

## THE PROBLEM OF KAKISTOCRACY IN NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY

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### **Abstract**

Although Nigeria paved the way for democratic rule roughly two decades ago, the people still struggle to locate or fathom tangible dividends of this system of government. Rather, what is glaring is the near failed state situation as manifested in the cases of injustices, insurgencies, ethnic and other forms of rivalries, to mention but a few. This is a clear indictment on the quality of leadership that has been administered to the Nigerian public since the inception of democracy. Many questions abound; what is the objective of democracy? Has it failed? This paper labels the current rule experienced in the country as kakistocracy. kakistocracy describes a government manned by the worst set of people. That is a government with little or even no solutions to offer, except, greed, avarice theft, prebendalism and its likes. This study submits that the democratic process in Nigeria has been hijacked by “Kakistocrats” who have made life miserable for a larger percentage of the Nigerian citizenry and her institutions/sectors. This study adopts the method of hermeneutics in interrogating this problem. While positing that if this trend continues a full-scale insurrection would become inevitable.

**Key Words:** Democracy, Kakistocracy, Development, Leadership, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Against oppression, suppression and tired of despondency, totalitarianism, despotism, Nigeria welcomed the reign of democracy in 1999. For her, the model of democracy that has been seen to have helped in transforming life in the Western, Northern and other parts of the first world had come to stay. Thus 1999 was an opportunity for Nigeria to also practice that paradigm that enabled development to emerge in such entities. So the system that guarantees and ensures that the voices, yearnings and aspiration of the people had to be met. And that would be democracy: but how have the Nigerian nation fared in this clime of practicing democracy after almost two decades?

Although democracy is described as the government of the people, which guarantees the people's participation in who rules them, the policies that are used in addressing issues and challenges within their entity, there seems to be a disconnect between the ideals of democracy as enshrined theoretically and the phenomenon on ground. How can one describe this seeming vacuum that democracy was employed to fill and the concrete reality on ground? The precarious condition arising from this situation is of more concern to this work. And that precarious situation is christened kakistocracy. Although democracy has been popularized by the West, and most nations on earth, claim to practice democracy, kakistocracy is not as ubiquitous as such. In fact one hardly finds a government or system that labels its self as a kakistocracy, but an understanding of the concept would clear showcase features that determine features and traits that are noticeable for a regime, system or rule to be considered Kakistocratic. Kakistocracy is the government of the worst in the society. It can also be described as the government that enhances and promotes worse and retrogressive conditions for her people. This fallout of this is the fact that the people's commonwealth, are diverted for personal and class gains, therefore leaving space for hunger, impoverishment, and other inhuman conditions. This is the bane of poverty in most developing countries; rich in human and natural resources but wallowing in poverty and depending on foreign aids to survive. Although some studies have been done on the concept kakistocracy, not much has been done to really demonstrate its meaning and how ubiquitous this phenomenon has become, mostly amongst developing countries.

The overriding implication of kakistocracy which is clearly manifested in maladministration and its negative impact on the Nigerian state is identified in this work as the problem with the Nigerian democracy. To buttress this further, this study has the following objectives; firstly, to depict that there is a massive departure from what democracy is and that which is practiced in Nigeria as democracy. Secondly that although there are activities with the similitude of democracy within the Nigerian entity, but a critical look at the ideological foundations of democracy would reveal a total contradiction. Thirdly, that which is practiced in Nigeria can be compared with kakistocracy and it has extraneous consequences on the well-being of her citizenry, development of her sectors and institutions and the unity of the nation. This paper therefore reflects on the problems of Nigeria and asserts that what is practiced as a system of government in Nigerian seems more kakistocratic than democracy which is the government of the worst in the society or the government that enhances and promotes worse and retrogressive conditions for her people, than democratic. The reason for this is not farfetched, the fact that resources in the people's commonwealth, are diverted for personal and class gains, thus leaving space for hunger, impoverishment, and other inhuman conditions.

This study provides a postmortem analysis on the concepts and construct of democracy, its inhibited practice in Nigeria, and its negative implication which is kakistocratic. This study juxtaposes the current phenomena in Nigeria with the ideals of democracy, while pointing out the incontinency inherent in such maladministration on the Nigerian public. This has led to underdevelopment in critical sector of the nation's life, as

evident from the health, education, transportation amongst others. The methods of critical analysis and hermeneutics would be utilized in analyzing these fundamental issues. These methods enables for a proper analysis, interpretation and reinterpretation of the concepts of democracy and kakistocracy. Before proceeding further, it is imperative to review some scholarly background by way of conceptual analysis in order to properly understand the progression of this discourse for the purpose of proper situating within the right context.

Etymologically however, Kakistocracy comes from the Greek word *kakistos*(worst) or *kakos* (bad) + *kracia*(rule, power or government),<sup>1</sup> so it depicts or describes a government manned and administered by the worst, bad and most terrible set of people. It is very instructive to note that when it comes to the hierarchical representation of the capability of the personnel that make up the sort of arrangement, they are not merely bad, but worse than bad, thus living a sane mind to only imagine empathetically that which such a set of leaders can impact the state with. Kakistocratic tendencies does not only limit its tentacles to state or governments, this sort of leadership behaviour may explain the world's woes as regards, citizens' misconduct, corporate scandals, misdemeanor in the church, anomalies in civil society, spousal indiscretion and infidelity, the desecration of rule of law, and even the persistence of illegitimate authoritarian states and despotic rulers.<sup>2</sup> A historical tracking of the term, traces its earliest use to the English preacher, and lawyer Paul Gosnold, in a sermon he preached at *the Publique Fast the ninth day of Aug. 1644 at St. Maries*:<sup>3</sup>

Therefore we need not make any scruple of praying against such: against those Sanctimonious Incendiaries, who have fetched fire from heaven to set their Country in combustion, have pretended Religion to raise and maintain a most wicked rebellion: against those Nero's, who have ripped up the womb of the mother that bare them, and wounded the breasts that gave them suck: against those Cannibal's who feed upon the flesh and are drunk with the blood of their own brethren: against those Catiline's who seek their private ends in the public disturbance, and have set the Kingdome on fire to roost their own eggs: against those tempests of the State, those restless spirits who can no longer live, then be stickling and meddling; who are stung with a perpetual itch of changing and innovating, transforming our old Hierarchy into a new Presbytery, and this again into a newer Independency; and our well-tempered Monarchy into a mad kind of Kakistocracy. Good Lord!<sup>4</sup>

Secondly the English author and novelist Thomas Love Peacock later used the term in his 1829 novel *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, in which he explains kakistocracy as representing the opposite of aristocracy, as *aristos* (ἄριστος) means "excellent" in Greek.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore in his 1838 *Memoir on Slavery* (which he supported)<sup>6</sup>, U.S. Senator William Harper compared kakistocracy to anarchy, and said it had seldom occurred:<sup>7</sup> In the same breath, Tudoran adds that kakistocracy can best be understood as *a government by all the*

*wrong people*.<sup>8</sup> Stretching the discourse further, she submits that there is an important connection between kakistocracy and kleptocracy.

The concept kleptocracy is defined as a Government whose members seek predominantly to obtain personal advantage (material, social, political etc.), at the expense of the governed.<sup>9</sup> Thus *it would only be corollary to assert kleptocratic management as closely related to corruption, kleptocratic management is the opposite of democratic management, strategic, aimed at rapid enrichment by any means*.<sup>10</sup> So in a nutshell kakistocracy is closely related to kleptocracy. While the former describes a system that aids and abate the worse form of governance, the latter showcases a system that promotes theft, greed, desperate measures to keep and hold power for selfish and clandestine benefits. So at the level of effects, both negatively impact the national economy. Put more succinctly Parhizgar asserts the kakistocracies that kind of management or leadership based on nepotism, favoritism and political parties, while *kleptocracy* is based on corruption, embezzlement and "theft" of resources. Therefore, while kakistocracy is visibly manifested in the "driving by the worst administrations,"<sup>11</sup> kleptocracy on the other hand "steals" from the organization and system they lead, in violation of both laws and moral norms. Thus, the kleptocratic and kakistocratic organizational leadership, both deny democracy and multiculturalism.

In his work entitled *Kakistocracy*, in the periodical entitled *The Credit Strategist*, Lewitt points out that the term "kakistocracy,"<sup>12</sup> is a Greek term "which describes a state or government run by the most unscrupulous or unsuitable people"<sup>13</sup>. In this situation "corrupt, dishonest and incompetent politicians, regulators and bureaucrats were put in charge by self-absorbed, selfish and ignorant citizens". He applies this theory to the American presidential elections that led to the emergence of Donald Trump as "a low-point in American history; now the country is holding its breath (and its nose) waiting to see which lesser evil gets the nod". As an advocate of good governance, he saw that the American state was becoming kakistocratic and pointed out that the country needed a political lobotomy. He points out further that kakistocracy comes with many destructive features; one of the most disturbing is the continuing failure of progressivism to help the very constituencies (the young, the poor, and minorities) whom it claims to serve. It is also imperative to add that he borrows a leave from the Chinese great Confucius who wrote that: "Three things are necessary for government: weapons, food and trust; if a ruler cannot hold on to all three, he should give up weapons first and food next. Trust should be guarded to the end; without trust we cannot stand."<sup>14</sup> And a leader, who is able to meet up this three, will not be indicted for kakistocracy. His article is very instructive as he does not only analyze the theory or the system that kakistocracy is, but also demonstrates the effect of kakistocracy on life, politically, economically and otherwise. While also providing necessary ingredients through which governance can be properly enhanced.

On the other hand Abadjian in his work entitled *Kakistocracy or the true story of what happened in the post-Soviet area* in the *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, provides an in-depth analysis of the concept kakistocracy showing its effect on the post disintegrated Russian Empire. These different nations needed to take decisions that would enable them

address issues of development and other needs. So what system would best serve their interest? He points out that in the mist of all these glaring challenges the nations faced, kakistocracy raised its ugly head. He describes kakistocratic regimes as regimes that are able to take any measure to hold onto power, because power is the source of their richness and self-esteem, it is their *raison d'être*, and there is little wonder that they will never give it up voluntarily.<sup>15</sup> He describe this set of leaders as sit tight leaders who can only be thrown out of power. So they only leave the reins of power through the huge pressure of insurgent people or they will permanently and consistently falsify elections, stifle individual rights and freedoms, introduce an atmosphere of fear for the others and lawless permissiveness for themselves. Therefore, Abidjian clearly asserts that there is “no legal means through which a kakistocratic regime can be removed or dethroned”<sup>16</sup> Thus from a pragmatic point of view, any effort made to get rid of such a system or set of leaders or elites whether extra constitutional or “illegal” cannot be seen as wrong since it’s an attempt to dethrone a kakistocratic regime.

The implication of this position held by Abidjian is that “there are only minimal, if at all, chances to get rid of kakistocratic regimes within the constitutional framework. (So) The kakistocrats’ lawlessness and lack of legitimacy must be tackled by adequate means. This adequate means is synonymous with result oriented means, thus, if it “is impossible to topple illegal power by legal means or, the other way round, any means to topple the kakistocrats’ illegal rule is legal.”<sup>17</sup> His template for defeating such inhumane regimes may a times come with its own side effects and casualties, like the loss of lives and properties, like it happened in Romania, but it does not happen that way always, as he points out that Czechoslovakia and some other countries achieved that without bloodshed. But what is most glaring from his submission is the fact that pains taking effort must be taken to reverse this scenario, and this he sums up thus; “But the logic of historic events was the same. The kakistocratic regimes inevitably lead to deterioration of the political and socio-economic situation, as well as to degradation in terms of basic values and elementary human behavior...”<sup>18</sup>. And this poignant situation they have created must be confronted, without which they would do anything to maintain this status quo.

### **Democracy in Perspective**

Etymologically speaking, the term democracy comes from two Greek words: demos = people and kratos = rule. Meaning the "rule by the people," sometimes called "popular sovereignty." and can refer to direct, participatory and representative forms of rule by the people.<sup>19</sup> Today the word has a positive meaning throughout most of the world-that it appears that to gain legitimacy many connect themselves with this positive image, even some political systems contradicting the rule by the people have claimed to be democratic<sup>20</sup>-as noticeable with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Tobi adds that the notion "democracy encompasses variables such as the organization of free elections at regular and reasonable intervals, the independence of the judiciary, press

freedom, the existence of interest groups and political parties."<sup>21</sup> These democratic values are most likely to enhance people's capacity to achieve a desired change in a society.

In consonance with Tobi, Linz and Stephen opines that democracy guarantees development in any society.<sup>22</sup> They argue that the basic elements of true democracy include its ability to regulate social conduct, the creation of strong political institutions, the presence of a strong civil society and pressure groups, a strong and rational bureaucracy and an economic regime with a strong private sector base, increased production and economic growth. Thus against the tide of a military regime which is mostly totalitarian, the exact negation of these ethos was that which was obtainable.<sup>23</sup> Boyte further expands our understanding of democracy by positing democracy "as a way of life...that requires far greater emphasis on citizen capacities: the habits, skills, confidence, as well as citizens' power and authority."<sup>24</sup> What his view of democracy suggests is that any political system that usurps the role of her citizens in government due to their non-involvement in the process of policy formulation and implementation negates democratic principles. Negation of democratic ideals hinders the power of citizens to participate in government.<sup>25</sup>

This study posits that democracy whose templates and practice has helped in liberating, emancipating, developing other nations seems to have failed in Nigeria, reason being that democracy and its processes has been hijacked by a set of people who are not capable of anything but overseeing bad governance. Instead of practicing the ideals of democracy that have led to massive development and growth in other climes, a caricature of that democracy is what is been practiced. Yes, in Nigeria, there is nothing like absolute monarchy, we have political institutions, that on paper are meant to aid and promote democratic, institutional positions and other important standpoints of democracy. But a critical consideration of their existence and impact would reveal that they are more theoretically present, with little or no tangible impact. Thus the features and characteristics of democracy are missing. This includes, citizen rule of the people (which in most cases is replaced by stolen mandates), majority rule and minority rights<sup>26</sup> (is replaced by the tyranny of the majority as Tocqueville points out)<sup>27</sup>, individual rights (as replaced by inequalities), free and fair elections (as replaced with electioneering activities marred with stolen mandates and colossal violence), citizen participation (as replaced and evident in political apathy), cooperation and compromise (as opposed to and evidently noticed in rivalries, chauvinism).<sup>28</sup> But what can be adduced to as the cause of the ills outlined above? From what premise(s) can we draw out a reason(s) for this quagmire? What is the problem with the Nigerian demoracy.

Having outlined the characteristics of democracy pointed out above and juxtaposing them with the current situation in Nigeria, it is obvious that democracy in Nigeria is different from the ideal democracy. Hence what was introduced from the West as democracy has gotten a Nigerian version which is a perverted caricature of what democracy at the level of ideals and practice is. But, does this imply that the Nigerian state must absorb hook line and sinker that which it adopted from the west as a form of government? Cause, a critical look at what certain nations call democracy is not totally in line with the original tenets and terms, as can be noticed in the western and other

longstanding democracies. The Chinese example of democracy, where just one party exists is a pointer to this. But the major paradigm that may be used to address this issue may be the pragmatic theory.

The pragmatism theory is a result oriented theory<sup>29</sup>. So the question would be, how has democracy imparted the people under the particular clime in question? That is, put more succinctly, how has democracy impacted the state in question, which claims to practice democracy? Then, if we are to answer this question, this country or state in question has to be brought under review. So let's take china for an example; how are the Chinese doing? Are they faring well? The answer to this query may not be sufficiently dealt with here, as the Chinese are not the primary subject of this discourse. However, the Chinese feature in this discourse because of the fact that in spite of the fact that they practice democracy, their brand of democracy is different from what the western democracy postulates; but at the level of positive impart, they seem to be getting things right. Data from the country shows that over the decades, China had made giant developmental strides technologically and economically. Thus Wang points out that it is clear that public opinion surveys shows that more than 90% of Chinese citizens believe that having a democracy is good. But the majority is not yet ready for a major effort towards democratization because they still see economic growth and social stability as more important than freedom of speech, political participation, and democratic rights<sup>30</sup>. And they are unapologetic in practicing their brand of democracy due to the inherent benefits seen in them.

From the above assertions by Wang, it can be gleaned that although the Chinese are democratic, they are not fully democratic. Because certain fundamental ingredients are missing: this as pointed out by Wang includes "freedom of speech, political participation, and democratic rights."<sup>31</sup> But this is a sharp contrast to that which is obtainable within the Nigerian clime. The Nigerian political system or system of governance although labeled as democratic, is a charade as it neither meets the need of the (most) people either economically, politically or otherwise. As earlier pointed, the Chinese's brand of democracy may not be perfect, but their form of arrangement has met certain basic needs that the Chinese people find very fundamental; that is economic stability. Thus, in spite of the fact that pertinent issues like freedom of speech, political participation, and democratic rights are seriously impeded on, their greatly satisfied with the economic and social stability they have secured thanks to their democracy.

So the query that logically follows would be, what has Nigeria's practice of "democracy" bequeathed to her? Or better still, how has "democracy" imparted Nigeria? Or more specifically, how has the Nigerian brand of democracy impacted her critical sectors. The sectors may include, education, health care, key infrastructures like roads, water, electricity, agriculture support, hospitals, and the likes. Now, zooming to the democratic era ushered in the fourth republic in the year 1999; how have the aforementioned sectors being imparted?

### **Nigeria and the Trajectory of Democracy**

Kifordu maintains through the findings of a “public perception survey covering the post-1999 period showed that approximately 78 per cent of Nigerians support democracy. Despite this positive outlook on democracy, only 42 per cent of surveyed Nigerians were satisfied with the country’s democratic governance and an even lower 32 per cent could perceive democracy extensively in their respective experiences.”<sup>32</sup> However, the negative indices from the Nigerian would suggest a sickened condition. From Nigeria’s rating as the poverty capital according to the Brookings Institute,<sup>33</sup> and corroborated by the Development Finance Institute (DFI) and Oxfam<sup>34</sup> confirms that the trajectory of democracy is dissatisfactory. The seeming contradiction becomes even more glaring when you juxtapose this reality with the volumes of contents bandied about as the dividends of democracy by politicians are mere propagandas with little or no tangible impact on the people. This does not however mean that there are no pockets of progress here and there, but when compared to how much effect it has on the people, the quality is glaring. What percentage of the people have genuinely been affected or imparted by this “effects” in forms of projects? This statement by Obasanjo, may help in depicting how impactful democracy has been in the life of Nigerians;

The lice of poor performance in government – poverty, insecurity, poor economic management, nepotism, gross dereliction of duty, condonation of misdeed – if not outright encouragement of it, lack of progress and hope for the future, lack of national cohesion and poor management of internal political dynamics and widening inequality – are very much with us today. With such lice of general and specific poor performance and crying poverty with us, our fingers will not be dry of ‘blood’<sup>35</sup>.

Even the so-called war against corruption with glorified institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and other law enforcement agencies appears to be a charade considering latest reports by the Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index which opines that some large African countries (including Nigeria) have failed to improve their scores on the index.<sup>36</sup>

In his work entitled *Political Elite Composition and Democracy in Nigeria*, Kifordu “analyzes the post-independence background and composition of the Nigerian core political executive elite.”<sup>37</sup> For him by analyzing changes in the country’s political elite, he established the extent to which the composition of the elite reflects the democratic governance aspects of openness and inclusiveness. He showcases the Liberal pluralists’ schools of thought who opine that transformation in the elite power structure depends on periodic renewals, i.e. the entrance of new persons and ideas as regimes and resources change.

Although in his submission on post-colonial Nigeria, Kifordu points out that there have been different structural changes, most especially affecting the political

regimes and economic resources. But the objective of this paper is to address the fact that structural changes have not been very effective in transforming the outlook of the Nigerian elite, and the negative effect this has had on the Nigerian state. “The lack of transformation in political elite demeanor at the national executive power structure is based on the shared (common) background and preferences of members of the elite.”<sup>38</sup> Hence Kifordu employs the critical elite theory to analyze the characteristics and continuity of the Nigerian political elite, thus pointing out that if the backdrop of their continuous existence and strength is not addressed, then the Nigerian people and state will continually be victimized by her political elites. In the final analysis, the cardinal focus of his work which was set out to demonstrate how the “nature of the political executive elite in Nigeria has contributed to the weakness of political institutions”<sup>39</sup> is worthy of commendation.

Still on governance in general and democracy in particular with reference Nigeria, in his work entitled *Democracy and the future of the Nigerian state* Gberegovie posits democracy as that system of governance which gives citizens the opportunity to participate in government. He also adds that there is a nexus between political participation and development; which in turn promotes development. His paper examined democracy and the future of the Nigerian state. Thus pointing out that past governments failed in the “area of development and peaceful co-existence of Nigerians due to their non-adherence to democratic values and application of the principle of true fiscal federalism”<sup>40</sup>. Having diagnosed the problems that birthed the challenges of underdevelopment, conflict and strife, he therefore recommended “that for the future of the Nigerian state to be guaranteed, government at all levels should imbibe a political democratic culture which promotes values such as popular participation of citizens in decision-making, fundamental human rights, a free press, the curbing of corruption, and above all, shunning of all anti-democratic vices in dealing with issues of the state and the application of the principle of true fiscal federalism”<sup>41</sup>. Without religious adherence to these ideals, then the future will be bleak for Nigeria as a nation. His paper deserves credit for not only showcasing the ills of society, but positing that democracy is a panacea to the problem of underdevelopment, injustices and strives, while adding that democracy if negated or not allowed to be freely practiced can portend serious problems.

### **Juxtaposing Kakistocracy and Nigerian Democracy: Problems in Focus**

From the aforementioned, it is crystal clear that the concepts kakistocracy and democracy are not new terms. However, kakistocracy, an ancient and unpopular term describes a terrible situation, while democracy, a very popular term, provides the ideals through which the people can participate in governance, which will invariably provide the opportunity for the citizens to contribute to their development. It is imperative to note that in spite of the sundry works done on governance and democracy, much scholarly work has not been done to properly construe the situation of things in the Nigerian clime. Put more succinctly, in spite of the fact that we claim to practice democracy, a phenomenological engagement will reveal a contrary fact. Hence from its objective, this

work sets out to reveal what democracy is, while demonstrating that kakistocracy is the problem of Nigerian democracy.

Although both concepts as captured above are at parallel conceptually, juxtaposing them at this stage becomes necessary, since *prima facie* considerations would designate Nigeria as one of those countries that practice democracy, while a more reflective perusal would reveal otherwise and there lies the problem. That is, this work earlier exposed the meanings and implications of democracy and kakistocracy. And from the above analysis, it is difficult for both democracy (in its genuine nature) and kakistocracy to be practiced simultaneously in an entity or a state concurrently. But how true is this? How is it possible to assert that democracy as a system is a perfect system that would always bring about the good? In replying this question it would be imperative to assert that democracy is a governance theory<sup>42</sup> which is meant to be practiced by humans. So as a theory, it may not be perfect, but since it gives the humans, who are supposedly rational beings the opportunity to participate in the affairs of governing themselves, then the power to make choices makes democracy sacrosanct. The question of whether they will make the right choices or if they are adequately positioned for that is not the primary concern of this work, as that falls well within the confines of citizenship. Although it is very important in the administration of the state that the citizens be capable to veritably contribute to build their state up to best standards, the question of whether they are adequately positioned to do so is another issue totally. Generally speaking since humans are supposedly rational beings, then it may be affirmed that humans are “epistemically” positioned to make the right choices for the governance of the state. Thus it may be fitting to suggest that the thesis of this work maybe either that democracy is good or that kakistocracy is the abuse of the democratic processes. More specifically, this work can be better understood if we are able to answer these questions; In spite of the fact that democracy is wildly labeled as the government of the people, is it really possible to generally meet up the needs of the people? How does democracy manage the generality of the interest of the people? Is there a possibility of hijacking democracy by the high and mighty in the society? If yes, in whose interest would they do that? Is it in the interest of the people or their personal or class interests?

Since man’s first instinct is the egoistic desire to survive and first or primarily to benefit himself, then whose interest would override in a democratic setting? Although through efforts by democratic institutions like political parties, the electoral commission, the different levels and arms of government, to properly administer the democratic process and how the mandates, “will(s),” interest(s) and desire(s) of the people can best be harnessed and managed: If the interest of a man or a class, overrides that of the general public, then in whose interest would it likely be? If man’s quest for survival is his primary concern, and such an individual possesses the wherewithal to pull the strings that can determine that which will be, then he would most likely do things in form of policy initiation, in form of influencing the institutions and arms of government to suit his or their needs. When this reality becomes the case, then we may suggest a subtle “hijackal” of the processes and apparatus of governance in that clime. And if the interest of such an

individual or class is primarily their growth and development, then the general will, needs and aspirations of the people will inevitably suffer. This is the only reality or option that the people will have to endure as the commonwealth of the people will be employed for the clandestine pursuits of the “powers that be”; thereby leaving them lean, poor, impoverished and “destituted”.

This hijackal may possibly be linked to kakistocracy, in which the worst set of people provides the worst set of governance to their people. Thus there seemingly exists a connection between greed driven interest and kakistocracy. This connection can be clearly noticed in the fact that the greed ridden individual(s) cannot help but worsen the plight of the mass or generality of the people. This is clearly underlined in the fact that greed driven interest drives kakistocracy. In fact Tomescu-Dumitrescu goes on to postulate the nexus between kakistocracy and kleptocracy. She points out that, the concept of kleptocracy is defined as a Government whose members seek predominantly to obtain personal advantage (material, social, political etc.), at the expense of the governed.<sup>43</sup> Thus *it would only be corollary to assert kleptocratic management as closely related to corruption, kleptocratic management is the opposite of democratic management, strategic, aimed at rapid enrichment by any means*<sup>44</sup>kleptocratic management as provided by kakistocrats ensures worsening and growing poverty, the outbreak of social unrests, strikes amongst other social ills.

Adding credence to this discourse, Braji posits the possibility of a democratic government metamorphosing either into an undemocratic State or to a Kakistocracy.<sup>45</sup> In the event of failure in democratic processes as currently witnessed in Nigeria, kakistocracy may be labeled or diagnosed as the probable cause. As earlier demonstrated, the inability of the citizenry to fully take delivery of the dividends of democracy may be traced down to two possible causes; inability of the political elite to deliver the goods of democracy due to their ignorance or the inability deliver due to deliberate greed. Both cases thus agree at the level of not imparting the people, there are seemingly variances to the both of them. While the former seemingly appears as one wanting to develop the people, but lacks the wherewithal to get that done, the latter lacks the desire and is simply out to enrich himself or his class. So while democracy provides a template that will to a large extent create the opportunity for the most of the interest of the people to be met, kakistocracy would not work to uphold the interest of the people. In most cases such regimes are characterized by corrupt practices; like embezzlement, glaring nepotism, financial misappropriation,

The take home lesson from the above is that kakistocracy may be prima facie regarded as democratic, but once a government is proven to lack the ability to meet a high percentage of the general needs of the people, then such a government can be described as kakistocratic. This sort of government is crises driven, replete with propaganda, heavily nepotistic, sectional, parochial, and vindictive. So in this discourse the label of system of regime or government really does not matter. What really matters is what their actions posit. If their action posits that which is democratic, then they can be referred to as democratic. But if their actions impresse as kakistocratic, then they must

and should be seen and labeled as such. This becomes necessary, because sundry governments, whose obvious actions and impact would give away as kakistocratic, would not want to be labeled as such, knowing fully well that the implication of such will inevitably discredit their government and heighten tensions within that entity or state. Thus they put up facades to deceive the people, tending to impress them that things are going well, while in the real sense life is simply chaotic, brutish and short.

A critical look at the fourth republic would reveal that the epoch is characterized by kakistocracy. There are a barrage of events to support the conclusion; from the ways and manners through which elections are conducted, the ways and manners the economy is run, while not forgetting the infrastructural deficit that exists in critical sectors like the health, roads, schools, stadia, amongst others. This even becomes more glaring when you consider the fact that the rule of law is merely pronounced with the spirit of the law not been adhered to, subversion of elections and the electoral processes, the “hijackal” of political parties and other important public institutions to act within the whims and caprices of a privileged few. A serious pointer to confirm this is the fact that thousands of Nigerians leave the country both through legal and illegal means, just to avoid the stringent conditions in this clime. Put more succinctly, they seek to escape from the “zoo” called Nigeria<sup>46</sup>. This again may be properly substantiated from measuring how much role the people actually play in day to day running of the state, even at critical times like elections and life threatening situations like the Corona pandemic. In fact how many times have the Nigerian citizenry had the opportunity via a referendum, to contribute their quota in determining the direction the state should adhere to a burning national, state or local issue? If they seldom have, or do not have such opportunity for participation-i.e. public participation- then, who runs and determines what policies should come to place? What policies should be implemented? And who or what are the overriding forces or interests driving this policy thrusts? Could it be personal or class ambition? If yes such arbitrariness will have as its chief agenda, the primary interest of those who are in charge. Thus the interest of people who make up the large chunk of the public will not count much. If the political class of the day claim to be doing their best, and the best they can offer to afford is the current state that Nigeria finds herself, then they may either be ignorant or careless, or they may just be greedy and would only serve their interest, while undermining the interest of others. Or they may be impeded by some other form of ills that prevents them from adequately carrying out their function especially that of managing the common wealth of the people to their advantage. This premise would only be true if the kakistocratic system holds sway. And this seems to be more likely in the Nigerian clime hence the problem with the democracy practiced. The variables from the Nigerian phenomenon would easily direct one to this fact. From a failing educational system to a nation undergoing a massive infrastructural deficit, it would be rational to posit that a decaying system is in place. A system that would only secure and protect the interest of a few at the detriment of the overwhelming majority; such a system is indifferent about the state of life and general will of the people. It is more concerned with the interest of the few. The few in that small class who seemingly have hijacked the system and would utilize the common wealth of the people to their own private use.

In view of this phenomenon, this work therefore points out that there is a problem with the Nigerian democracy. In fact, what is practiced in Nigeria is not democracy, as it does not meet up with the set standards of democracy. Rather it is a negation of democracy and is more akin with the tenets of Kakistocracy. But what could possibly be the source of the quagmire? Could it be as a result of Ideological bankruptcy? As feared by the some nationalist, who felt that the elites who were to take over the reins of power were largely unprepared for the task of providing adequate leadership for the post-colonial state. Thus opening up the young post-colonial states for neo-colonization and imperialism. This confirms the fears of Amilcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, amongst others who posited that the threat of ideological bankruptcy was massive problem that the post-colonial African state would have to grapple with. The statement below may suffice to clearly depict their fears, worries and pensiveness;

In under-developed countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature<sup>47</sup>.

This problem did not only affect the nationalists who fought doggedly for the independence of their nations, but is also present among the contemporary political elites who hold the reins of power within the African continent. And Nigeria is not left out. Inevitably this condition ensures the rule and reign of kakistocrats; the government of the worse. This is the problem with the Nigerian democracy abound with consequential implications especially with regards to the future of the nation.

### **Kakistocracy the Time bomb of Nigeria's Democracy**

The term time bomb has been popularized by action movies, where, with keen interest, fear, and suspense, the audience watches to see a bomb slowly counting down to its detonation. This in most cases ends up detonating causing colossal damage. This may be a child's play to that which this research is envisaging in Nigeria, if leaders do not retract their steps to making the right decisions. The citizens have been seriously overstretched by the harmful policies and actions of the governments in this fourth republic. This does not however, imply that life was better under the military regime; for the military did not fare much better than the "democrats". But the reason why the fourth republic is under strict scrutiny is that much expectation was placed on the fourth republic as many saw the epoch as Nigeria's final opportunity to fly, after many years of being in the wilderness of suffering.

The contrast seems to be the case as different negative phenomena have become the norm in this clime. From incessant strives, bickering and agitations, to insecurity, as can be observed from the existence of Boko Haram, armed bandits, Herds men, militants'

amongst, pirates; to thugs collecting taxes and levies, controlling traffic, this are ex-convicts; educationally, students cheat to pass exams, lecturers and teachers would not adequately train students and pupils, politically; elections are characterized by vote buying, electoral violence, stolen mandates, “godfatherism” to mention a few; lack of basic amenities like water, schools, roads amongst others. Even more critical is the fact that in those places where there seems to be some form of presence of the amenities; they are mostly under furnished as noticed during the early days of COVID 19. They can’t meet the needs of the public.

Now, the question is; for how long will this continue? How long will the Nigerian citizenry continue to wallow in difficult and harsh times? The elasticity of their patience has been stretched to the extent that their breaking point may be close. The pointer to this fact is clearly demonstrated in the Arab spring and in other uprisings through which the public vented their disgust and frustrations on repressive and irresponsible governments. In fact the fallouts of these mass actions have led to the termination of the reign of such governments as evident from the Arab spring. So a continuation of the variables present currently in Nigeria may lead to a situation of an imminent revolt. More directly, the problems with the Nigerian democracy will lead to a likely insurrection; which this paper metaphorically describes as a time bomb.

### **Conclusion**

This work has been able to demonstrate that against the tide of oppression, suppression and tired of despondency, totalitarianism, despotism, Nigeria welcomed the reign of democracy in 1999. This was done with the understanding and confidence that the model that democracy projects possesses the capacity to transform the state, as have been achieved in the Western Europe, and other parts of the first world. But the reverse has been the case as after roughly two decades of practice, the yearnings and aspirations of the people are yet to be met. Hence this work bordered around the question; what is the problem with the Nigerian democracy.

The backdrop of the above reality caused the system of rule as practiced in Nigeria to be brought under scrutiny. Although democracy is described as the government of the people, which guarantees the people’s participation in who rules them and contribute in deciding the policies employed to address issues and challenges, there seems to be a great disconnect between the ideals of democracy as enshrined theoretically and the phenomenon on ground. This work considered the precarious condition arising from this situation. And this precarious situation was christened kakistocracy. Although democracy has been popularized by the West, and most nations on earth, claim to practice it, this paper submitted that a careful consideration of the political realities in such climes would reveal that what is inherent in such climes is kakistocracy; a system of government operated by the worst set of people, providing the worse condition to those they govern. This work therefore provided a postmortem analysis on the concepts of democracy, republic, kakistocracy its practice in Nigeria.

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