeria. Nigeria democratic experience has so many bad lessons as experience shows that more than 98 percent of the nation populations are of the same opinion as they wallows in pathetic poverty. This potent a great danger to the nation and generation unborn if nothing drastic is done to correct this abnormality into normalcy urgently.

It is an established fact that all the political parties that contested election right from the colonial era till date had ethnic coloration and orientation, none of them had a national outlook that cut across all the ethnic extractions in the nation. The PDP was dominant in the north, Alliance for Democracy in the west, ANPP in the north,. There was no national political party with national interest and sound political ideology. Each political party draws much population on where its founders are based. APGA was only known in the South East zone of the nation as its founder hails from there.

Democracy in the fourth republic witness political parties without sound ideology and manifesto. All we had from People Democratic Party in 1999 during electioneering campaign has been military government is the worst form of government, an aberration, freedom for all. They had no focus and direction only paraded a watery manifesto. All Progressive Congress in 2015 wrestle power out from People Democratic Party (PDP) with a political campaign mantra of change. The change as a mantra was not conceptualized and defined, the change has cost us more harm than god. Political parties in the fourth republic failed to implement its watery manifesto that was defined by the political actors and gladiators. The current president as the head of administration told the world that it is his time to rule the country when asked his vision and mission for the nation he wants to rule. He mentioned names of people that helped him answer some questions on campaign rally.

Another feature of Nigerian democracy is that government of the day lacks the will power to come up with good policies, programs that can curbed poverty and ameliorate the condition of the masses. They failed to perform fundamental function of the state when they come to power the same thing is applicable to the All Progressive Congress (APC) that is power now. PDP under the leadership of president Obasanjo couldn't achieve anything to better the life of Nigerians, YarAdua came up with seven point agenda death couldn't allow him pursue and achieve his vision, Jonathan came up with transformation agenda, and none was achieved because of corruption, embezzlement and cronyism. APC came up with change mantra as a slogan through out there first tenure nothing positive came out of it. They have changed to NEXT LEVEL as a slogan let us see how there next level will either higher or lower the nation level. Currently they are using RENEW HOPE AGENDA which is a conduit for financial appropriation to few of them in power. A political party without national interest and outlook cannot easily articulate the will and will of the people. Political parties without sound ideology and manifesto can only wallow to govern the people. It is a clear indication that they have planned to fail in, only to enrich themselves and their cronies. Political parties manifesto in Nigerian is not what one can write home about. It is laughable to see political party say they will build market, borehole and construct roads. Are those things not part of their categorical fundamental duty of government? Chinnah,(2019).

The fourth republic witnesses a great negative political wrangling, crises and power struggle and tussle in all the political parties. All the registered political parties lacked internal democracy. The political landscape is characterized with crises, court orders that are not obeyed, parallel party secretariats and executives, continuous change of chairman and other executive members. For instance how many chairman of the People Democratic Party (PDP) completed their tenure as stated in the party constitution? Currently the PDP chairman is in appeal court over breach in his tenure of office; same applies to All Progress Congress (APC) Nigeria political terrain lack internal democracy this has led to crises upon crises. They don't adhere to democratic principles as the will of the people are not allowed to play.

The issue of defection is another democratic feature in the republic under survey; the number of defection cannot be counted and numbered by the two dominant political parties in Nigeria. The quest to control the party machineries and executives in determining who get what, when and

how has been a major contending factor among political heavy weight in the party leading to breach of party constitution, democratic principles and ethos. Political actors and players adopt all possible means no matter how crude it is to get their will prevail over the masse will and wishes. The issues of defection, suspension and cross carpeting are as a result of wrangling over who controls the party executives and structure. In 2019 general election, All Progressive Congress (APC) in Rivers state had much litigation, many court cases, not different what played out in Zamfara state and in Imo state. All Progress Congress (APC) in Imo state lost the election to People Democratic Party (PDP) the opposition party, which earned the governor of Imo state Rochas Okorocha suspension from the party. In Rivers state All Progressive Congress (APC) had no candidate for the gubernatorial election. In Rivers state Accord Party had court case resulting from internal wrangling court disqualified their governorship candidate from contesting election few days to Election Day. At the national level the same scenario played out imagine in PDP someone that has been jumping from one political party to the other since the beginning of the fourth republic decamped to PDP and got the presidential ticket of the part to the detriment of those that have suffered to build the party. The defection of Godwin Obasiki of All Progressive Congress to People Democratic Party few days to gubernatorial election and him getting the party ticket is laughable his emergence and wining overwhelmingly during the election is another pointer and laughable in Nigerian democracy. The Governor of Cross Rivers, Eboyi state and other prominent party stakeholders too numerous to mention. Politics of defections without tangible reasons is a worrisome development to democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Godfatherism in politics has escalated drastically in the fourth republic with negative intent and grave consequences to governance and national development. Godfathers use their power, influence and affluence to manipulate and maneuver the political system to suit their preferred candidates in election. Internal democracy is seen as a litmus test for external democracy which will be transmogrified into good governance if on the positive. The representatives of the people will be accountable to the people not to those that manipulated the democratic process for them to emerge and win elections as we have seen in Nigeria. Adeoye (2009) defined godfather as a term used to describe the relationship between a godfather and godson. A godfather is a kingmaker, boss, mentor and principal, while godson is the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of godfather. Bassey & Edet (2008) postulated that godfatherism connotes the power and



influence of people who are politically relevant in deciding who gets nominated to contest elections and who eventually wins the election. Kolawole (2004) defined godfather as an institution of political kingmakers through which certain political office holders of tenuous political clout come into power. As the name implies godfather, etymologically means people with extra ordinary power and influence in the political/ economic arena and electioneering process to determine who get what position in the nation. They are Elite in the political arena that wants their interest to be protected and represented in every political dispensation. Most of them are in the economic sector, educational and in all other sectors they ensure that their interest is always protected by any government in power. Politics is the quickest means to make wealth there are people in the business of sponsoring people for election and they get paid in hundred folds in form of money and contracts from the government which in most cases are not executed. The issue of godfatherism is a cog in the wheel of development and good governance. The issue of godfatherism dealt with Anambra state seriously with negative impact it's destruction brought the state on limelight of development. In Edo state Lucky Igbinedon used it to defeat a prominent governorship aspirant of PDP known as Alhaji Azeez Garuba, Musa YarAdua used it to emerged through the northern myfia as the presidential candidate of PDP against some other notable presidential candidates that spent their time, energy and resources in campaign. The current issue in Rivers state that led to the declaration of state of emergency in the state is another godeample. When the rightful people choices are not produce government will not come up with good useful programme and polices for the people. There is a lacuna created already during election.

In the fourth republic politics had a negative cultic spiritual tie. People were recruited to join certain organizations and groups with stringent forceful fraternal bonds on the guise of protection, guidance, staunch support, and assurance of sponsorship and wining of elections, mostly for newly political actors without base. Chinnah (2019) referred to franternitism, as the forceful or peaceful fraternal patriotic bonds tied to shrine gods or goddess to protect members of the same fraternity politically, obey and keep an oath and or be punished if otherwise, The political battle you see today in many states of the federation are not the surface politics you are seeing, it goes beyond that. It is a battle of which fraternal groups controls the political power. There are cases where better candidates that pick forms are asked to step down by the stakeholders of the party for just no good reason. Consensus candidates are used to seal their



demonic deal. There are states, from the list political positions to the highest are occupied by people of the same fraternity. It must be mentioned that the destruction of Okija shrine ushered in rapid economic, political and infrastructural amenities in Anambra state. There are states mortgage like Anambra state then, they need political liberation from fraternitism. The political parties you see in those states are camouflaged for their underground secret society or group. They are busy recruiting both old and young for the growth of their union. This has negative effect in our democratic system and cannot ensure good governance. As a result of this some people cannot be prosecuted, or even asked why projects are abandoned. These set of people protect the interest of their members and place them in any available juicy position. The say you must belong before you belong or you end, your political career halfway, Chinnah (2019)

Furthermore, democratic experiment in Nigeria in the fourth republic has left Nigerians with great nostalgic feelings and palpable fear about the future and development of this nation. The high rate of violence prior and sequel to the Election Day, the election date is the worst. Many Nigerians were assassinated because of elations, properties burnt. Electoral violence is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria right from colonial era. One expected a positive change but to the greatest, dismal disappointment and perplexities the reverse is the case .In 2011 there was electoral violence in 12 states in Northern Nigeria that claimed the lives of 800 persons including 10 corps members of the National Youth service Corps (NYSC) serving there fatherland in Bauchi state with ethnic and religious colouration.. This is sardonic and barbaric a sin against humanity and natural justice. In 2015 electoral violence was intensified as there were serious issues ok killing, snatching of ballot boxes, use of thug, hate speeches and character assassination on media and public campaign ground. What AIT did to Buhari during campaign on their television is undemocratic and unacceptable in any western civilized nation of the world. Political parties in Nigeria use character assignation as manifesto and party ideology during electioneering processes. Aggressive, abusive languages, campaigns based on personal frictions, fraternity superiority are brought to bear on national issues and matters. Cultist are mobilized militia trained to snatch ballot boxes, intimidate people on election day and shoot around polling stations to cause panic to enable them rig election. In Rivers state what happened in the last concluded general election was an eye saw. Immunity was used as impunity before, during and after the election. There were killings in all parts of the state with pockets of atrocious electoral crime mostly in, Abonnema, Ahoada West, Khana to mention but few. In fact more than 40

persons lost their lives during the last general election. There were tenable cases of other electoral frauds. Vote –buying and use security personnel to perpetrate electoral crime were visibly seen. The use of federal might was made more manifest in 2019 unlike what we saw in 2015. Electoral fraud and rigging are what we have seen so far in the journey on democracy. The Elite are responsible for all these crimes just to keep themselves relevant and retain political power at all cost. They fraternize with secret cult members; empower them negatively for distortion of election and manipulation of electoral process to their favour. The consequences are not farfetched as we have seen recent cult classes and killing that have enveloped the state after election. The last general election of 2023 many persons died before, during and after election.

The issues of armed robbery at gun point and snatching of cars are on increase. The high rate of insecurity in some states of the federation can be attributed to political actors and gladiators actions and inactions in empowering people negatively and their failure to come up with developmental programmes and policies that will improve the lives of those boys and girls they used during election. This is anathema, offensive odoriferous saga in Rivers state and Nigeria in general as elections are marred with brutality, hooliganism, criminality, impunity, thuggery, gangsterism . Awopeju (2011) highlighted on the issue of violence. Rigging of election has gone digital it get sophisticated day by day. The use of underage in some part of the states is not a welcome development to the nation democracy.

The electoral umpire in Nigerian has failed the nation; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has failed Nigerians woefully. The independency of INEC is questionable. We have had cases where officers of the commission collect money to favour a particular candidate. Result sheets are sold to politicians by INEC officials and their adhoc staffs, some Resident Officers of the commission have also compromised their integrity. There are logistics and administrative issues that affect INEC. INEC have used federal power and might to favour any candidates they prefer to win in an election. We have seen INEC postpone election severally, cancellations of votes in some areas, and declaration of an election inconclusive. In all of these there are so many reasons attached to it below. INEC an umpire has not done enough. Registration and distribution of voter's cards is not encouraging. Monitoring of political parties primaries and other of their activities is not done properly by INEC. No wonder there are so

many cases in court against INEC conduct of election. There are litigations upon litigations in courts before and after election.

Nigerian democratic experiment in the fourth republic showed that over 75 percent of national wealth are used to service political office holders. Politicians in Nigeria earn the highest salary in the world yet Nigerian is rated among the poorest nation in the world. It is highly incredible but credible a senator takes home 13.5 million naira every month as running cost while House of Representative member collects 12million as running coast not as salary, with Constituency project of 200million naira which is not accounted for in any form. It is alleged that a senator takes home 29million naira a month while House of Representative members earns 8million as salary and 12million as running coast. Senators have refused to make their salary known to the public. They have appropriated our national wealth to themselves yet minimum wage for the common man is tagged at 18,000, senators are ready do anything about it until labor threatened to go on strike. Deduct the above from national pause of 109 senators and 360 reps members you will discover that the nation just exists for the benefit of the political office holders; the same scenario is replicated at both state and local government level. What a councilor gets in Nigeria as salary a professor doesn't get it the in the university. This is the reason why politicians will everything humanly and satanically possible to retain power considering the jumbo salaries and other paraphalania of office.

Another issue that has marked Nigerian democratic experience in the fourth republic is share the money syndrome and symptom. Nigerian oil monies are shared by the political elites and their cronies. National wealth is not for development rather shared among the few people in power. They transfer the siphoned wealth to foreign account. Travel abroad for holiday, leave and medical treatment. They are busy buying properties all over the world while Nigeria economy is among the poorest in world. Recently it was discovered that money meant to buy arms to fight Boko - Haram was diverted to few individual pause. They award contract to themselves and inflate the prices; the dramatic irony is that those contract are not executed, for instance the East West –Road has stayed close to two decades uncompleted.

From the democratic journey so far, opposition has never found it easy to exist in Nigeria. Any party in power in Nigeria since the fourth tends to intimidate, marginalized and suppress

opposition. The use of federal might, apparatus and agencies to suppress opposition has been like a recurring decimal since the beginning of fourth republic. Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Directorate of State Services (DSS) are used to deal with opposition. It started from Obasanjo era continued till date. I don't want to go into details about that. The issue is that no matter how corrupt you are if you defect to the party in power your sins are forgotten and forgiven. Opposition in Nigeria political climate is seen as a crime which is not part of democracy. It is laughable many corrupt politicians today that defected to APC are seen as saints the same scenario played while PDP was in power.

Corruption is digitalized in the current fourth republic as there are many weak institutions that claimed they are fighting corruption while they are more corrupt than the corruption. The issues of abandoning project after collecting money or doing project below specification is rampant in this republic. It is a perfect truism the East West that was awarded during PDP regime is not completed till date. There are many more projects at all level of government.

Electoral malpractices is been sophisticated on daily based, it has gone digital, in collaboration with other organization that conducts and monitors elections.

The politics of winners takes it all and the act of dealing with opposition decisively is prominent.

Political appointments to juicy position are done on ethnic sentiment. The composition of the current federal executive council and the service chief is a clear testament.

Marginalization, secessionist movement, herdsman killing, terrorism, kidnapping, ritual killings, fraudsters, religiosity, cyber crime and many other atrocious aberrations are on the increase.

Incessant increase in the price of goods and services in the markets, reduction in the value of naira, much borrowing to service stomach instead of investment. There is high rate of infrastructural decay and general economic recession on the increase country, poor roads, poor health care, and poor education to mention among others..

Jumbo salaries are paid to political office holders while core civil servants are paid slavery wages that cannot take family of four for five days. We have witness budget padding and budget disappearance in the National Assembly.

Prolong industrial action by labour in some ministries like health and education.

Disrespect to the rule of law, government don't obey court orders, individual that are connected act takes laws into their hands.

There is over concentration of power at the center as the federal government has beaten more than what it can bit. The revenue sharing formula is in favor of the Federal government followed by the state and then local government. There is nothing like true federalism in Nigerian federal system. Federal government has used its power to deal negatively with the state in terms of projects execution and allocation of wealth. We are all living witness to what Olusegun Obansajo did to Tinubu Ahmed 1999-2007 when he was governor of Lagos state. The state was starved of fund and federal allocation for some months because Tinubu Ahmed and the entire Lagos state in opposition party. Rivers state government during Ameachi as governor of the state didn't benefit much from federal project because Ameachi was in opposition party. The relationship that exists between state government and local government is seen as an appendage not as component units same applies to federal and state.

State institutions are weak and dependent on the government in power. State apparatus are wrongly used by the party in power. The independent of the judiciary, electoral body and others institutions are seen as a mirage in the fourth republic. There were several electoral litigations from the beginning of the electioneering processes to almost end of the tenure of those elected in position for the said tenure.

Judiciary is more supreme than the electoral body, people sovereignty are undermined and disregarded by the judiciary. The judiciary more reliable that voters powers as expressed in votes cast for their preferred candidates.

Elections cost Nigerians so much money, upon that the will of the people are not allowed to play. The politics of winner takes it all. There is high level of prebendalism, kpletocracy, cronyism

and nepotism at all level of government. The politics of winners takes it all irrespective of credibility or inability.

It must be mentioned that democracy in Nigeria has witness the recycling of the same set of people or family names. This was made more manifest during the fourth republic. There are people in the National Assembly that have spent over 16 years not that they have anything to offer or that they have offered anything good to their people before. They are there because they have conscripted and mortgage their constituency as a private property using all instrumentalities of powers to be in power. This scenario is not common to the National Assembly alone it also applies to all other elective position and political appointment.

Corruption and non independent of the judiciary and other institutions like the DSSS, EFCC, ICPC, must also be mentioned. Justice can be bought with money, while some institutions and anti corrupt agencies are used as tools to intimidate and hurt those seen as formidable opposition to the government. Imagine the level of corruption seen in Niger Delta Development Commission, How snake swallow billions in a federal ministry. Delay in settling and resolving election matters in court.

Fayemi (2009) posited that since the return of democracy rule in 1999, the tide of development in the country has not accelerated to any higher height .....money laundry, political godfatherism , economic wastage, misplacement of priorities, insecurity, of lives and property, insensitivity to the plight and welfare of the masses and lack of vision have remained permanent feature of the present democratic leadership. Buhari (2005) stated that Nigeria has been saddled with civilian administration that have wasted the years doing nothing other than struggling with issues of legitimacy arising from rigged and fraudulent elections, he accused democratic leaders of the country of displaying exemplary incompetence within the context of failing checks and balances.

Democracy has witness corruption of all most all other institutions of the state. What we have these days id fusion of powers not separation of powers .there is no independent institution in Nigeria including the judiciary and anti graft agencies. Appointments to key political offices are done on fraternal ethnic bounds or party affiliation not on qualification.

### **The Nexus between Democracy and Sustainable Development**

Nigeria is a primordial society with a monolithic economy that produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce. Politics is the only leverage and leeway to make wealth in Nigeria. Nigeria nation is configured in a way that politics is seen as the super structure that determines the pace and growth of other structures and sectors. The political system which is driven by democracy plays a dominant role in the development of the nation or the otherwise.

Udo (2017) asserted that the country has thus been left in a poor state of development characterized by endemic corruption at all levels of government and society, abject poverty and hopelessness, insecurity of lives and property, high rate of unemployment and youth restiveness, kidnapping, and armed robbery, religious extremism, and infrastructural deficits among other. Those in position of authority have remained indifferent to the plight of the people, the hungry and the unemployed instead they are obsessed with siphoning of the country resources, hence social injustice, corruption, poverty and insecurity have brought untold hardship to the people. These clearly indicate that democracy is a tool that can be for development or underdevelopment of the nation depends on what the government in power wishes.

Democracy as a tool that ushers in our political leaders, these leaders are responsible for the formulations and implementations of policies and program to better the life of the people and the environment. Leaders decide what type of projects to be approved or not to be approved. The execution, monitoring and evaluations of those projects are also the responsibility of a responsible sensitive and accountable government. Development begins with democracy and its operation in any political system.

A strong democratic government with will power and political will for development will ensure development. When democratic principles and ethos are applied in a democratic; state leaders will be chosen by the majority of the people not the minority through godfatherism. There policy and program will reflect the wishes and aspiration of the masses not of the few aristocrats. When there are strong institutions for legislation, execution and adjudication of justice sustainable development will be ensured.

This paper submits that wrong democratic foundation gave birth to bad governance and other social evil associated with bad governance. For sustainable development to take place all democratic principles and ethos should be applied with strong functional institutions to independently complements and checkmate all and sundry in the polity.

Democracy can be used to attained sustainable development in Nigeria, we have the resources our problem is leadership and management of our huge resources. From available facts and figure based on the above explicated and expounded issues discovered about Nigerian democratic experience. It is apparent that Nigeria development is anchored on good electioneering process, credible, free and fair election is a panacea for sustainable development.

Democracy populaly known and practiced in developed coutries of the world under ideal situation is expected to produce leaders that are selected from the people through free and fair election, leaders that knows the problems of the people but the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Our political leaders are selected by the few political elites that dectates what happens in the political areana through manipulation and circuventions of all democratic principles. These leaders only listen to those that helped them to acquire political power. A democratically elected leaders ideally will focus on the wish and willings of those those that elected them, which will inturn give birth to policies and programmes that will lead to improvement on the life of the people that voted them to power taken cognisance of the environment and that is what is called sustainable development. That is the meeting point and the nexus between democracy and sustainable development. So long as democratic ethoes and principles are circuvented to produce leaders that are not elected by majority of the people sustainable development will be illusory as other abberrational abberation that has enveloped democracy will not allow sustainable development to crop up.

## **Conclusion**

Democracy as a system of government combined with federalism seems to be the best form government for a pluralistic heterogeneous society like Nigeria considering her huge natural resources and wealth generated on daily bases. There is no iota of development in the Nation in all fields of human endeavor. The paper defined democracy, development and used structural



theory as theoretical framework. Features of democracy and governance system were analyzed and nexus between democracy and sustainable development clearly stated.

The paper argued strongly that Nigeria has all what it takes to become the best economy in the world but is tagged one in the nations with high number of people living in extreme poverty. The birth of new civilized cultured democracy where all the democratic principles, ethos and ethics are applied and implemented strictly with strong independent institutions will usher in sustainable development. Development is quagmire in Nigeria because our democratic system is faulty. A faulty democratic system begets a faulty output and bad governance. Relating it to the structural functionalist theory, all the structure must be carried along for the system to work well.

The paper also submitted that the denigration of other sectors, component parts, units and people by the few political elites will continue to give birth to greater level of underdevelopment despite all the developmental initiatives and program.

### **Recommendations**

To free Nigeria from her excruciating pathetic level of poverty and to achieve substantial level of development that can be sustainable, the researcher made the following recommendations.

- (a) There is need for urgent sensitization of the masses on the danger of faulty democracy. People should be taught what democracy is all about and its proper applications, this will help to stop some of the abnormalities associated to Nigerian democracy, seen and taken for normalcy.
- (b) There should be review of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The review should be masses centered and powers properly delegated to all the component parts of the federation.
- (c) There should be functional independent institutions free from government influence and interference.
- (d) Checks and balances, that create enabling political environment for the existence of strong opposition without molestations and intimidations.
- (e) Accountability, equity, justice and fairness should be enshrined in the constitution and be our watch word.
- (f) Restructuring of the entire political system will give birth to restructured democracy that will midwife sustainable development.

- (g) The law should rule rather than men and the constitution held in high esteem.
- (h) The ruled should have direct feedback from those in power.
- (i) Offenders of the law should be punished accordingly to the law of the land.
- (j) Character reformation and attitudinal change. Including electoral reform.
- (k) Value reorientation and reformations. Let all democratic principle and features be put in practice.
- (l) All institutions should be strengthened and made to function independently without interference.

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