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## **Democratisation, Political and Economic Development in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal of the Fourth Republic**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines Nigeria's democratisation process and its effect on political and economic development in the Fourth Republic. The challenges confronting the country's politics and economy under the current republic necessitate this research. The explanatory sequential survey design was adopted. The study involved the administration of questionnaire to the senior academic staff of the Nigerian Social and Economic Research Institute and interview data. These data were descriptively analysed. The findings indicated that the process of democratisation has fallen short of achieving the anticipated political and economic outcomes, and citizen engagement has been limited. This underscores the need for a more profound commitment to democratisation and the enhancement of political institutions to maximize the benefits of democracy.

**Keywords:** Democratisation, Development, Fourth Republic, Nigeria.

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## Introduction

Nigeria's journey towards democracy has its roots in the colonial period, when various autonomous communities with varying levels of cultural development were brought together. This process, overseen by colonial powers, paved the way for the establishment of a unified Nigeria, during which institutions were created, bureaucracies were structured, and governance frameworks were imposed (Assibong, 2016). Colonial rule in Nigeria commenced in 1861 with the establishment of Lagos as a British colony, followed by the British protection of Northern Nigeria in 1887. At that time, the territory was divided into three distinct regions: the Lagos colony, the Southern Nigeria protectorate, and the Northern Nigeria protectorate.

The British took over the full colonial and administrative responsibilities for modern Nigeria in 1900. In 1906, they merged the colony of Lagos and the Southern protectorate which was referred to as the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria respectfully. By Article 4 of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate Order in Council 1906, the Legislative Council of Lagos was empowered to make laws for the protectorate of Southern Nigeria by ordinance. Then the Southern and Northern protectorates were amalgamated and Fredrick Lord Lugard became the first governor-general of Nigeria. Lord Lugard, after the merger, constituted the Nigerian council to join the small legislative council of the colony of Lagos already in existence. The establishment of the Nigerian Council laid the foundation for constitutional development in Nigeria and introduced the country to the democratic system (Oladipo, 2016).

Upon assumption of office in 1919 as Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford was pressured by the then West African Congress, led by Caseley Hayford, to provide constitutions in West African subject states. This led to the making of the Clifford Constitution of 1922, which introduced the systems of democracy and elective principles. This influenced the formation of political parties in Nigeria. Herbert Macaulay formed the first Nigeria political party, which was the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923 to contest for Lagos town council, setting the foundation for party politics, an integral part of the democratisation process, in Nigeria.

Though the first election was conducted into the legislative council with four slots, three for Lagos and one for Calabar to kick start electioneering, the voting right was based on a limited franchise of a minimum of 100 pounds annual earning, far beyond the reach of most Nigerians. As such, many adults of voting age were deprived of the right to vote even in the first restricted geospatial election aside from other undemocratic acts like veto or reserve power for the governor-general and selected representation at the legislative and executive arms by officials that characterised the

colonial regimes. This, according to Ene (2022), was the bedrock for future regionalism.

After forty-six years of colonial rule, on 1st October 1960, Nigeria became an independent sovereign state. The Independence Constitution of 1960 had some similarities with that of the 1954 Lyttleton constitution as the parliamentary system was retained with provision for dual executives (head of government and head of state), sharing of power between the centre and regions – the north, south and east, and constitution amendment procedure, amongst others. While this set the stage for Nigerian governance leadership, there were vestiges of imperialism as the queen of England retained the head of state position with a proxy representative and the highest court of appeal, the Privy Council and not the Supreme Court of Nigeria, resided in London. The seemingly democratic dependence on Britain ignited the demand for improvement by Nigerians and eventually culminated in the decision by political leaders to adopt republican status in 1963 after several meetings.

Nigeria has been through four republics with varying democratic experiences. The first republic spanned from 1960 to 1966 but riddled with political crisis largely orchestrated by ethnic agenda promotion leading to military intervention while the second republic commenced in 1979 with a federal constitution adopted with the belief that it would curtail ethno-regional politics. However, it collapsed on 31st December 1983 because of the anti-democratic practices of the party leaders (Yaqub, 2002), which deprived the populace of the dividends of democracy. Hence the change from the parliamentary to a presidential democratic system of governance appeared not to have engendered the desirous politico-economic development. This reverses the first republic testimony regarding political and socio-economic progression (Aluko, Yemi & Edigbonwa, 2021).

The succeeding third republic under the military head of state, Ibrahim Babangida, collapsed after the annulment of the June 12 presidential election in 1993. The annulment was greeted with protest by civil societies and citizens because it was judged to be free and fair and won by Moshood Abiola. Consequently, the military regime led by Sanni Abacha returned after three months under the interim national government of Ernest Shonekan. One thing gleanable from this republic is that the strength of democratic appreciation by citizens was weakened alongside its accompanying development expectations. After the demise of Abacha, General Abdusalam took over and hurriedly rolled out a transition timetable that was concluded within nine months and produced Olusegun Obasanjo as the first president of the fourth republic. Although the transition period was short, the populace actively participated, perhaps because of their dissatisfaction or disenchantment with the military regime.

Also, the global acceptability and popularity of democratic governance with attendant testimonies of political freedom and socio-economic development of most developed states – especially the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Canada – and some developing ones seem to have spurred Nigeria’s interest or endeared Nigerians. However, in the case of Nigeria, Olu-Adeyemi (2020) asserts that the fourth republic has been struggling to implement democratic governance and citizens have been experiencing difficulty in reaping the benefits of social welfare, justice, equity, and equitable access to resources and power. This suggests there are problems with the country’s democracy. Therefore, can it be said that the democratic expectations of Nigerians have been met twenty-six years after going by signs of antidemocratic politicking and harsh or unpleasant economic experiences? This study is undertaken to respond to this poser in the context of Nigeria’s fourth republic, which is the longest in the country’s political history. The specific questions that the research seeks to answer include: i) has the democratisation process facilitated Nigeria’s political and economic development in Nigeria? ii) has the citizen’s engagement in democratisation process contributed to Nigeria’s political-economic development? iii) how can the democratisation process be positioned for improved political and economic development in Nigeria?

## Literature Review

### *Democratisation Challenges in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic*

Democratisation denotes spreading democracy as a form of government alongside deepening its principles, ethos, ideals and beliefs in a polity, expected to be a growing experience as years of practice increase. But democratic governance rarely thrives in a country without a hurdle or impediments across the world, hence Nigeria’s experience is not an exception. While some of the problems bedeviling the Country democracy are somewhat common to many democracies, especially in developing states the intensity of their manifestation appears unparallel. The hurdles to democratic consolidation include leadership problems, political apathy, election misconduct, corruption, rising civil strife, poverty, unemployment, godfatherism, insecurity and human rights abuses amongst others. Nevertheless, this study interrogates four critical and most pronounced issues of leadership, political apathy, corruption and human rights.

Firstly, the challenge of challenge of good leadership has become almost a recurrent decimal in Nigeria’s fourth republic democratic dispensation. It is noteworthy that the twin benefits of freedom and better welfare are central to other expectations of democracy from the citizenry, whose onus rests heavily on the elected leaders. Moreover, effective leadership is key to the meaningful development of every

nation. In the case of Nigeria, Ake and Olowojolu (2016, p. 3) aver that “poor leadership is the major challenge and source of Nigeria’s predicament and socio-economic crises.” This implies that political leadership is a bane to national development. And, hence making the below-expectation outcomes of the democratic fourth republic be critiqued by some Nigerians as not yielding dividends due to good leadership deficit.

Meanwhile, it requires people’s support for leaders to prosper but this can only be obtained via good communication between them, transparency and accountability of the latter to the former. But, Onodugo (2016) opined that some leaders adduce many reasons for not being effective, but none of such reasons excuse them from the obligation and that of being responsive to demands. It is believed that leaders who listen are known to respond well to criticism and crisis, build more loyalty and increase the morale of the followers aside from a clear demonstration of caring about the ruled.

Furthermore, the submission of Ogunmilade et al (2017) that the recent call for restructuring is intensifying in Nigeria because of the economic hardship and the failure of the current ruling political party, All Progressive Congress (APC) to fulfil her promises and manifestoes. It can be inferred that the major challenge of the democratic governance in Nigeria begins with the process of electing public officers into leadership positions because candidates’ campaign promises and political party manifestoes end up translating into failed hopes to the populace at the end of the tenure. Hence, it is not only instructive but also telling of the degraded level of leadership performance in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized by a fast-paced political and socio-economic advancement.

Political apathy is one of the banes of democracy in Nigeria, which is a lack of interest or positivity towards politics or its activities. The various forms of political apathy are interest apathy, voters’ apathy and information apathy. Many reasons account for citizen’s indifference to political activities as revealed in the literature and advanced by scholars. Notable among them, according to Zakari and Abubakar, (2018), are: the belief that voters’ vote would not count in an election, hatred for some politicians, sometimes based on character failure, perception of incompetent party candidates, distrust for past or incumbent government, biased or poor media report of political news, ballot snatching, result in falsification, election misconduct and electoral malpractices.

In addition, electoral malpractices take different forms in Nigeria including putting pressure on voters against their choice, vote buying, underage voting and electoral officers’ partisanship. Although electoral laws are amended to address some of these antidemocratic practices, the practical experience seems not to concur with

having a significant mitigating effect. This resonates and underlines Azinge's (2004) submission that the electoral process and political party system are corruption-ridden and not sufficiently participatory. Implicitly, electoral process corruption influences political apathy and promotes political corruption in Nigeria.

Also, corruption has been identified as an impediment to democratic advancement in Nigeria. It is a concept applicable to different sectors such as political, economic, socio-cultural and other contexts employed. In virtually all sectoral analyses, corruption has been leading, amongst other challenges confronting Nigeria's developmental aspiration, especially on the political and economic fronts. Corruption, an act of compromising an acceptable standard of operation for personal gratification, has constituted a huge stumbling block on the path of both public and private sectors delivering acceptable performance.

The political sector has witnessed the manifestation of corruption in areas of internal party management, electioneering process and governance. It is noteworthy that political party running and internal democracy or election is continually been hijacked by moneybag politicians to circumvent due process and promote godfatherism, elections umpire representatives are a lure to compromise free and fair election or to tinker with results while ethnic affiliation, nepotism, party patronage and other sentimental or parochial considerations often influence national policy choice and implementation.

Offering insight into the driving forces of corruption in Nigeria, Olu-Adeyemi (2020) asseverates that corruption transcends officialdom or a mere perversion of good but what excites citizens, making them instrumental to the festering of corruption or receptive to corrupt politicians, when rules defining the institutional basis of social, political and economic exchange are not enforced. In this sense, some Nigerians are accomplices to political corruption and, as such, partners in political decadence and socio-economic underdevelopment.

Another problem of the democratisation process in Nigeria is the records of human rights abuses. Before the return to civilian rule in May 1999, the human rights situation in Nigeria was poor and excruciating due to military regimes' minimum regard for human rights. However, since the advent of democracy, the situation has improved but seemingly not meeting the global best practices or standards, perhaps due to challenges of insecurity and poverty. The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights report on Human Rights (CDHR, 2022) captures human rights compromise in Nigeria as abuse of rights to life and the death penalty, extra-judicial killings including assassinations, arbitrary arrest and detention, government neglect of avoidable disaster and maladministration of the prison system. The bulk of recorded



abuses are perpetrated by overzealous police officers, military and paramilitary personnel which, consequently, is battering the country's image in the international community.

As a corollary to the above, the poor international perception hampers inward foreign investment as the state is considered an investment risk. To a larger extent, this has caused disenchantment and disappointment in most Nigerians with the outcomes of the current democratic experience of the Fourth Republic. The declining economic well-being and lack of trust in democratic institutions, processes and political leadership can be appropriately understood and situated in this context (Bullock, 2014). Unfortunately, this development seems to have overshadowed some of the successes associated with the democratic experience of the Fourth Republic.

Nonetheless, democracy remains an essential ingredient for the sustainable political and socio-economic development of desiring nations. Additively, economic progress chance is brightened under a democratic government that is positioned on the path of good governance. Little wonder, Ozdeser & Diner (2019) maintain that democracy is more about delivering the gains of the civil rule of economic growth that in turn strengthens the democratic system.

### *Nigeria's Economic Development Trend*

Nigeria's economy is historically tied and influenced by colonialism, more importantly, towards facilitating the attainment of a European exploitative economic agenda. While cash crops such as cocoa, groundnuts and palm oil are exported to sustain the burgeoning industrial sector poll and commercial taxes were deployed to fund the local administrative system. This succeeded the illegitimate slave trading epoch. It is interesting to note, as posited by Idowu (2020), that, though the country's foreign earnings experienced a positive trend, the diversion of agricultural production from food to cash crops backfired on local food security, making the country move from food self-sufficiency economy to joining the league of food-dependent nations.

However, after independence and the discovery of oil, which become the mainstay of the economy providing over 70 percent of the national income from then till date, Nigerians seem ready to fix this flaw and create an independent, service-based, industrialized economy in their country (Metu, Nwogwugwu & Okeyika, 2018). Promoting import substitution industrialization, nationalization of foreign firms and agriculture revolution programs, including the Green Revolution and operation Feed the Nation, were among policy measures employed to redress the ensuing colonialist economic ripples, and to recalibrate it for development.

Meanwhile, the economic collapse in the late 1970s and early 1980s contributed to substantial discontent and conflict between ethnic communities and nationalities, adding to the political pressure leading to the expelling of more than two million illegal workers in early 1983 and May 1985 (Assibong, 2016). This is a reverse gear towards ensuring regional integration in the sub-continent of West Africa under the country's leadership. And, since economic growth is crucial for a nation's efforts to combat poverty through increasing employment opportunities, raising wages, delivering better goods and services, and utilizing cutting-edge production technologies (Prabha, 2020),

Nigeria's government resorted to seeking foreign assistance to stimulate or reflate the economy. Therefore, the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) structural adjustment programme (SAP) was adopted to this effect, though after subscribing to its conditions, more importantly, that of implementing economic liberalization especially privatization or commercialization of public enterprises. In consequent, some of the public assets such as the National Electricity Power Authority were commercialized in 1989 and privatized in 2013, increasing the national income, reducing government expenditure and better positioning the country for a private sector capitalist-driven economy.

The impact of economic development measures and policies, especially the SAP, on the economy is argued by political economy experts or scholars to be negative, predicating their stance on the rising inflation, high rate of unemployment, food shortage, depreciating currency value amongst other economic indices that have been characterizing the economy from 1986 to the present time. For instance, Adegboyo, Keji & Fasina (2021) found that the macroeconomic fiscal, trade, and monetary policies enacted from 1985 to 2021 have had both positive and negative effects on the economy. This suggests that post-colonial leaders have failed to transform the economy from its colonial roots of dependency to a more self-sufficient model. Instead, there has been a shift from an agricultural base to an economy heavily reliant on oil, despite efforts to implement both domestic and imported economic policies aimed at revitalization, even under democratic governance since 1999.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Development democratic theory is employed to underpin this research. The thrust of the development democratic theory propounded by Tumin (1982) is that democracy promotes state development and enhances people's welfare, especially in Africa. He states further that democracy accommodates citizens' participation, engagement and discharge of civic duties keeping them abreast of national issues, deepening their understanding, appreciating governance and making them more civil and responsible.



Implicitly, democracy demands active, responsive and responsible leadership and followership for optimum positive deliverables.

While the theory appears more relevant to African and developing climes of the world as new practitioners of democracy, Tumin's research interest in developmental studies and first-hand experience as a lecturer at the University of Ibadan and the University of Zambia would have influenced his perspective. In other words, the theorist's academic background has broadened his perspective on democratic governance, tenets and expected outcomes and underscored development as its overall objective irrespective of the state's level of development.

However, the practical implications of this theory in the context of Nigeria's democratic journey, which is fraught with political and economic hurdles, appear to diverge significantly from its foundational assumptions. For instance, the prevalence of ethnic favoritism, nepotism, and similar issues undermining democratic stability and economic progress indicate a stark contradiction to the principles of the development democracy theory. Consequently, achieving the main goals of political and socio-economic advancement associated with democracy appears increasingly difficult.

While every democratic state faces its own unique or common challenges, the capacity to navigate these issues without jeopardising the fundamental goals of democracy is a significant advantage. For example, the attack on the United States Congress in 2021 by violent groups, despite being a well-established and exemplary democracy for many, including Nigeria, posed a serious threat. However, the crisis was managed in a way that preserved the nation's democratic and economic integrity. Is it possible to achieve a similar outcome in Nigeria? This study will explore the applicability of this theory within the Nigerian context.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

An explanatory sequential survey design is adopted for this research. It is one of the mixed-method variants that employ a survey as the first data source but complement its analysis with an interview or any other qualitative data sources. In other words, data collection and analysis are conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance the validity and robustness of the findings.

### ***Population of the Study***

Considering the objectives of this study, virtually every Nigerian above forty years old possesses the experience to answer questions raised. However, experts' knowledge is the prime consideration here, informing the choice of the senior staff of the National Institute of Socio-Economic Research (NISER), Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria alongside inputs through interview targeting Economics and Political Science Departments, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State and Oduduwa University, Ife, Osun State, respectively.

Though the NISER staff population is not specified on their website, a senior administrative staff is approximated to be 150, excluding the low-rank officers. Hence this figure is used for sampling determination for the administration of the questionnaire while seven academics were interviewed.

### ***Sampling Size and Technique***

The Krejci and Morgan sample size table is used for sample determination. From table 1, a 108-sample size is required for a 150-population size. Also, the sampling technique employed is a purposeful sampling technique because the employees at NISER are fitting as experts for the study and hence purposively chosen.

### ***Research Validity and Reliability***

Facial validity is used to validate the appropriateness of the questionnaire and interview questions. Senior members of the faculty from the Political Science departments at Caleb University, were used to review the questions alongside statisticians. Also, scholars' acceptability of the sampling table and the mixed-method design strength of minimising quantitative and qualitative errors validate the instruments for the data collection.

**Table 1.** Table for Determining Sample Size of known Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370

65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384
<b>Note: N is Population Size; n S is Sample Size</b>									

Source: Krejcie & Morgan 1970

## Data Presentation and Analysis

In analyzing the data collected, each response obtained is analysed using the simple descriptive statistics. The summary is presented in tables. And, for ease of response analysis, the strongly agreed (SA) and agreed (A) were merged as positive responses while responses under strongly disagreed (SD) and disagreed (D) were merged to represent negative responses. The striking and relevant interview responses are also used to complement the quantitative data results. Meanwhile, out of 108 questionnaire administered at NISER, 100 was retrieved representing a 93 per cent return rate.

The formula used for the descriptive analysis is presented here. The highest point in the Likert scale – the lowest point of the levels used for the five-point Likert scale was adopted for this study. The responses were on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly disagreed, 4 = disagree and undecided = 0. Therefore, an addition of the strongly agreed and agreed or strongly disagreed and disagreed equals the total percentage of agreed and disagreed percentages of the responses, respectively. A percentage aggregate between 100-70 is considered significant, 69-50 moderate, 49-30 low and 29-1 very low. Upon this simple percentage, grading is inference to arrive at the finding for each question and provide answers to the three research questions predicated.

## Research Question One

This subsection (table 2) shows the way respondents responded to each of the questions asked concerning the research question one which is: has the democratisation process facilitated Nigeria's political and economic development?

**Table 2: Democratisation Process and Nigeria's Political and Economic Development**

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
1	The Federal government samples citizens' opinions on economic policies which facilitates sound economic management and development.	10	27	5	4	54	100

	Percentage	10%	27%	5%	4%	54%	100%
2	The Federal government does not assess economic policies' impact through citizen feedback mechanism to advance development in Nigeria.	4	2	4	12	78	100
	Percentage	4%	2%	4%	12%	78%	100%
3	There is a political party's internal democracy that is enhancing political development in Nigeria	6	5	8	11	70	100
	Percentage	6%	5%	8%	11%	70%	100%
4	The Independent National Electoral Commission has the capacity for electioneering reforms to improve the political system in Nigeria.	8	82	7	1	3	100
	Percentage	8%	82%	7%	1%	3%	100%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows how the respondents responded to questions addressing research objective one. 10% of the respondents strongly agreed with the question that the Federal government's sampling of citizen's opinions on economic policy facilitates sound economic management and development, 27% agreed, 5% of the respondents were undecided, 4% of the respondents disagreed and 54% strongly disagreed.

Adding the strongly agreed and agreed percentages together and strongly disagreed with disagreed as well, the result implies that 37 percent disagreed while 58 percent agreed that the government peoples' opinions are sampled. It can be inferred that the disagreed percentage is moderate and hence citizens are not consulted by the government before proceeding to formulate economic policies affecting the populace. This finding is affirmed by respondent two interviewed who avowed thus:

realistically, opinions of citizens have no influence on economic policy needed to facilitate economic management and development because they have a strong displeasure for entertaining progressive ideas of the common man.

The second question borders on the assessment of government economic policies through citizen's feedback mechanisms and whether it advances development. The response indicates that 4% strongly agreed, 2% agreed, 4% are undecided, 12% disagreed while 78% strongly disagreed. The second question, after summing up the agreed and strongly agreed and disagreed and strongly disagreed, reveals that 90 percent of the respondents disagreed that citizens' feedback mechanism enhances development and 6 percent agreed. The disagreed percentage is significant suggesting that the Nigerian government do not seek citizens' feedback in assessing economic policies' impact. Corroborating this outcome, interview respondent 1 asserts that:

Nigerians have shown their disapproval or negative effects of bad economic policies through many indices, for instance, strike actions, protests bothering on hardship etc. yet the Nigerian Government has never seemed to have development plan.

Question three asked if the political parties' internal democracy in Nigeria enhances political development. 6% of the respondents strongly agreed, 5% agreed, 8% were undecided, 11% strongly disagreed and 70% disagreed with the questions. Summing the agreed and strongly agreed totaled 11 per cent and disagreed and strongly disagreed is 81 per cent. The agreed percentage is significant, indicating that there is low or poor political internal democracy, contributing to political underdevelopment in Nigeria. Interview respondent 3 supported this outcome by stating that:

political parties do not have a fair structure of internal democracy, therefore, it does not contribute to a party or political process growth.

Based on the above submissions, it is safe to conclude that political parties in Nigeria are not helpful to the democratisation process in Nigeria because they are bereft of democratic internal structure and tenets.

In response to question 4, 8% strongly agreed, 82% agreed, 7% are undecided, 1% strongly disagreed and 2 % disagreed that the Independent National Electoral Commission has the capacity to engender electioneering reforms to improve the political system in Nigeria. With 89 percent agreed (adding agreed and strongly agreed) and 3 percent of totaled disagreed and strongly disagreed, it means that the INEC can foster political development through improved electioneering reforms. This implies that INEC is underperforming its role as election umpire either due to staff or resources poor capacity and, possibly both. Interview respondent 1 buttresses this result by asserting that:

using the most recent gubernatorial election in Ondo state, it is quite obvious that the current electoral body can do better as regards improving the electioneering or political system in Nigeria. All things being equal, deploying technology to help will advance the INEC course.

Hence, one can infer that political development can be achieved through INEC reforms, especially via capacity enhancement.

Based on the economic – citizen-centered policy and its impact assessment – and political indicators (political party internal democracy and INEC capacity for managing democratisation process) analysed, it is obvious that the country's

democratisation process is faulty or weakened because of this disconnection between the citizens and government in the area of economic policies management and the underperformance of democratic players, political parties and INEC. Both have contributed to national political and economic underdevelopment. This finding concurs with Azinge (2014) and Ogunmilade et al (2017) that the corrupt electoral process and political party discourage political participation and the recent demand for restructuring is borne out of the failing economy respectively.

## Research Question Two

The second research question is: has the citizen's engagement in the democratisation process contributed to Nigeria's political and economic development? This is shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Citizen's Engagement in the Democratisation Process**

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
5	Nigerian membership of political parties deepens democracy and political Development.	5	5	7	78	5	100
	Percentage	5%	5%	7%	78%	5%	100%
6	Nigeria has experienced transparent elections that promote citizen participation.	2	3	2	23	70	100
	Percentage	2%	3%	2%	23%	70%	100%
7	Freedom of speech enhances citizen's contributions to political and economic development	27	68	0	3	2	100
	Percentage	27%	68%	0%	3%	2%	100%
8	Nigerian's voting population is an encouraging contribution to political and economic development.	18	72	3	4	3	100
	Percentage	18%	72%	3%	4%	3%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

For the fifth question, 5% strongly agreed that Nigerian's membership of political parties deepens democracy and political development, 5% agreed, 7% were undecided, 78% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed. By summation, 10 per cent agreed while 83 disagreed, significant and implying that chunks of Nigerians of voting age did not belong to any political party, minimizing citizen partisanship with its attendant low contribution to growing political parties, especially internal democracy. Interview respondent 7 affirms this finding by stating that:

of course, the number of voters, judging by the new wave of political participation, have witnessed massive involvement of Nigerians.



Interrogating whether transparent elections in Nigeria promote citizens' participation, 2% strongly agreed, 3% agreed, 2% were undecided, 23% disagreed and 70% strongly agreed. Going by the rule of addition, 5 percent disagreed while 93 disagreed. This is significant and suggests that elections in Nigeria are not transparent or advance citizens' political participation. Virtually all interview respondents agreed to the essentiality of transparent election to the sustenance of democracy but respondent 4 affirmatively responded thus:

yes! And this is key to good governance.

The seventh question asked if freedom of speech enhances citizen's contributions to political and economic development. While 27% strongly agreed, 68% agreed, none of the respondents was undecided, 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 2%. Hence, 95 per cent agreed and 5 percent disagreed after summation of agreed and disagreed respectively. The agreed percentage is significant, meaning that freedom of speech is enjoyed and is improving citizen's political participation in Nigeria. Respondent 2 interviewed also noted that:

freedom of speech is an essential ingredient for citizen's contribution to politics

The last question in this section asked whether Nigerian's voting population is an encouraging contribution to political and economic development. 18% of the respondents strongly agreed, 72% of the respondents agreed, 3% were undecided, 4% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed with this. The percentage of the agreed is 90 and disagreed 6 percent after addition. It means that Nigerian voters' turnout is good and is boosting the democratic process. Nevertheless, Respondent 4 while attesting to this fact also suggests that voter education should be improved when he noted thus:

yes, but citizens should be educated more on elections.

Arising from the above analysis, research question two can be answered based on the aggregation of answers that Nigerians population engages in political processes of freedom of speech and voting but needs significant improvement in party politics participation and transparent voting system to entrench robust and admirable political process that would guarantee enduring economic development. The finding is in agreement with Bullock's (2014) submission that a lack of citizens' trust in political institutions weakens engagement. However, it contrasts the development democratic theory (Tumin, 1982) assumption that citizens' engagement in government enables participation development.

### Research Question Three

The third research question is: how can the democratisation process be positioned for improved political and economic development in Nigeria? This is shown in table 4.

**Table 4:** *Repositioning the Democratic Process for Improved Political and Economic Development*

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
9	The perception of having free and fair elections would enhance citizens political participation and development.	32	67	1	0	0	100
	Percentage	32%	67%	1%	0	0	100 %
10	Improved Political culture devoid of ethnic, religious and sectional interest consideration would improve political and economic development.	24	74	0	0	2	100
	Percentage	24%	74%	0	0	2%	100 %
11	Domesticated political and economic policies would enhance development.	23	73	3	1	0	100
	Percentage	23%	73%	3%	1%	0	100 %
12	Citizen's welfare-centered economic programs would improve development.	27	70	3	0	0	100
	Percentage	27%	70%	3%	0	0	100%

*Source: Field Survey, 2023*

The ninth question asked if the perception of having free and fair elections would enhance citizen's political participation and development. 32% of the respondents strongly agreed, 67% agreed, 1% were undecided, none of the respondents disagreed and none strongly disagreed. Therefore, 94 percent concurred to the need to have free and fair polls in Nigeria which is significant. This can be made possible by stakeholders including citizens, political parties and INEC. Interview respondent 3 observed further thus:

having a free fair election would give voters participative security which would lead to a huge turnout, and the only assurance of a great turnout is knowing that the election would be free and fair, devoid of attacks and any form of electoral violence.

24% of the respondents strongly agreed that an improved political culture devoid of ethnic, religious and sectional interest consideration would improve political and economic development while 74% agreed, none was undecided or disagreed but

2% strongly disagreed. Apparently, 98 percent agreed, which is significant, that sentiments should be downplayed in Nigerian politics to pave the way for meritocracy to attain economic advancement. The fourth interviewee asserted thus:

national Interest rather than ethnic interest will improve political and economic development.

The eleventh question is about if domesticated political and economic policies would enhance development. 23% of respondents strongly agreed, 73% agreed, 3% were undecided, 1% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. The percentage of the agreed is significant at 97 percent, indicating that national political and economic policies should have internal consideration and inputs as well as be domestically driven or implemented. In agreement with this, interview respondent 2 noted that:

truly the government needs to look inward at the nature and peculiarities of our economic situation.

The concluding question inquired whether citizens' welfare-centered economic programmes would improve development. 27% of the respondents strongly agreed, 70% of the respondents agreed, 3% were undecided, and there is no strongly disagreed respondent. While the agreed percentage is significant at 97 percent addition, it also implies that economic policies should be geared towards promoting Nigerians' well-being as occupying the central position in national political and economic development. Also, the following were the interview respondents' similar views on this question.

Respondent 1 said:

it will be the remarkable turnaround needed to install citizens' trust in the government.

Respondent 3 submitted that:

citizen's welfare-centered programmes will raise citizens above the poor standard of living, it will also improve our human standard on the Human Development Index (HDI). With citizens welfare, the HDI of Nigerians will be improved and this would also transcend to improved development in all ramifications.

Respondent 6 observed that:

with adequate care of the citizens, more participation by the populace will lead to improved development.

Given the findings above, it can be inferred that the democratisation process would improve to enhance the political and economic development via free and fair elections, national interest-driven politics, citizens'-centered domestic political and economic policies. The finding aligns with Adegboyo, Keji and Fasina's (2021) finding that the macro-economic policies from 1985 to 2021 have hurt Nigeria's economy but contrasts with Ozdeser and Diner's (2019) submission that democracy enhances economic growth.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this research provides empirical answers to the research questions that first, the country's democratisation is vitiated by the chasm existing between the citizens and government in the management of the economic policies and the poor performance of democratic leading actors or players (especially political parties and INEC). Second, Nigerian's participation in the political processes through freedom of speech and voting is encouraging but requires improving in party political involvement and aggressive promotion of a transparent voting system if a political process that would engineer a sustainable economic progression. Third, the country has the capacity for an improved democratic process that would catalyze political and economic development if free and fair elections are ensured, national interest is placed above the ethnic or parochial ones and citizens' welfare-driven policies are prioritized. However, to make this lofty trajectory a lasting experience in Nigeria, the following recommendations are canvassed.

The INEC should be empowered with the required financial and human capital as well as to operate as an independent umpire, not just by name but by actions that would birth positive citizens' perceptions and facilitate election transparency, and acceptability. Similarly, INEC should be more proactive and diligent in discharging the role of political party supervision, and more importantly, internal democratic practices and funding to encourage citizens' membership and reduce money-bag politicians' overbearing influence on party management while not hesitating to wield the big stick of law through prosecution or deregistering erring individuals or political party.

Also, the electoral act or relevant constitutional provisions for elections should be strengthened through an amendment to deactivate ethnic, religious and other sentiment-based politics in Nigeria. This would drastically reduce policy-making and implementation biases aside from aiding citizens-centered welfare policy direction simultaneously. In return, this would endear Nigerians interest in political participation.

In addition, more awareness of the important role citizen plays in the electioneering process that would ensure the emergence of credible or popular leaders cascading into good governance imbued with the capacity to deliver a rounded political and economic development should be promoted. To achieve this, INEC should partner with civil societies, media (print, electronic and social) and government agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to widen the publicity of election and political information dissemination to the populace and keep them abreast of trends or development.

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