

# **Can Democracy Survive Again in Nigeria? A Historical Perspective and The Question of Sustainability.**

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## **Abstract**

The main reason Nigeria is still trapped in the morass of economic, and technological backwardness is because Nigeria has not got it right, politically. Examining Nigeria's pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial and democratic rules since 1999 will be very essential and crucial in finding out possible ways to make democracy in Nigeria to survive again. It is obvious that 2026 marks exactly 66 years since independence and 27 years since Nigeria entered into democratic rule. Since 1960/1999 till date, Nigeria had conducted seven back to back elections, and by January 2027, it will become seven general elections conducted in Nigeria. However, these elections were faced with massive violence, killings, abductions, destruction of people's lives and property and other forms of electoral malpractices. As a result of this, Nigeria, the giant of Africa continues to grapple with political instability, insecurity, poverty, injustice and social inequality due to weak political institutions that paves way for corruption, elite domination and exploitation. Employing the methods of hermeneutics and critical analysis, this paper argues that the principles of democracy which are accountability, rule of law, transparency have not been practiced in Nigeria's government and elections since Nigeria entered into democratic rule. The paper submits that it is only when the politicians take proper study of historical foundation of Nigeria's politics, gets a morally upright electoral officer who is incorrupt, adheres to the principle of separation of powers, elect competent, visionary and patriotic leaders, have proper training for their leaders, and engage their citizens to participate fully in politics, then we can start taking about the survival of democracy in Nigeria.

## **Keyword**

Democracy, Colonialism, Independence, Politics

## **Introduction**

The challenges and instabilities confronting Nigeria is simply the "failure of leadership". Nigeria, a country once the giant of Africa has been ranked the 12<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world by gross domestic product per capita in 2025, placing it among the bottom of 15 out of 50 countries surveyed, according to new data from the International Monetary Fund published by Visual Capitalist<sup>1</sup>. This ranking shows the persistent economic hardship faced by its population despite being the major oil producer. The questions that propel this research are: is democracy in Nigeria entirely difference from democracy practiced in other countries? Does it mean that Nigerian leaders are ignorant of poverty, instabilities, corruption and poor governance facing Nigeria? What is wrong with democracy in Nigeria? Can democracy still survive in Nigeria? To give answers to these questions, this research will critically examine past systems of government beginning from the pre-colonial era down to this present democratic rule, this will go a long way to examine the root factors/causes of poor governance in Nigeria and the possible ways to fix democracy back.

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<sup>1</sup> Azeez Kareem (2025) "Nigeria, 12<sup>th</sup> Poorest Country by GDP in 2025" in guardian.ng

### **Pre-colonial rule in Nigeria**

Pre-colonial Nigeria had three major political structures: centralized, decentralized, and theocratic systems. The centralized political structures were defined by hierarchical governance. The leadership was vested in monarchs, kings, or emirs. We shall examine these political structures of pre-colonial political rule under these tribes; the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba, the Ibo and the Benin.

#### **The Hausa-Fulani emirate system in northern Nigeria**

This group provides a quintessential example of centralized political structures in Nigeria. The establishment of the Fulani Emirates in the Northern part of Nigeria was as a result of the conquest of the already existing old Hausa Kingdom by the Fulanis in the Holy war led by Usman Dan Fodio. In every state conquered, the former Hausa ruler was replaced by a Fulani emir. The whole former Hausa kingdom was organized into Emirates; Sokoto and Gwandu. Emirs became the apex leaders who wielded political, military, and religious authority, administering their territories based on Sharia law. They controlled the economic life of the people in the emirate, raised taxes and maintained law and order within their emirates.

#### **The Yoruba Kingdoms in Southwestern Nigeria**

This group particularly Oyo and Ife demonstrated a highly sophisticated centralized political structure in Nigeria. The Alafin of Oyo was the first lordship and ruler of Yoruba Empire before the various inter kingdom wars broke out which made the Oni of Ife the lordship and spiritual head of the Yorubas rather than the king of Oyo. The Oba is made out of all the male sons who are able to trace their descent from the first king that established the kingdom. The Oba is both the spiritual and political leader, and symbolized the unity and identity of the Yoruba people. Oba could not authoritatively take decisions on majority of issues without the previous consultation and approval of his senior chiefs, and this could be termed democracy in a traditional way.

#### **Decentralized Government in pre-colonial rule in Nigeria**

This period during pre-colonial time was egalitarian and communal, with power dispersed among councils of elders, age grades, and community groups. Leadership in this centralized governance was based on consensus, merit and tradition.

#### **The Igbo traditional system in Southeastern Nigeria**

Igbo society provides a prime example of decentralized governance in Nigeria. Waidi succinctly explains that the pre-colonial Igbo political system was republican, democratic, fragmented and segmented in nature.<sup>2</sup> This is because there were no permanent chiefs in Igbo land at the time those who hold post of authority got such authorities from the people. In Igbo society, governance was primarily organized around village assemblies or councils, where elders, age-grade grouped, and titled individuals such as Ozo holders played significant roles. In each of the families constituting a village among the Ibos, there was usually a head, holding the Ofo title for the family. All the Ofo title holders of all the families in the village formed the council of elders.

Another important group of people that could wield some political authority within the village or a group of villages were the Ozo title-holders. The Ozo title holders, as custodians of societal values, exemplified

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<sup>2</sup> Waidi .A. "Ibo Precolonial Political System" in Nigeria History. 2019, [www.Worldpress.com](http://www.Worldpress.com)

leadership rooted in merit, accountability, and service to the community. This system emphasized inclusivity and a shared sense of responsibility, fostering harmony and mutual respect among community members.

### **The People of Tiv of Central Nigeria**

This group also adhered to a segmentary, communal governance structure. The system adopted by the Tiv people was based on kinship and clan relationships, with elders and lineage representatives serving as the primary decision-makers.

The leaders of this tribe were never appointed but were recognized for their wisdom and the ability to resolve conflicts by adhering to the traditions.

### **Theocratic political leadership in Pre-colonial rule in Nigeria**

In theocratic leadership in Nigeria, rulers were both temporal authorities and spiritual guides. So, it was a unique fusion of political and religious leadership. Religion was seen as the central in shaping administrative practices, societal norms, and judicial systems, ensuring that moral and divine principles guided governance.

### **The Kanem-Borno Empire of Northeastern Nigeria under Theocratic leadership**

This tribe under theocratic leadership in pre-colonial Nigeria was epitomized by the role of the Mai. Mai served as both the political leader and spiritual head of the state. There was a widespread of Islamic principles under this leadership. The Mai's dual role as king and spiritual leader solidified his authority and brings the people under a common religious and political identity, paving room for stability, unity and cohesion within the empire.

### **Nupe Kingdom under Theocratic Leadership in Pre-colonial Nigeria**

The ruler of Nupe people, Etsu Nupe, integrated Islamic teachings into governance, combining religious ideals with political thought. This combination of political and spiritual leadership reinforced the ruler's legitimacy and underscored the role of religion as a unifying force within the society. While religious leaders played significant roles in advising the monarchy, Islamic law influenced the kingdom's judicial and administrative systems.

In summary, in pre-colonial Nigerian political systems, we discovered that although the political systems were diverse but yet they were united by a profound integration of religion and governance. Secondly, centralized, decentralized and theocratic leadership in pre-colonial Nigeria coexisted, reflecting the complexity and richness of Nigerian societies. Finally, there were orderliness, unity, love, loyalty, respect and stability among the people before colonialism disrupted the system.

### **Colonial Administration in Nigeria**

Colonial administration in Nigeria was established by the British from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until October 1, 1960, when Nigeria got her independence. Colonial rule was introduced by Sir Lord Lugard who was referred as the father of indirect rule. He described the system of administration as a "child of necessity". This system administration was introduced first around 1906 in Northern Nigeria when Sir Lord Lugard was the High Commissioner of the Protectorate. Lugard sets out the principles of the administrative system subsequently institutionalized as indirect rule. Local government was to be left in the hands of the traditional chiefs, subject to the guidance of European officers. Ogunfayo rightly says that the mindset

that the British had when claiming Nigeria as a colony was to introduce civilization to a land without it<sup>3</sup>. Thus, he further stresses; as Nigeria had been an integral source for slave trade, and the British were rapidly shifting to anti-slavery outreaches, it was an ideal area for the British to expand in. their ‘civilization’ included bringing Christianity to the land, and Christian missionaries headed this project<sup>4</sup>.

Ogunfayo also points further that ‘civilization also included a transformation of economic system. Thus; The British aimed to expand commerce. They began by setting up an import and export system: exporting raw materials (Nigeria was especially rich in these) and importing finished goods. This required some sort of infrastructure, and the British built roads, railways, ports, etc. they introduced a material/cash currency that matched that of UK. The final step of their economic domination was conditional on Nigerians working for the currency.<sup>5</sup>

Ogunfayo concludes that the most fundamental part of colonization and civilization was the implementation of language. In schools, the government, the church, and commerce, English was enforced.<sup>6</sup> It became the language of the nation and in turn, the language of prestige, and a signal of education and wealth.

The colonization of Nigeria benefitted only the British. They adopted a divide-and-rule policy to prevent any united opposition to its authority, keeping Nigerians separate from one another. They remained in control of everything, especially religion and economy. These exploitation and domination gave rise to the formation of nationalist movements. The Aba women’s riot in 1929 witnessed protests by thousands of Nigerian women against the unfair rule of warrant Chief tribal officials appointed by the colonial government. A number of Nigerians joined other Blacks in various parts of the world to embark on the wider project of Pan- Africanism, which sought to liberate Black people from racism, European domination and as well end indirect rule.

The first Nigerian political party, the Nigerian National Democratic party (NDP) was formed by Herbert Macaulay who was regarded as the “father of modern Nigerian nationalism.” Political leaders resorted to the use of political parties and the media to mobilize millions of Nigerians against the continuation of British rule<sup>7</sup>.

## **Post-Colonial era (Independent Nigeria)**

### **The First Republic**

Nigeria got her independence on October 1, 1960 and became a federal republic on October 1, 1963. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first president and head of Nigeria, while Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Bewa continued as prime minister and head of government. In 1962-63 the mid-West region was created by dividing the Western region. This was in attempt to stave off Nigeria’s long-lasting regional stresses, caused by ethnic competitiveness, educational inequality, and economic imbalance confronting the nation. Despite this division, Nigeria was still segmented into three large geographic regions, the West,

<sup>3</sup> Ogunfayo, M. “The Echoes of Colonialism: To What Extent has Colonization Impacted the way Nigerian Youths view their Culture and Indigenous Language” in Yale Review of International Studies. April, 2025.

Yris.yira.org/Africa/the-echoes-of-colonialism-to-what-extent-has-colonization-impacted-the-way-nigerian-youths-view-their-culture-and-indigenous-language/

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> “Nigeria- Colonial History, Economy, People/ Britannica” <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Nigeria-as-a-colony>

controlled by Yoruba, the east, controlled by Igbo, and the north, controlled by Hausa-Fulani. In January 1966, there was a collapse of order in the west following the fraudulent election of 1965, a group of army officers attempted to overthrow the federal government, and Prime Minister Balewa and two of the regional premiers were assassinated. A military administration was set up under Maj. Gen. Johnson Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi. Ironsi's plan to abolish the regions and impose a unitary government led to anti-Igbo riots in the north. The military intervention worsened the political situation, as the army itself split along ethnic lines. The counter coup in 1966 led to the assassination of Aguiyi-Ironsi who ruled for only six months, and Yakubu Gowon replaced him<sup>8</sup>.

### **Military Rule Under Yakubu Gowon**

In 1967, the military head of Nigeria, Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu rejected Gowon's administration declaring himself president of the Republic of Biafra in protest against Gowon regime and the Igbos massacre in the north. Civil war later broke out, unleashing famine and death in the south-east. In 1967, Nigeria was divided from the three regions into 12 States, this was to undermine future secession attempts. However, Gowon's military regime was described and seen as incompetent, corrupt and failing to guide the country back towards democracy<sup>9</sup>. In 1975, Gowon was later overthrown in a coup, and replaced by Gen. Murtala Mohammed. He was then assassinated in 1975 during an unsuccessful coup attempt which made his deputy Lieutenant General Obasanjo to take over and oversaw Nigeria's transition to democracy.

### **The Second Republic**

After the civil war, Lieut. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo became head of the government in 1976. He pursued Mohammed's desire to return the country to civilian rule. A parliamentary system was promulgated to replace the British-style. All the registered political parties that emerged promised to improve education, provide welfare and rebuild the economy, but some parties used political power as an opportunity to gain access to public treasuries and distribute privileges to their followers. This made the members of the public to become angry and openly challenged the relevance of a democracy that could not produce leaders who would improve their lives. Shehu Shagari won narrowly won the 1979 presidential election, and was reelected president in 1983 could not end the political crisis and continuing economic decline, the military seized the opportunity to stage a coup on December 31, 1983 that brought Maj. Gen. Muhammad Buhari to power.

### **The Second Period of Military Rule in Nigeria, 1983-99**

In 1983, Gen. Mohammadu Buhari came into power. His regime declared a 'War Against Indiscipline' (WAI) following the troubles of the Second Republic and the declining economy. The government popularity began to wane when the War against indiscipline was extended to those who had no hands for social decay. This led to bloodless coup in 1985, and Gen. Ibrahim Babangida came to power. It was Babangida who supported a return to civilian government in 1986. Although he worked to undermine the process in order to retain power. In 1992, Babangida voided presidential primary elections, and banned all the candidates from politics. Later in 1992, the election was held and M.K.O. Abiola won the presidential election, but Babangida annulled the results before it was announced officially. This forced him out of power in August 1993. An interim National Government was instituted by Ernest Shonekan and Gen. Sani Abacha overthrew it in November reinstating military rule. Abacha used excessive force and

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<sup>8</sup> CHATHAM HOUSE "Democracy in Nigeria – International Affairs Think Tank". June, 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/democracy-nigeria>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

violence to attain his ambition. It was under Abacha's corrupt leadership that Nigeria became a pariah nation.<sup>10</sup> Nigeria In 1994 when Abacha declared himself president, he was arrested and later died in jail in 1998. Abdulsalam Abubakar was appointed to replace following his death in June 1998. Abdulsalam promised to transfer power to civilians. He ended the harassment of political opponents and freed political prisoners.

### **The Return of Civilian Rule in Nigeria (Fourth Republic)**

When Abdulsalam took over after Abacha's death, political activity blossomed as numerous parties were formed. Three parties emerged that were able to contest elections: the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Alliance for Democracy, and the All People's Party<sup>11</sup>.

Olusagun Obasanjo of the PDP, who was the head of state in 1976-79 won the presidential election that took place in February, 1999, and was declared the winner. This was the first civilian- administered elections since Nigeria achieved independence in 1960. The insecurity and domestic unrest that characterized the military regime still manifested in various parts of Nigeria during Obasanjo's administration even after when he was reelected in 2003. There were protests in Niger Delta over high fuel prices and exploitation of their oil without compensation from the government. These protests culminated into coordinated militant action in 2006, which led kidnappings and vandalizing of oil pipe lines.

In 2006, Obasanjo's plan to amend the constitution to allow him to stand for a third term as president was rejected by the senate and Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was selected to stand as the PDP's candidate 2007 presidential election instead of Obasanjo's vice, Atiku Abubakar. Yar'Adua was declared the winner after the election, but the international observers condemned the election, arguing that it was marred by voting irregularities, in spite of these allegations, Yar'Adua was sworn in as president of Nigeria.

Nigeria under Yar'Adua's presidency witnessed poor leadership due to his health issue. This was called into question after he travelled to Saudi Arabia for treatment of heart disease for many months. The controversy surrounding Yar'Adua's prolonged absence made the National Assembly to vote for his vice president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to assume full power and serve as the acting president until Yar'Adua resumes. Yar'Adua never recovered, but died on May 5, 2010 and Jonathan was sworn in as the president the next day. Although, Yar'Adua's presidency was so brief, but it was marked by attempts to foster peace in violence areas, particularly in the Niger Delta. Jonathan's administration witnessed a lot of economic growth, but was characterized with allegations of corruption, insurgency and clashes in northern Nigeria. These security challenges contributed to his defeat in 2015 by another military leader, Buhari.

Due to serious security threats in the country, Nigerians believed that since Buhari was once a military leader that with his military power he can fight corruption, revamp the economy and address security issues in Nigeria. As Ezeador puts, under Mr. Goodluck Jonathan's presidency, the masses were highly intimidated and killed by Boko-Haram insurgency, it was believed that Muhamadu Buhari being an ex-military head of state could combat terrorism as he assured Nigerians in his three points agenda.<sup>12</sup> But, the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Chidimma, E. "Rethinking Muhamadu Buhari's Eight Years Presidency: The Gains and the Drains in a Distressed Nation" in Nigerian Journal of Philosophical Studies. ISSN: ONLINE- 2971-5296 print-2971-5288, VOL.2 NO2

reverse was the case, during Buhari's administration, human right violation, security, kidnappings, killings, unemployment, hunger, hardship and political violence worsened under his two term presidency. Nigerians began to question the change Buhari and APC promised they will bring. In February 2023, presidential election was held and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the flagbearer of APC was declared the winner in a closely contested election against Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi. Ezeador, observes that the 2023 general elections were marred with many shortcomings, starting with the high cost of nomination forms which made some competent and incorrupt candidates to decline<sup>13</sup>. It was the lowest voter turnout in Nigeria's fourth republic- only 24.97 million of the 93.47 million registered voters in Nigeria casted their vote (a turnout of 26.72 per cent). Tinubu during his inauguration on May 29th announced the removal of fuel subsidy to ease pressure on government finances. The fuel subsidy removal has had both positive and negative impacts on Nigerians. Negatively, it has led to increase in prices of things, especially food items as a result of sharp rise in transportation cost. On positive note, the removal of subsidy led to an increase in government revenue<sup>14</sup>.

### **Challenges Facing Democracy in Nigeria since Colonial Administration**

Democracy as a system of government is without doubt the best form of government. It is the only system of government that allows for equality and justice for all. Francis Fukuyama in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* highlights that Democracy is the final form of human government because it successfully balances the inherent tension between the twin principles of liberty and equality<sup>15</sup>. Fukuyama's contention that there is no conceivable ideological rival to liberal democracy still rings true. Nigeria's democracy has been fragile and fluctuating since independence. The problem with democracy in Nigeria lies in the hands of their leaders. It is very unfortunate that since independence till date, Nigeria had not gotten a true leader that will implement the principles of democracy. Instead, Nigerian leaders adopted the system of imposition and domination from their colonizers.

### **Some Factors that affect Democracy in Nigeria**

Civil War: Civil war contributes in weakening Nigeria's democracy during the military era. The conflict helped the military elites on power to hijack oil revenues. The Nigerian political space was militarized by dictatorships who disrupted the flourishing of democratic institutions and culture. The effects of civil war still linger to some parts of the country especially in the south-eastern part of Nigeria where the IPOB, Indigenous People of Biafra are agitating for referendum and accusing the government for neglecting to involve the Igbo political leaders in national leadership. The inability of the government to settle this conflict has resulted to insecurity in the affected states.

Freedom of Speech: Another serious challenge confronting democracy in Nigeria is freedom of speech. Right to speech which is one of the fundamental human rights is been taken for granted in Nigeria. The masses have been seriously intimidated and brutalized due to their ability to speak up. The case of ENDSARS protests in 2020 was an example of the abuse of freedom of speech. Again, incessant arrest of freedom fighters against the freedom of expression is an evidence which shows that Nigerian leaders are against the freedom of expression and not open to public scrutiny. The masses who came out to protest

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October, 2023. Pg.42-65.

<sup>13</sup> Chidimma, E. "Overcoming Electoral Challenges in Nigeria: A Case Study of 2023 General Elections and the Role of INEC" in Amamihe: Journal of Applied Philosophy, ISSN: 1597-0779, Vol. 21, No. 4, 2023. P.16

<sup>14</sup> Prince, A. "Impact of Fuel Subsidy removal in Nigeria" in Sun Connect News. <https://sun-connect.org/impact-of-fuel-subsidy-removal-in-nigeria/>

<sup>15</sup> Francis, F. *The End of History and the Last Man* The Free Press: New York 1992 p.xi

over the unfair treatment they receive from police were massacred by the police and nothing was done to bring those involved in the brutal act to book.

**Leadership Ineffectiveness:** The problem with Nigeria since independent till date is the failure of leadership. Aluko succinctly notes that the plethora of leaders that have spanned the Nigeria leadership ladder are selfish, mediocre, tribal leaders and opportunistic small money-minded people, masquerading as leaders have continued to regenerate in Nigeria<sup>16</sup>. Over time, Nigeria has become a mockery of the so-called “giant of Africa” and an epitome of unproductiveness, ineptitude, mediocre, parochial and ethic-drunk leadership; thus, the preference of self-preservation over national interest continues to undermine Nigeria’s attempt to liberate itself from the clutches of underdevelopment<sup>17</sup>. It is evident that Election rigging since the second republic, during Shagari’s regime has become part of our democratic culture. It’s quite unfortunate that corruption deeds have become moral fabric in Nigeria. What is good is perceived as bad; and bad as good owing to the erosion of moral values among the leaders and the led. Our current leaders still retain the domination attitude our colonizers used to colonize us to govern.

**Elections:** Violence, snatching of ballot papers, assassination, kidnapping, low turnout of voters and result forgery are lingering features of elections in Nigeria. Since the turn of democracy, most elections were not free, fair and credible in spite of huge amount of money mapped out for these elections. The electoral body, INEC saddled with the responsibility of conducting peaceful election has always failed to carry out its functions due to injustice and corruption that characterized the system. In fact, the executive government characterized by the “cabals system” has no direction, no vision, and no agenda for Nigeria. They use money during elections to buy their votes and use their four years tenure to regain back the money they wasted during elections. The legislatures on their own are ineffective. They have failed woefully in providing adequate checks on abuses of power by the executive arm, and this is why the governance process lacks scientism and does not enthrone merit system.

**Justice:** One of the perturbing challenges of democracy in Nigeria has been the inability of the political leaders to adhere to justice in administration of public affairs. This is why elections in Nigeria have not been transparent, credible, free and fair since colonial rule. Nigeria’s judicial system is so weak that law is not meant for the political elites but for the poor masses. It is so compromised to step in and enforce civil liberties. It is only in Nigeria’s judicial system that political class are above the law. They do everything possible to remain on power and continue to extract the resources of the country for their own selfish interest. That is why the “Go to court syndrome” has become the order of the day because the judicial arm which supposed to be the last hope of the common man and the beacon of justice is now mere puppet in the hands of greedy politicians who usurp political power illegally. The case of the governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodimma who was neither the first runner-up, nor the third runner-up, during the 2019 Imo State gubernatorial election and was declared the winner is a typical example.

**Corruption:** Corruption is the greatest Nigeria’s enemy of development and good governance. Nigeria is one of the most corrupt nations in the world today. Corruption in Nigeria is attributed to lack of honest and competent leaders. Nigerian leaders are so corrupt that is why everything in Nigeria always fall apart. Nigerian leaders see politics as a means of getting things done. Nigerian leaders know what to do to fix Nigerian Democracy back, but corruption won’t let them do so. Corruption fuels insecurity and crime.

<sup>16</sup> Aluko, A. (2022) “Democracy and Administration of Social Justice in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of the Fourth Republic” in Open Journal of Political Science Vol.12 No.2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

According to Ojewunmi, corruption is one of the most pervasive types of crime; it fuels transnational crime, waste public resources, destabilizes countries, and impedes good governance<sup>18</sup>. Authoritarian countries and those veering towards authoritarianism increasingly weaponize corruption to perpetuate power at home and undermine democracy around the world. This fact gives an accurate reason why the military governments in Nigeria were deeply rooted in corruption<sup>19</sup>. Abacha's military regime almost turned Nigeria into an authoritarian state. During his administration the corruption practices recorded were unprecedented. It is not an overstatement to say that the insecurity in Nigeria is as a result of corruption and Nigeria's political class contributed to the promotion of corruption to make it normal to carry out the government's official business. The agencies saddled with the responsibility to fight corruption and conduct elections are corruption. The reason our politicians delve into politics today is because they want to embezzle the resources. That is why the rate of cross carpeting from weak parties to strong parties is on its high increase.

### **Ways by which we can strengthen Democracy in Nigeria**

One thing is to discover the problems confronting democracy in Nigeria and another thing is to search for possible ways to address these problems identified or deal with those who manipulated the system<sup>20</sup>. First and foremost, for Nigeria's democracy to be strengthened, we must have a morally upright electoral officer, who is incorruptible. This is a force for the strengthening of Nigeria's democracy. Likewise, our political leaders' adherence to the principle of separation of powers will form a bulwark against the collapse of our democracy<sup>21</sup>. Secondly, it is obvious that our colonizers had hands to the failure of leadership in Nigeria. Their policy of imposition, extortion, domination and divide and rule adopted during the colonial era is still raising its ugly head in Nigerian democratic system. Their target was to extract Nigerian resources, which they succeeded in achieving. Now our leaders today are still replicating the same method the colonizers used to embezzle the country's resources. Their target now is to develop their pockets and not to develop the country.

Again, to end this persistent corruption in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck to fight corruption. INEC, the agency responsible for election must truly examine and prepare the candidates vying for leadership positions. They must ensure that there is a strong academy where these politicians go to receive leadership training. This training will dwell on the study of the history of past leadership and morality, this will go a way to help them know where things fell apart and put up strategies to address the problems. More so, Nigeria's democracy can be strengthened if Law enforcement and security forces devote to constitutional democracy instead of regime security. There should be better quality political parties. Political parties must maintain law and order within them and the incessant cross-carpeting from one party to the other must be seriously looked into. This is because, most politicians who are running up and down from one party to the other are doing so because they want to continue to stay in power so that they will keep on with their corrupt practices. Thus, only competent, visionary, and patriotic political leaders can drive the developmental initiatives in their respective countries to greatness<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel, O. (2025) "Challenges of Corruption on Democratic Governance in Nigeria in the fourth Republic (1999-2024)" in International Journal of Arts and Social Science ISSN: 2581-7922 Vol. 8 Issue 4, April 2025. [www.ijassjournal.com](http://www.ijassjournal.com)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Rodney, W. (2009) How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Panaf Publishing, Inc p. xii.

<sup>21</sup> "Ways by which we can strengthen our democracy" in Business Day May 31, 2023

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

Finally, the three arms of government, namely the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature must act independently of one another. The independence of the judiciary must be seriously maintained and impartial to safeguard our democracy and prevent it from collapse. Nigerian constitution should be tinkered so that it will become unconstitutional to swear in a president-elect or governor-elect whose victory is being challenged in the court. In other words, the swearing in of present and governors should be done after courts have disposed of the suits challenging their victories.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have carefully examined governance system in Nigeria starting from the colonial era till date. The facts remains that Nigeria got it wrong politically due to some factors, namely, colonization and corruption which have hindered the growth of our democracy and made it to collapse. However, to strengthened our democracy and prevent it from collapsing, all hands must be on deck to make democracy to work again. The electoral officer must be incorrupt, the politicians should attend leadership training, the three arms of government must act independently and finally, the constitution should be rewritten.

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