

TODAY'S POLITICAL ACTORS IN NIGERIA, AND THE DIALECTICS OF PEACEFUL AND FAIR FUTURE ELECTIONS

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We shall begin by stating that 'election', one of the appurtenances of 'government' that lay claim to being 'democratic', (irrespective of structural mutations) is strictly a human endeavour within the domain of political activities. It remains a veritable centrum in the whole gamut of the processes and activities for putting in place 'governance' in many modern states, (albeit moral communities). By its nature, it is an easy prey for perversion such that it can even be made arid of its ideals in some societies where it is assumed as being adopted as method for instituting governments and governance, depending on the nature and characters of the dominant class in power. Our contention here is simply that, it's fundamental ideal as modus for enthroning governments that could be assumed to be 'preferred' by majority of rational individuals (that registered for voting) within a specific geopolitical space, including making it possible to identify (specific numbers of) individuals presumably preferred by the 'majority' to be saddled with the responsibility of governance, stands the risk of easily being compromised to the point of 'achieving' blatant negation of the ideal(s).; and this ofcourse equally depends

on the characters of principal stakeholders involved in the conduct of elections.

Thus, we must quick to know that at any point 'election' (albeit election matters) is to be made real in any society, we must expect what in our view amount to some structural inevitabilities in the sense that the implementation and actualization of all requirements and processes within the gamut of the totality of election related matters will largely reflect the totality of the nature, characters and direction of the cherished 'value', of the aggregate of those involved in the processes, particularly those that control the relevant institutions that are directly involved in electoral matters, with voting here accentuated. In Nigeria for example, such institutions includes the principal *dramatis personae* of government in power within the three tiers specifically at the level of the executive arm, the National Assembly, States Assemblies in the case of local government elections; officers, including ad hoc staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the respective states elections commissions, officers and men of the respective security agencies, political parties, the judiciary and voters (to a very limited extent).

11

The human person as a social animal cannot but be concerned with 'governance' which literally is the *modus operandi* within any moral community (albeit modern state) instituted for evolving and sustaining rational collectivism towards a rational and harmonious society such that could be recognized by every rational person. Man by virtue of being an inherently rational being remain inherently conscious of the need to put in place requisite institutional arrangements (government/governance) considered necessary for effecting societal mutual dependence, including providing the relevant guidance and regulations for interpersonal and groups relationships within the particular moral community.

It is however important to note that 'government' as institution, could be of different forms, both in structure and modus; and also with different procedure of selecting the group and individuals to manage governance. 'Election' (albeit voting) is just one of the known methods. As a method for

instituting governments within most modern nation-states, its applicability and usability remain cosigned to such forms of government that adorn itself with the toga of being 'democratic'; whether in a mono, or multi-party formations. This assertion may not escape onslaught from many neo-liberal scholars.

'Election' (in its ideal form) is for now largely assumed as the most credible and most inclusive method within the neo-liberal configuration whereby all qualified citizens (as defined by subsisting laws of the 'democratic' state) are presumed to be given 'unfettered' opportunity of 'choice' of government, and *ipso facto* participate (as a collective) in the process of selecting persons of their choice (as put forward by the different political parties) to 'legitimately' preside over the state in the process of executing governance.

For the purpose of clarity, 'election' is just one of the known methods evolve by man to institute government/governance for the moral community. Other forms of governments that do not categorize itself as being 'democratic' are not bereft of other (i.e. non-electoral) types of methods for instituting whatever genre of government espoused . It is even important to note that some species of the non-human animal categorization that exhibit 'sociality' in their mode of existence exhibit such instinctual 'arrangements' that sustain their respective 'communities', which approximate our notion of 'government/governance.'

'Election'/electoral activities as applicable to the overall theme of this effort is simply the presumed all-encompassing method whereby 'rational' members of the Nigerian society, are 'legitimately' given the opportunity to participate in the process of instituting government(s) including selecting those to be entrusted with our *res publica*. It ('election') encompasses a gamut of different processes and stages for voters to institute governments of their choices including selecting those to be assigned with the responsibility of 'presiding' and 'managing' the affairs of the collectivity within these respective geopolitical spaces, viz., the Nigerian state as a geo-political whole, the different states constituting respective separate administrative units; and the last of the tiers, which is the local government geopolitical units.

Having ‘escaped’ the ‘hobbesian’ ‘state of nature’ where life was reportedly *nasty, brutish and short*, man by virtue of his rational component and consequent power of intellection; man realized the need for ‘societal structural organization’ and cohesion, such that was absent in the ‘state of nature’; and thus brought into being the phenomenon of ‘governance’. Thus, Thomas Hobbes along this trajectory of this cogitation articulated the need for the evolution of ‘government’ (albeit *social contract*) as the only strategy to effect a complete break with the ‘state of nature’. Discussing Thomas Hobbes, we have once noted that:

*According to Hobbes, men in their natural state are generally equal in power even though there might be some differences. This tendency made life precarious and insecure because there is no limit to which the individual could apply his ability against the other,.... Consequently, **wise men** within the group in attempt to preserve peace in an environment of indiscriminate right to all forms of evil evolved a social contract. (Akaruese, 2012, p.123)*

In furtherance of his views on the type and pattern of ‘government’ to be put in place for the ‘state’, Hobbes in his political philosophy favoured an all-powerful sovereign to preside over the moral community. No doubt, the days of Hobbes are long gone and the attractiveness and reality of the principle of ‘all-powerful sovereign’ has significantly paled as largely determined by modern values. But that notwithstanding, we significantly note his position to the effect that ‘government’ should exist to preside over the community.

As already noted, democratic government within the neoliberal context as practiced in Nigeria is instituted through electoral processes which ideally remain a product from the choices, preferences and actions of free and rational persons, including legally registered political groups within Nigeria. Given the fact that electoral activities (viz party formations, registrations to vote, voting, etc.) in all their actualizations are all strictly human activities that

cannot be independent of human sentiments and passions, it stands to reason that such actions and the types of choices of the individuals and groups cannot be totally divorced from the source of sentiment and passion; which is the types of *value* that superordinate in any society where election remain instituted. In the myriad (or do we say gamut) of methods and processes involved in 'election' which is *sine qua non* for enthroning governments in democratic states, 'rational' members of society (albeit voters), members of political groups and officials of government institutions in the different geopolitical milieus play different roles in their different capacities of individualities, group structures and officialdom. Basically, whatever the nature and patterns of the individuals and groups' involvements, including institutions and governments, dominant sentiments within these individuals, groups including institutions and governments as dictated by the prevalent values play predominant roles in whatever pattern of involvements and roles' deployments.

We have already asserted that sentiment and passion are precipitates of cherished values. Deductively from our assertion, it is the cherished *value*, and system of values in any democratic state that will basically determine the qualities of persons and types of political groups that can emerge to participate in the systemic actualization of democracy and its appurtenances including ideals. For example, if the prevalent sense of *value* and the sentiment it precipitates are such that largely cherishes altruistic dispositions, patriotism and statesmanship; critical stakeholders in the electoral process will majorly strive to ensure that such governments and dramatis personae to emerge will be those that will espouse the ideals and values that are so cherished within the geopolitical space. In a similar vein, and very importantly, the degree of patriotism, selflessness and honesty to be deployed by official institutions, groups and individuals to the above including achieving free, fair and credible elections will also be tied to societal cherished values. Concomitantly, it is the cherished values within society that will determine the individuals and groups' expectations, reactions to results from voting, forms of investments in election matters including political parties, and patterns of relationship between contestants and electorates; i.e. how voters perceive contestants and vice versa. In view of our assumed primacy of the role of *value* in election matters; what then do we mean by 'value'?

According to the Encarta Dictionary (2013);

principles or standards: the accepted principles or standards of a person or a group.

regard somebody or something highly: to regard somebody or something as important or useful

From the above definitions, *value* (albeit values and system of values) constitute the fundamental standard(s) to determine what should be assumed as 'right' or 'wrong'; 'good' or 'bad' as rational beings. Given its determining role, it can rightly be assumed that it is the nature and types of values that any individual, group, institution, government and society cherishes that will *ipso facto* determine what aspects of human endeavours, actions and institutions that will attract prominence and pre-eminence. In the same vein, it is the nature, focus and systems of values that are treasured in any society, and particularly among the ruling cadre that will determine the types of institutions that will attract attention, relationship with the governed and the patterns of management of state resources. Concomitantly and very central to our discussions, it is the types of values that any particular ruling class cherishes that will equally determine the nature, focus and intentions underlining societal laws that will be put in place to govern, including patterns and systems of punishments and rewards. And finally, but at the risk of repetition, it is the sense of values dominant in any society that will determine the prevalent sense of morality, patterns and forms of specific human activities including moral actions that could be considered as 'right' and 'wrong'; 'good' and 'bad', and those to be cherished, or neglected.

Contextualizing the above brief analysis within our subject-matter of what in our view amount to a 'linear' and organic relationship between 'value' and human actions, endeavours, including conducts, it stands to reason that the nature of any electioneering /voting activities in Nigeria cannot be insulated from the dominant values that are cherished in Nigeria; by virtue of the fact that it (i.e. *value*) informs and directs all our actions/conducts, specifically those that are imbued with moral components like election and election matters as already noted. Thus, we can with certitude assert that such electioneering/voting activities in Nigeria, specifically those that are conducted for the enthronement of governments for the three- tiers respectively, will of necessity remain vulnerable to the dictates of the dominant values espoused by Nigerian state,

albeit the ruling class by virtue of the fact that they remain central to election matters. The degree of the said vulnerability will largely be depended on their (i.e., members of the ruling class) sense of morality, intensity of espousal and commitments to the ideals of democratic elections, the nature and focus of laws put in place by them, and fundamentally the extent of their desirability and wish for the actualization of the principles of free, fair and credible elections. For example, if the values of governments in power espouses the principle of ‘winning at all costs’, such will largely determine its sentiment and the mode of its involvements in any electoral process.

Consequent upon the above, it can reasonably be asserted that any serious effort that is being (or will be) put in place for the purpose of evolving the requisite elixir for resolving Nigeria’s present quagmire of historic crises-ridden electoral activities, including ancillaries ones (like the involvements of the media, moneybags and the judiciary in elections matters); such efforts must note the central role of the values and consequent characters of members of the Nigerian ruling class, particularly how such goal them into serially precipitating our endless electoral pitfalls.

No doubt, their characteristics and dispositions as encapsulated (within their cherished values) are such that accommodate and relish in the negation of all known rules of democratic elections as veritable and civilize way of enthroning governments including selecting those to be entrusted with governance in Nigeria (including states and local government councils).

IV

In our discussions so far, we have raised two suppositions that in our view need to be briefly articulated on so as to put up some clarifications since they are central to the crises-ridden nature of elections in Nigeria. Firstly, is our view that the cherished values of members of our ruling class, is *ipso facto* the cherished values of our society which they dominate; and secondly, is what can be considered as the nature and constituents of the dominant values of members of the Nigerian ruling class which inadvertently has remain pivotal to elections in Nigeria particularly why they have been crises-prone. Let’s turn to the first supposition.

According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,

law is the will of the dominating class raised to the level of law as determined by material conditions of life, (K. Marx and F. Engels, 1955, P. 443).

The existence and sustenance of any modern state is predicated on laws which are largely codified. It is such laws that sustain and 'stabilize' societies by defining what should be accepted or otherwise, and the institutions needed and how they should operate for the flourishing of societies. In this way, laws are designed to protect cherished societal values. Since societal laws are promulgated by those within the class that dominate 'state power' who instinctively and in reality must of necessity protect its interests, it stands to reason that whichever law of the state that must emanate from the same ruling class will be designed and imbued with all necessary factors such that will fundamentally reflect and protect those things they treasured and consequently their values and systems of values, including self-perpetuation; irrespective of the harm such may cause on others outside the ruling coterie. At the risk of repetition, it is instructive to reinstate that the nature and focus of any societal 'law' is strictly a derivative of the cherished values and focus of the ruling class of such society responsible for putting any 'law' in place.

Unarguably, societal laws which are structurally not neutral and cannot be, are designed to be obeyed by all those residing within the specific state with provisions for sanctions in the case of any 'confirmed' infraction. Through the instrumentalities of its laws, ruling class create necessary institutions of state for control. Such are saddled with the responsibility of determining lawbreaking by anyone within the particular geopolitical space including the extent of such infractions and the gravity of punishments such should attract for imposition. With such enormous 'power' to impose its 'will' at the disposal of the state (albeit ruling class) through its institutions, vast majority of denizens within the confines of the geopolitical space will be constrained not only just to obey these laws to avoid sanctions, but to also internalize them including the prescriptive constituents embedded in such laws. Fundamentally, such imbibing will of necessity include such values from which the laws emanate. In this way, the ruling class imposes its values, laws, morals and mores on society such that they inadvertently assume the status of societal laws which the governed must kowtow to, and even imbibe them.

Deductively, from the brief, but graphic description above, we can understand the basis for our earlier assertion that the cherished values including the morals and mores of the dominant class in any society remain the values of such society. Thus, if we want to understand the dominant values, worldviews, characters and tendencies of any society as a social organism, an analysis and understanding of those of the dominant class in such society will be reflective

and suffice enough, even though some individuals and groups may in isolation sometimes reflect something different, but will never be potent enough to undermine what the class in power wishes.

Relating our discussions on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' views (as cited above) to our subject-matter, we will now attempt to demonstrate with few examples how some of the laws guiding our electoral processes (specifically in relation to the formation of political associations) are deliberately strewed and laden with inbuilt potentials for money politics, including the disempowerment of financially-weak citizens, such that only the pecuniary well-endowed (as epitomized in the membership of the Nigerian class including their proxies) can venture into forming political parties which remain the only platform on which any interested and qualified person can contest for political-power in Nigeria.

Let us briefly look at only three of the clauses of the constitutional provisions for the formation of political parties to accentuate our views as above, particularly that venturing into forming political parties must of necessity be a money gulping endeavour which only members of the Nigerian ruling class and their associates including proxies can confidently ventured into. Part 111 SUPPLEMENT: *D-Political Parties* states among others in Section 222 in the **1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria** (as amended) that:

(f) the headquarters of the association is situated in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

In the same vein as will be explained, part of Section 223 states that:

(1)The constitution and rules of a political party shall-

(b) ensure that the members of the executive committee or other governing body of a political party reflect the federal character of Nigeria.

(2) For the purpose of this section-

(b) the members of the executive committee or other governing body of the political party shall be deemed to reflect the federal character of Nigeria only if the members thereof belong to different States not being less in number than two-thirds of the States of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Superficially, the cited laws as couched could dubiously radiate, and present the drafters of the **1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria** (as amended) as fundamentally concerned with the primacy of the imperativeness of national integration and cohesion as against divisiveness; and also to fundamentally avoid the pitfalls that may emanate from centrifugal political arrangements. However, our critical assessment of these laws against the background of the history and characters of our rulers (as they have never been known to be altruistic and patriotic); including the generally accepted federal structure, one cannot but come to the conclusion that such views as above are largely bare of rational content in the face of the reality of the structure of the entity Nigeria, in terms of its diverse compositions.

Let us for the purpose of this discussion momentarily even accept the earlier rhetorical conjecture of possible patriotic intents by the drafters, simply for the purpose of being the proverbial 'devil's advocate' on our part. Even within the above reasons of patriotic intents, these laws (if properly assessed), remain pathologically arid in terms of capacity to foster unity, as the thrusts of their contents cannot but constitute sure recipe for generating inter and intra-groups tensions; more so that the nature and structure of Nigeria of necessity demands politics of plurality of views, opinions and contestations. Deliberately undermining the much needed 'politics of plurality' through constitutional provisions in a country like Nigeria which lay claim to a strange type of federal arrangements (even though banal and deceitful in nature) given its plurality of cultures, peoples, religions, etc., these laws clearly remain a recipe for inherent instability such that has always manifested in electioneering activities among others since 1999; even though deliberately underreported and acknowledged.

No doubt, these laws (as cited above) which are put in place to define processes for the acquisition of 'political power' are largely packaged to alienate some social groups, with the possible result of precipitating not only general, including inter-classes disaffections and antagonisms, they primarily undermine the fundamental basis of democratic arrangement and ideals centred on unfettered participation of 'all' in election matters. Thus, they (laws) are robustly mono-directional and dimensional in terms of the categories of expected principal participants (individuals and groups) in the arena of contestation for political power in Nigeria. Concomitantly, they fundamentally define the nature and types of political associations that can legally emerge in Nigeria, which translates into the types of characters and behaviours of destined types of leadership which the electoral system will of necessity pop up.

For example, the constitutional provision that the Nation's capital, Abuja should be the headquarters of all political parties; besides being dangerously politically centripetal (and thus, structurally tension-creating 'pact') within a federal 'layout', is basically put in place to make formation of political parties the exclusive preserve of the rich at the expense of the less pecuniary endowed.

In the same vein, the compulsion for the reflection of federal character in constituting the leadership cadre of any political association that can contest elections has succeeded in advertently popping up a particular type of 'proprietorship' structure for political parties with the grave consequence of what in our view amount to 'sectorial' alienation and emasculation of a broad spectrum of Nigerians, even within the internal politics of these political associations. The result is that forming and controlling political associations have become the exclusive prerogative/venture of members of Nigeria's propertied class and their allies/acolytes alone. Such policy of pervasive alienation that excludes the 'economically disadvantaged' inadvertently creates mutual distrusts between the constitutionally favoured and the rests within the same polity. This reality no doubt affects the degree of genuine interests and commitments that the 'legally' alienated groups will invest in our elections in terms of protecting this 'sub-institution' of democracy which is elections, specifically the 'voting' aspect which remain most determinant and critical. In the circumstance therefore, the best they have always offered in elections matters cannot go beyond half-hearted commitments even to the extent that primordial considerations may be at stake; after all, the elections irrespective of official propaganda and ruling class manipulations and deceit, are strictly not theirs as their interests and socioeconomic conditions were kept in abeyance and never in the reckoning in the process of designing the relevant electoral laws, among others.

No doubt, our leaders and election 'czars' are not oblivious of this fundamental fact, specifically the pervasive disinterestedness of the vast majority of the Nigerian peoples and social groups by virtue of their perceived institutionalized alienation in the electoral processes. This explains why on any election day, specifically during general elections, the country remain virtually shot down within the periods designated for voting as vehicular and human movements remain proscribed with uniformed personnel always let loose to ensure compliance irrespective of the macabre costs to individuals and Nigeria. The humiliating realities that our rulers are confronted with, necessarily compel them to opt for such undemocratic and crude display of the arrogance of power (actualized in such subtle and disguised country wide imprisonment),

so as to dubiously create semblance of general commitments to, and participation in voting, when in reality whatever commitment and belief in any election they organize are largely restricted to themselves and their allies. If restrictions of movements on election days are not imposed with hype strictness and ferocity, it is certain that vast majority of Nigerians will always go about their daily routines and abandon polling booths. Anything short of such draconic and monstrous action on the path of government will only expose the degree of nudity, inherent shams and hollowness that has successfully besiege our electoral processes interms of blatant lack of interest and faith in the whole process by the vast majority of Nigerians.

The reality on ground as precipitated by the constitutional provisions as already intoned (specifically interms of forming political association) is that few rich individuals (largely cemented together by the inordinate desire for profits, and devoid of any iota of altruistic intents) acting for themselves, and sometimes combining the roles of proxies on behalf of some faceless 'status-allies' come together to alchemize themselves into 'politicians' cum founders of political associations. In their cognition and actions, the political associations to be midwife must be slanted so as to combine the characteristics and rules of Limited Liability Companies, including the patterns of relationship with their shareholders. Unable to avoid the constitutional requirements (some already cited) so as to achieve registration from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), these propertied individuals, or their anointed proxies will junket round the country with cash in hand to shop for would be officers of the (would-be) political association so as to satisfy the stipulated provision that all officials of political associations must 'belong' to atleast two-third of the states of the federation. In this manner, many individuals with no known point of convergence (albeit strange bed fellows) except very little or no idea about 'what political party is', nor the ideology of the particular association in question, are recruited with all kinds of inducements and brought in to lead such groups that are largely alien to their knowledge and realities. Some of such persons with party membership cards dangling over their necks suddenly find themselves in the leadership cadre of such political associations largely as acolytes of their sponsors. These are usually legitimized through sham political parties' conventions where results of even intra-party elections are determined by the highest bidders.

When such recruited individuals find themselves within the leadership cadre of these political associations, their major interests does not (and cannot) in anyway revolve around advancing and deepening the course of democracy in Nigeria, moreso that the notion and ideals of democracy sound hollow to

them, nor could they be interested in working for the enthronement of patriotic governments with progressive and emancipatory agenda. No doubt, their main thrust naturally remain tied to the agenda and dictates of their benefactors who are goaled by the primary motive of accumulation and returns for their investments as already discussed.

This scenario largely explains our history of consistent turbulent elections given the fact that the desire by our political 'merchants' cum political parties' shareholders to recoup their investments with huge profits knows no bound. In the process of striving to actualize this, the different sub-groups within the ruling class 'whole' will inadvertently find themselves face to face in the voting arena to engage themselves in the fierce battle to outwit each other through whatever means each may have comparative advantage of. These are usually manifested in inflating voters register, vote rigging, killings and maiming, abductions, snatching of ballot boxes, inflation of voting figures, bribing of election officials including security agencies personnel, among others. In such fierce battles which are largely fought through proxies particularly on voting days, there exist no known rules of engagements and anything considered as hindrance stand the risk of being a target and decimated. Our electoral laws for the formation of political associations have no doubt foisted this anomic condition on Nigeria and Nigerians.

There is another dimension in the characters of these political associations which further reinforce our view to the effect that seeking for elective positions in Nigeria is not and cannot accommodate the financially faint-hearted, or the weak. Because of the singular importance of elections/voting in the process of enthroning government in Nigeria, political parties by their internal regulations and policies ensure that even intraparty elections remain a money-gulping exercise such that only few rich individual members will dare to participate even in parties' primaries to select candidate that will fly the respective parties' flags. Let us take as a case study an aspect of these parties preparations for the recently concluded 2015 general elections specifically the costs of purchasing what some of the parties classified as *Expression of Interest*, and *Nomination Forms*. Because of space constraint, we shall restrict ourselves to information from the two most dominant political associations: the Peoples Democratic Party (P.D.P), and the All Progressive Congress (APC). By their rules, each member within these respective parties aspiring to contest for any of the available elective positions which included- President, membership of the Senate, and House of Representatives respectively, State Governors and membership of States Houses of Assemblies were directed to purchase both forms in sequence (I think) beginning with expression of

Interest Forms by the P.D.P, while the A.P.C had only *Nomination Form*. Find below what those seeking to be flag bearers were asked to pay;

P.D.P.

President	Expression of Interest Form	N2m
	Nomination Form	N20m
Senate	Expression of Interest Form	N400,000
	Nomination form	N4m
House of Representative	Expression of Interest Form	N400,000
	Nomination form	N2m
Governor	Expression of Interest Form	N1m
	Nomination form	N10m
State House of Representative	Expression of Interest Form	N200,000
	Nomination form	N1m

A.P.C.

President	Nomination Form	N27.5m
Senate	Fresh Aspirant	N3.3m
	Sitting Member	N5.3m
House of Representative	Fresh Aspirant	N2.2m
	Sitting Member	N3.2m
Governor	Fresh Aspirant	N5.5m
	Sitting Member	N10.5m
State House of Representative	Fresh Aspirant	N550,000
	Sitting Member	N800,000

A cursory look at these figures from the standpoint of the socioeconomic realities (as university teacher) that we have find ourselves, cannot but cause fright in us, and precipitating possible irredeemable fear about what 'democracy' in Nigeria is all about; and why is ours so contemptuous of the less financially endowed like us. Such no doubt precipitate in us, the fear of diminishing hope for the implantation and realization of the ideals of democracy in Nigeria. On this issue, and very importantly, we cannot but realize here that such huge costs merely for collection of forms cannot but rudely awakening us to our present and future predicaments whereby only rich Nigerians including those they may anoint as political acolytes can participate in our elections as contestants. It must however be noted that these figures we describe as frightening are indeed mere tips of the ice berg when compared with the quantum of cash that will of necessity be deployed when actual contests comes up.

Our analysis of three of our election-related laws demonstrate how they have inadvertently pop up a peculiar brand of political associations that are so structured to possibly produce 'anything', but a platform for the course, advancement and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, including (and very importantly), free, fair and credible elections, as they have from inception been designed to be money gulping. In addition, is their display of contemptuous policies towards the less privileged and the economically powerless through alienating them, even though they constitute the vast majority. We may pause to ponder about the type and form of neoliberal democracy Nigeria claim to be practiced whereby the majority remain excluded?

We have noted with example that the nature of these political associations given the characters of the principal stakeholders has precipitated the condition whereby only those that are well endowed financially can use their platforms to seek elective positions in elections. The consequence of this is that those who succeed (after huge investments) in getting the tickets of their respective political associations to contest for the same elective positions will inevitably meet on the same 'electoral platform' contesting for the same position, and with the fixed desire to 'win at all costs'. This naturally results into fierce contest of immense acrimony and recrimination of violence among contestants particularly during elections

What the two dimensions of identified challenges to our electoral processes has highlighted is simply that elections in Nigeria will remain prone to crises partly arising from the structural deficiencies of political associations as they are designed to be expensive, and also as investments by our political entrepreneurs thereby precluding non-members of the coterie with the attendant mutual distrust. While contestants will always remain at each other throats particularly when contesting for the same positions during elections, the vast majority that remain structurally alienated will hardly see elections as theirs and how to reverse the current trend will be an attractive option to them.

From the angle of our alleged mono-directional and dysfunctional nature of the electoral laws as exemplified in the ones cited, we deduced that elections in Nigeria will always be confronted with two crises-related challenges of high intensity. They include the pervasive electoral alienation and emasculation of the majority; and the prohibitive costs of elections as instituted by political associations which naturally goal contestants into fierce and bloody contests that consistently make elusive free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria

V

We shall now turn to what we consider as the characters of the Nigerian ruling class, particularly how they have in their individual and collective capacities successfully not only arrest the course and development of 'democracy', but created a particular form of anomic atmosphere that remain arid of such conditions within which democracy could thrive and develop. Strictly speaking, 'democracy' as a system of government is only interested to them and to be identified with, to the extent that it has remained central to the contemporary uni-polar world as a mark of civilized sensitivity. By virtue of this, it has the potentials of attracting to our rulers some forms of respectability both the continental and global stages, including accessing them (i.e., our rulers) with ease to international gatherings. Within the totality of their usually opinionated and arrogant conducts which they brazenly display, 'democracy' cannot go beyond the level of a mantra as they make no pretention of their repugnancy to the ideals of democracy which rest on the supremacy of the 'will of the people'. Such fundamental ideal of democracy remain too uncanny and intolerable within their values, worldviews and conducts. It even bemuse us to imagine how a group of persons cemented together by their propensity for ruthless predation of Nigeria's collective resources can willingly turn around towards the ideals of altruism to the point of committing class suicide by espousing the democratic principle of the 'supremacy of the will of the people'. Attempting this unarguably has the strong potentials of undermining their present exclusivity to state resources; which for now must remain out of contemplation, given their life style. If predation must continue unabated, the vast majority must be disposed of 'political power' by whatever means possible; as its possession of 'political power' remain the only key to state resources.

Thus, when we ponder about our present predicament of how we can consolidate democracy in Nigeria through the instrumentality of a free, fair and credible elections which must be located within the matrix of equal stakeholding for all social groups in Nigeria, we should not be oblivious of the fact that electoral victories remain (for now) the surest way to acquiring stupendous wealth in Nigeria. Those who have become stupendously rich through electoral victories that are mostly achieved through our usual crises-ridden elections will definitely muster all their resources to ensure that our elections should continue to be crises infested.

An important dimension of the characteristics of our rulers, are their opulent life styles and patterns of consumptions. With privatization of state resources and consequent access to huge cash, Nigerian politicians for example, are now ranked as one of the groups of highest purchasers of private jets globally. For example, in an article entitled “How wealthy Nigerians Spent \$6.5bn on 130 private Jets in 5 years”, the author drew attention to the growing penchant for private jets among the class of wealthy Nigerians which has gulped a whooping sum of \$6.5bn (over N1.02tn). The author quoting from Aviation Sources revealed that the luxury trend which rose by 650 percent between 2007 and 2012 is encouraged among the rich by the need for privacy, and fear of uncertainty. The report further noted that private Jets ownership in Nigeria has grown from 20 Jets in 2007 to over 150 Jets by 2012, and are owned by top politicians, oil magnets and other business moguls in Nigeria. We must note that these reported business moguls and oil magnets are largely those we have referred to as proxies and acolytes of our politicians. The report further noted that Nigeria currently rivalled China as one of the fastest growing private jets markets in the world. (For details see www.naijagists.com, Sept. 17, 2012).

The characters of members of our ruling class in their arrogance and opulence was further exemplified in the widely reported allegation that Mrs Deizani Allison-Madueke (the immediate past Federal Minister for Petroleum) spent about N10bn.= (Ten Billion Naira only) in aircraft charter. The Federal House of Representatives which was set to probe the allegation could not proceed as she successfully got refuge in the judicial system that of necessity operate on laws that hardly punish the rich, irrespective of their offences. Another classical example of the opulent life styles of our rulers also manifested in Ms. Stella Oduah’s (former Minister of Aviation in the government of President Jonathan, and now a ‘distinguished’ Senator of the Republic) reportedly compelling an agency under her Ministry to buy her two bulletproof armoured cars valuing N255 million (Two Hundred and Fifty Five Naira only) for ‘official’ use. Investigations revealed that besides the immorality, opulence and prodigality which underline such purchase, the reported costs of both vehicles were out rightly over inflated.

In another report, Ibe Uwaleke described Nigeria as the home of the highest number of private jets in Africa. The report further added that, ‘ Nigerian private jets owners have spent more than N1.5 trillion in foreign exchange to purchase these sky ‘toys’. (The Guardian Newspaper, June 30, 2015, p.1.)

What is the import of the above information on the opulent life styles of our rulers to our discussions? It is largely to awaken us to the dangerously

ostentatious life styles of our rulers through ‘state power’; particularly the consequences on Nigeria’s democratic experiment. It can never be the desire of any of them to part with such positions that largely effortlessly access them to limitless cash. Here we can recall the agony expressed by ‘Elder’ Godsdey Orubebe (a former Federal Minister for Niger Delta in Dr. Goodluck Jonathan’s government) who unsuccessfully attempted to truncate the announcement of the results of the presidential elections when it became clear to him that the former president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was at the verge of being defeated in the last general elections. Orubebe’s action was simply to display his pains over the slipping away of his sources of huge cash and the accompanying lavish lifestyles, irrespective of the costs to his personal integrity.

The immediate and long term implications of such opulent lifestyles of our leaders is that ‘government’ will always be so attractive because of the limitless opportunities it offers those that are strategically located within it to access public funds unimpeded. Consequently, the struggle for ‘political power’ in Nigeria will (for now and even in the near future atleast) remain endlessly and uncompromisingly intense and acrimonious so as to be strategically placed within the matrix of governments. Such intense and acrimonious struggles will largely manifest in election matters, and particularly in voting exercises. Here lies Nigeria’s debacle in election matters, and why not to think of free and fair elections in Nigeria within the subsisting socio-political formation.

CONCLUSION

In our discussions sofar, we have asserted that election related matters, especially voting exercises remain strictly human activities which of necessity borders on choices of the individuals, groups, institutions and the class that dominate state power. Such choices are products of emotions and sentiments which are derivatives of the types of values that all those that are involved in electoral matters respectively cherish and treasured. We went further to articulate the view that the laws of society are necessarily derived from societal values, and societal values are strictly those of the class in power which naturally imposes its values on society for the sole reason of self-perpetuation. Assessing three of the electorally-related laws specifically for the formation of political associations as contained in the **1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, we argued that irrespective of the pretention of the drafters, the laws were designed to make formation of political associations an expensive venture, and thus exclusive prerogative of members of Nigeria’s propertied class and their allies. This we viewed as recipe for crises, moreso that those who may have made investments must of necessity expect

returns at all costs; while the majority of Nigerians alienated hardly see themselves as stakeholders in the democracy project, and are thus strictly not interested in election processes. These tendencies partly inform our history of crises-ridden elections which seemed to have assumed a state of 'permanency'. In the same vein, we put forward with examples the hype ostentatious and consumptive attitudes of our rulers and conclude that such lifestyles have inadvertently made strategic placements in governments irredeemably attractive, and it remains a recipe for fierce and bloody electoral contests (in our instant case) in order to gain access into the ruling circle to participate in the looting exercise. The Godsdey Orubebe's *coup de théâtre* remain eventful particular the extent that beneficiaries of the present system can go to realize self-perpetuation in office

What has so far emerged is that Nigeria's debacle of endless crises-ridden elections is historical and fundamentally structural; and no amount of security personnel to be deployed on election days, vitriolic propaganda, including voters' education and sanctimonious admonishment can revert the trend, atleast for now. This is because the causal factors that precipitate election violence are structurally self-effluencing, multidimensional, determined, self-reinventing and self-catalyzing . For example, how can personnel of security agencies be successfully advised against receiving bribes in order to subvert elections when his monthly income may hardly be sufficient for a week family upkeep. If Nigeria must begin to address the issue of election crises, it must review such laws that not only alienate the majority, but those that make formation of political associations expensive ventures. In addition, political office holding (whether elective or appointive) should not be made attractive; and finally, asserts declaration should be made *condition precedent* to contests in any election and whatever declared should be made as public as possible.

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