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Ideological Battle in the Nigerian State: An Interplay of Democracy and Plutocracy

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Ideological Battle in the Nigerian State: An Interplay of Democracy and Plutocracy

Chris C. Ojukwu ^α & O. G. F. Nwaorgu Ph.D ^σ

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I. INTRODUCTION

The democratic forces must be careful about rallying around crooks because of short-term, calculations. Crooks are unreliable. They will sell democracy down the river if and when it becomes necessary in pursuit of their personal ambitions for them to reach accommodation with anti-democratic oligarchy. What democracy needs is a principled and dedicated leadership and more effective institutions for combating any oligarchy (Toyo, 1994:62).

Nigeria, after five decades of political independence, still finds itself in the throes and trajectory of deep political quagmire. Frantic efforts to ensure that there exists smooth and sustainable democratic governance have failed several times. The cause of this is not far fetched. It is basically because the Nation State has been hijacked by a stratum of plutocrats and timocrats. Given the degree and high rate of their ill-accumulated wealth in the Nigerian society, the ideological interest of the Cabal appears to influence and determine the contour of the Nigerian political system and structure that is largely build upon democratic principles.

Many scholars are of the opinion that the woes of democratic institutions have been largely attributed to the military incursion into politics. For instance, the transition programmes during these periods which were ostensibly arranged for the purpose of handing over

power to the civilian were basically characterized by arbitrary power, intimidation, subversion of the rule of law, suspension of the constitution and the abolition of virtually all institutions of democratic governance (popular participation, the fusion of executive and legislative powers, the mutilation and emasculation of the judiciary). The military's repressive nature has also been interpreted through the ethnic prism that accuses the military elite who monopolized power as representing sectional interests. The abortion of the transition to a third Nigerian Republic through the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election was a classical case in point.

Beyond this popular view, some students of political theory have also begun to argue that the country's lose of grip on democracy can be tied to rein of plutocrats in the corridors of power and circles of governance.

The paper, therefore, examines the interplay of democracy and plutocracy in the context of the Nigerian State.

II. CONCEPTUALISING IDEOLOGY, DEMOCRACY, PLUTOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

From a social-scientific viewpoint, an ideology is more or less a coherent set of ideas that provides a basis for organized political action (whether or not it is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power relationships.) All ideologies, usually in the form of a 'world view', provide a model of a desired future, a vision of the good society, and outline of how political change can and should be brought about. Ideologies are not, however, hermetically sealed systems of thought, rather, they are fluid sets of ideas which overlap with one another at a number of points.

Ideologies are also always subject to political or intellectual renewal, because they interact with and influence the development of other ideologies and because they change over time as they are applied to changing historical circumstances (Heywood, 2003).

Throughout the ages, the great political theorists have dealt with the question: what is a good government and what kind of society will provide the base for it? Their theories were influenced substantially by the type of society they lived in or ideology they subscribed to as no theory or ideology develops in a

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vacuum. In other words, every society is shaped by a set of belief systems, values, norms, and principles which to a large extent determine the nature and character of such a society, its policies and programmes.

While ideologies are capable of being means of progress and liberation for people, they can also be vindictive and oppressive if used as a means of manipulation. They can express racial superiority and ethnic segregation as well as racial solidarity. Ideologies can easily topple noble goals, twist a common goal to favour group interest and domination (Feyisetan, 2008:88-89).

For instance, ideology was the major issue behind the cold war between the West led by the United States and the Eastern bloc led by the then Soviet Union. Unwilling to move into hot war which would have meant self-destruction in an eventual nuclear holocaust, the two power blocs resorted to a war of words, in which Africa and the other less-developed nations remained neutral in spite of the efforts made by the two giants to persuade them to join their respective sides (Ekpebu 1999:66). The West opted for Capitalism and Democracy while the East subscribed to Communism.

The first half of the 1990s marked the end of the cold war after 45 years of its existence. Thus, the aggressive vacuity of the cold war was replaced with the mission of democratisation, a mission that consolidated the hegemony of Western values. As President Bush put it at that time:

A new world order (is) struggling to be born... where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak (Rourke, 1996:1-2).

The end of the Cold War also triggered the sudden collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and stimulated struggle for democracy in Africa. As Ibrahim (1995:126); Slater (et al. 1993); Diamond (1999:24) remarked:

The end of the Cold War poses for Africa a political and intellectual challenge which provides a critical historical conjuncture to conduct a more fruitful debate and advance the struggle for expanding democracy in the continent.

The concept of democracy has become a buzz word in the contemporary political lexicon. It has become a household terminology both in the developed and developing nations as most of rapid socio-economic and political developments revolve around and/or are shaped by democratic ethos. By the same token, the inability of many nations to measure up as expected of them in the economic and political realm can also be tied to the erosion of democratic principles in such countries. As if institutionalisation of democracy in Africa is sine-qua-non or a precondition to democratic consolidation, scholars have argued that the fall of

Communism has led many to believe that democracy has finally arrived and would serve as a reprieve to ameliorate the pains and sufferings of Africa (Kukah, 2000:XIV). Ake holds that Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival, they believe that there are no alternatives to this quest, they have nothing to loose and a great deal to gain (Kukah, 2000:XIV).

Modern democracy, as Samuel Huntington observes, is not democracy of the village, the tribe, or the city-state; it is democracy of the nation-state and its emergence is associated with the development of the nation-state (Huntington, 1991:13). Nwankwo (1992:290) opines that democratisation is a process of political renewal and the affirmative acceptance of the supremacy of popular will and consensual obligation over the logic of elitism and parochialism. It emphasises the shift from individual and class dispositions to polity and the institutionalisation of genuine representative political structures and organs of mass mobilization. The phenomenon stresses the ability of the ruling power-structure to revolutionize the economy to ensure a collective control of productive forces, the common access by all to the means of production, distribution and exchange. The implication is that democracy is meant to fight poverty, economic backwardness and under-development and to promote by all means rule of law, security of life and property and various basic freedoms such as freedom from want, expression, association and religion (Osuntokun, 2010:19). To realise this, requires the product of political leaders who have the will and skill to bring it about.

Laakso and Olukoshi (1996:9) have argued that the problems of nation-states are compounded by the absence of enduring structures of democratic governance and popular political participation, with the consequence that efforts at tackling the National Question are not organically tied to the question of democratisation in much of post-independence Africa. The question is, what are the supposed structures of democratic governance? Are they peculiar to African setting or do they cut across other continents?

In the view of Schumpeter (1942/1976), democracy means competitive leadership and the rule of the political elite and not mass participation and/or popular rule. The mass is used mainly as a mechanism to select the man who has the potentials to govern the society. In other words, the role of "the people" in a democratic society is not to govern but rather to choose representatives who will make the decisions for them. Schumpeter argues that this form of democracy is a political method, that is, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political-legislative decisions. In contrast, Putnam (1993:171-176) holds that the interdependence of elite and citizen behaviour helps to foster and consolidate democracy. Democracy may not thrive in a setting where there is no mutual understanding, shared trust between the elite and the

masses. Liberal democracy should not be a restrictive enterprise for selecting decision-makers and ensuring their legitimacy through election nor be an attenuated form of governance aimed at securing the hegemony of a ruling political elite (Marsha and Stoke, 1995:232; Elliot, 1973:123-125).

Though the role of the elite is crucial in any democratic process, democracy is meant to uplift the underdog in society, the weak and vulnerable. Whatever its nature and form, it has usually been articulated on the basis of principles such as welfarism, redistribution, social justice, and narrowing the gap between the rich and poor. As Feyisetan (2008:55) captures it, 'democracy defeats its purpose when it makes the conditions of the poor worse off'. In most African countries, attention is not given to democratic norms, rather, what prevails is an executive arrogation which occurs when elected political officers concentrate powers in their own hands which has been variously referred to as "authoritarian democracy", "bounded strongmen". Thus, many governments in new democracies have in sundry occasions abridged political rights and civil liberties of citizens, limited the press freedom and imposed harsh policies on the citizenry. The attendant effect has been political apathy which is a protest participation based on dissatisfaction with the operations of the political game, a post-participative phenomenon when people have reached the limits of what they can give or take politically, and a calculated peaceful aggression without wins (Ayoade, 1997:3).

Drawing from the views of Eskor Toyo (1994:10), democracy refers to the extent to which actual political power to determine people's social destiny belongs to the vast majority of citizens who constitute the people distinct from a ruling oligarchy or class. The fundamental basis of democracy is the ideological thesis that human beings are equal, that no human being is so responsible that he can replace another when it comes to determining the other's fortunes in society. This suggests equal rights of all social individuals to participate in taking socially significant decisions and in running those affairs of society that shape the fortunes of its members. Popular participation in arriving at decision-making or policies of national importance connotes consultations and dialogue with various segments that comprised the population of the State. At any rate, in any society where the concept of democracy does not embrace actual governance by the people and does not extend to the economic and cultural spheres, democracy is at best truncated (Toyo, 1994:15).

In some emerging democracies like Nigeria, it is observed that some key indices of democracy are often personalised by the leaders to the detriment of the masses or the ruled. For instance, public resources distribution, government contracts, instruments of

powers are restricted and circumscribed only to the rulers of the State. As Kukah (2000:218) captures it, the Nigerian State, in its quest for the personalisation of the instruments of power, has sought to domesticate every area of national life, especially those areas considered to be juicy by the elite. This, he termed, the 'myownisation of power', that is, 'power becomes my own, because I am the one who has taken control'. This mentality was virtually tolerated during the periods the Nigerian State was hijacked by the military for twenty-nine years because of the peculiarity of the military institution. It is an institution whose constitutional role is primarily to protect and defend its territory against external aggression, except incursion into politics which is an aberration.

This brings into focus the other concept, which is, plutocracy. The term plutocracy is derived from the Greek *ploutokratia*: from 'ploutos', we get wealth, and 'kratia' means advocate of a form of government. Thus, the concept is formally defined as government by the wealthy. It can also refer to a wealthy class that controls a government, often from behind the scenes or any form of government in which the wealthy exercise the preponderance of political power, directly or indirectly.

Classically, a plutocracy was an oligarchy which suggests a government controlled by the wealthy few. Today, the term plutocracy is generally used to describe two distinct concepts: one of a historical nature and the other of a modern political nature. The former expresses the political control of the State by an oligarchy of the wealthy. The instances of this include, the civilization of Carthage and the Italian merchants republics of Venice and Florence. The latter presupposes a pejorative reference to a disproportionate influence the wealthy are said to have on political processes in contemporary society. A good example of a society where this is operational is the United States in which there is a 'fusion of money and government'. In essence, most plutocrats control the executive, legislative and judicial aspects of government, the armed forces, and most of the natural resources. In some cases, however, there are still some situations in which private corporations and wealthy individuals may exert such strong influence on governments, in a manner that the effect can arguably be compared to a plutocracy.

Typically, most plutocrats are found within the confines of the elite group—the military, bureaucrats, technocrats, intellectuals, politicians and traditional rulers. This group of people (a privileged minority) who through educational exposure, connection, organisational skills, leadership abilities, are materially empowered to influence, formulate policies, guide activities and decide the significant issues of government.

Dye and Zeigler (1975:2) argue that the irony of democracy is that it is government 'by the people', but the responsibility for the survival of such democracy

rests on the shoulders of the elites. They must govern wisely if government 'by the people' is to survive. Drawing instances from the American political system, Dye and Zeigler hold that the American masses do not lead, rather, they follow and respond to the attitudes, proposals and behaviours of the elite. Buttressing this view, Key (1961:558) puts it succinctly thus:

The critical elements for the health of the democratic order consist of the beliefs, standards and competence of those who constitute the influential, the political activists, in the order. That group, as has been made plain, refuses to define itself with great clarity in the American system; yet, analysis after analysis, points to its existence. If democracy tends towards indecision and disaster, the responsibility rests here, not with the mass of people.

Wright Mills (1956:4) in his famous work, 'The Power Elite', emphasises that the elite is the product of the institutionalized landscape of the society. That is, certain institutions occupy pivotal positions in society and the uppermost ranks of the hierarchy in these institutions constitute the strategic command posts of the social structure. Again, drawing from the American society, Mills identifies a three level gradation of the distribution of power: the executive branch of the national government, the large business corporations and the military establishment. He holds that political power resides in the controlling positions of these powerful institutions, hence he describes the structure of the power elite thus:

They rule the big corporations, they run the machinery of the State and claims its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment and occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure in which are now centred the effective means of the power and the wealth and celebrity which they enjoy... To be celebrated, to be wealthy, to be in power requires access to major institutions, for the institutional positions men occupy determines in large part their chances to have and hold valued experience.

Power elite by extension reinforces and crystallizes Lord Acton's famous aphorism, that "all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Money power corrupts and ambition backed by money power both corrupts and blinds (Toyo, 1994:69). No doubt, most societies are being controlled by the plutocrats and timocrats. Before the arrival of the British imperialists in Africa and Nigeria in particular, independent kingdoms, empires and states were under the control of the traditional rulers such as the Obas, Emirs, and Obis. There were also places administered by council of elders. These personalities were conceived to be materially wealthy perhaps as a result of many advantages that accrued to Kings then. At the arrival of the colonisers to Nigeria, the politics and material powers of these Kings were further enhanced mainly because the imperialists used them as means to

attain their administrative goals and economic interests. Interestingly, during the colonial era, the colonisers were totally in control of the country, giving little or no room for Nigerians to participate in the running of the nation.

This facilitated the impoverishment of the country prior to their departure. Unfortunately, the political elites that took over from them followed their footsteps at independence. As Enemu and Momoh (1999:74) point out, the Nigerian State, like others in the rest of Africa, underwent no qualitative and transformative restructuring at independence. Consequently, it remains, just like its colonial progenitor, an instrument of exploitation and suppression of the popular classes and a tool for primitive accumulation and class consolidation for the hegemonic groups. They argue that the few who control the State have access to all imaginable perks while the many who are excluded are victims of all forms of abuse. As a result, the struggle to attain and retain power has become a veritable war fought without restraint and with total disregard for the ethos and conventions of democracy.

III. PLUTOCRATS AND THE RUNNING OF THE AFFAIRS OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

As stated elsewhere, democratic governance becomes effective when it is directed and managed by a stratum of minority group that is imbued with organisational skills, knowledge and drive. But it becomes worrisome and problematic when the State's affairs are run totally by plutocrats and political machines, a class that uses the resources of the State to consolidate their political and economic interests rather than better lives of the citizenry. In Nigeria, it is the views, sentiments, whims and caprices of this class of people that are often articulated and recognised. The opinions of the masses or the 'representatives' of the masses are taken with a pinch of salt because they do not have the financial clout to influence and in some cases, counter some policies of the government that seem not to have human face. As Nwankwo (1997:60) points out, the bulk of the Nigerian elite are without moral fibre and scruple. They existed for long as a self-serving, grasping hobo, men and women who never worked or sweated for their wealth, who lack vision, sense of direction and purpose, a class that is content to lend support to successions of regime tyrants and that indulge itself in the make-believe world of licentious living and profligacy.

Interestingly, most of the Nigerian plutocrats are found under the platforms of different political parties and prominent socio-cultural and political organisations. Party politics is a critical factor in democratic governance. Since a lot of money is required to sustain political parties, money bags, millionaires and political mercenaries take advantage of the circumstance to popularize and consolidate their political and economic

interests in those political parties. For instance, most western democracies permit partisan organisations to raise funds for politicians which can be either directly or through corporate institutions. Ideally, the gesture should have no effect on the legislative decisions of elected representatives, but some politicians are influenced by these contributions. In the United States, campaign finance reform makes efforts to ameliorate this situation. It challenges officials who are beneficiaries of the system that allows the practice. Thus, many reform advocates have suggested that taxpayer dollars be used to replace private campaign contributions (Scarrow, 2005:13). As Mimpen asserts, democracy has a cost, is elaborated regularly when talking to political party representatives in developing democracies, referring to the considerable amount of finances that political parties need in order to fulfil their democratic tasks (Mimpen, 2010). This finds expression in the intra-party democracy in Nigeria where the major financiers of the parties would want to be the ones to select their own candidates for primaries and subsequently to be nominated to represent their parties in the general elections.

The financiers in this context are popularly known as godfathers in Nigeria. They sponsor candidates for various political positions—presidency, governorship, National Assembly, State House of Assembly, Chairman of the Local Government and at the end of the day expect due reward and compensation from them in the form of fiscal and/or in the form of awarding contracts. Striking instances were the cases of Chinwoke Mbadinugu and Chris Ngige who were Governors of Anambra State between 1999 and 2003. They had Chief Emeka Offor and Chief Chris Uba respectively as their godfathers who in turn made Anambra State ungovernable in their attempt to take over the running of the affairs of the State (Ojukwu and Olaifa, 2011:250). They not only demanded monetary compensation but also a lion share in the appointment of State Commissioners. This buttresses Griner and Zovatto (2005) argument that, money and democracy have a complex relationship, especially since the affluent role of private money in politics can have many distorting effects such as, corruption, buying of votes and clientelism. When a party is well funded, it can achieve a lot of things, but the financiers may also have some strings attached to it.

A situation whereby the so-called mentors, patrons and godfathers of political parties and political office holders view parties as just a source of personal aggrandizement as is the case in many political parties in emerging democracies, probably suggests that there will be little or no dividends of democracy to be distributed to the electorates. The political office holders in ensuring that they retain their portfolios—ministers, governors, commissioners, president of the country; may be forced to delve into blatant misappropriation of

public funds and other economic illegality (Ahonosi-Yakubu, 2001:83-84). Albeit this kind of political game can be found in other advanced democracies such as the United States and Great Britain, it does not seriously affect their democratic governance or their political stability. Rather, that kind of interplay fosters and enhances their political development particularly in the area of human resources development.

Specifically, in the United States, the idea that a relatively fixed group of privileged people might shape the economy and government for their own benefit goes against the American grain. Though, the owners and top-level managers in large income producing properties are by far the dominant figures in the United States, and that there is often competition between national corporations and local growth coalitions for profits and investment opportunities, both are cohesive on policy issues affecting the general welfare of the Americans (Domhoff, 1997). The corporate rich and the local growth entrepreneurs supplement their small numbers by developing and directing a wide variety of non-profit organisations like a set of tax-free charitable foundations, think tanks, and policy-discussion groups. These specialised non-profit groups in turn constitute a policy-formation network at the national level (Domhoff 1997:241-249). It is pertinent to note that most of the power elites (captains of industries and corporations) are not interested in the general governance of the State. Rather, they simply sit back and enjoy the lifestyle that their great wealth affords them.

Again, in the United States, to claim that the corporate rich have enough power to be considered a dominant class does not totally imply that lower social classes are totally powerless. Domination in this context means the power to set the terms under which other groups and classes must operate, not total control. Hence, even the most powerless of people—the very poor and those discriminated against—sometimes develop the capacity to influence the power structure of the State through sit-ins, demonstrations, social movements and other manners of social dislocations. The practice explicates a setting where there is strong and healthy interplay and synergistic role of democracy and plutocracy, and where pluralism is at its best. Pluralism presupposes that power is more widely dispersed among groups and that power is held by the general public through the pressure that public opinion and voting put on elected officials. Sadly, this kind of attitude is still a far cry in many developing democracies like Nigeria where there is still an overwhelming political domination and subjugation of the corporate rich and petty bourgeoisie over the less privileged citizens, and where the wealth and income distributions are skewed in the favour of those steering the ship of the State.

The question is, what has been the impact of the corporate rich in Nigeria on the Nigerian democracy? To what extent has the relatively fixed class



of highly privileged people in Nigeria influenced or impacted positively on the political economy of Nigeria since independence? A good number of the military personnel in Nigeria are millionaires and billionaires as a result of the quantum of money they appropriated for administering the Nigerian State for 29 years. General Ibrahim Babangida (retired) for example, made a lot of money from the Gulf War between 1991 and 1992 but it was not used in any form to transform and restructure the Nigerian State, instead, the money was used to further consolidate his financial empire and today, he is considered globally as one of the richest personalities in the world. The same applies to Late General Sani Abacha who stashed away a good chunk of the Nigerian money in coded foreign accounts with impunity. It was also these very elite that benefited from the proceeds and revenue of the nation's oil and mineral resources and bought huge controlling shares in blue chip corporations and firms with the enterprises promotion Act of 1972, popularly called the Indigenization Decree (Nwankwo, 1997:55-56). And as the structural goals and institutional requirements fade away as a result of the repetitive tragic cycle of junta hegemony, and as the succession of military dictators intimidate their way to power with the promise of producing yet another set of super rich multi-millionaires through their bazaar approach to governance, they still fine-tune more thorough ways of adapting and accommodating themselves in the new scheme and emergent power relations.

Unfortunately, the civilian governments do not fare better, but continued from where the military institution stopped. Since 1999, the beginning of the Nigerian 4th Republic, the country is yet to be transformed and reengineered to meet the global standard. This is the case because most of the bureaucrats, technocrats, politicians, and intellectuals in power are more interested in amassing wealth to solidify their economic stronghold than to effect far-reaching structural, fundamental and strategic changes in the government at all levels of power. For instance, the governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, Lamido Sanusi Lamido in 2010 argued that the salaries and overhead cost of the National Assembly gulp 25% of the yearly National Overhead (Okolo, 2011:19). The salaries and allowances that these legislators collect are not approved for them by the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) statutorily nor by the National Wages and Salaries Commission. For instance, the clerk of the National Assembly informed the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on the arraignment of former speaker of the House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole, that the Senators take home with them about N360 million per annum. They are entitled to take home N11 million maximum but they contrive all sorts of arrangements. In view of this, Okolo (2011:19) remarks:

It is only the members of the National Assembly that have the impunity to change their furniture every year and ride the latest cars while most Nigerian Youth and young graduates are wallowing in abject poverty as a result of unemployment.

All the same, the situation with the executive arm of government is not different from that of the legislature. Feyisetan (2009:209) remarks that, Nigeria's political appointees are elevated to the highest pedestal as untouchable sacred cows who earn more money than any best paid worker in the Nigeria's private sector mainly as a result of having access to other revenues and opportunities to embezzle and receive bribes before contracts are signed. They feel they are put in that position to enrich themselves and not for the services of the nation flanked by police, guards or thugs to protect and defend them in their atrocities. This why politics is a do or die affair in Nigeria.

In the 2012 budget, the Jonathan-led administration proposed spending billion of dollars on travel, refreshment, generator and furniture. To be specific, N13 billion was budgeted for local and international travels; N4.5 billion for stationery, magazines, newspapers; N17 billion for maintenance of vehicles, furniture; N4 billion for generating set; N9 billion for refreshment and mails. For the Aso Rock Villa, the following was budgeted: N285 million for welfare, N265 million for computers, N150 million for scanners, N161 million for buses, N295 million for new furniture and N1.8 billion for the maintenance of existing furniture, office and residential quarters (Mumuni, 2012:4).

Indeed, not only that the budgetary allocations for some of these variables or items are stupendously outrageous and preposterous, but that at the end of the day, two-third of the money allocated for all these may be misappropriated by the government through its acolytes, loyalists and cronies. This perhaps underpins Fafowora's (2011:64) argument that the Nigerian governments are no less profligate in their expenditure on general administration. The cost of running the State's overblown bureaucracy is as much as 80% of the country's total income. At the comparative level, very few countries match the cost of general administration in Nigeria. He argues, for instance, that the United States, the largest economy in the world, with a GNP of US\$13 trillion per annum, has a federal cabinet not exceeding 20, about one half that of Nigeria with 37. The cost of general administration represents less than 10% of the federal budget of the United States. Fafowora further pointed out that, the rich countries spend on the general administration of their countries an average of 10%. China and India have the largest bureaucracies in the world, yet their average annual expenditure on general administration is only 12%.

The prevailing crisis rocking the foundation of the Nigerian State again hinges on insensitivity and the lack lustre performance of the plutocrats in power. The

Jonathan-led administration on the 1st of January, 2012 declared the deregulation of the oil sector by the removal of the petrol subsidy against the wishes of the Nigerian populace. This implies that the official pump price of petrol will be N141.00 as against the former price—N65.00. Government's reason for this is partly to be able to provide enough social amenities and infrastructure and to make life more meaningful for the citizenry, and also to stop a tiny cabal from enjoying the subsidy alone.

In view of this, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Trade Union Congress (TUC) representing all Nigerian unionised workers both in the public and private sectors, whether junior or senior staff, and many civil society organisations (CSOS) backed up by millions of Nigerians citizens including the House of Representatives disagreed with the policy on the ground that it lacks human face. Government's ingrained attitudinal disposition and determinate social behaviour toward the policy are considered to be suspicious and discernible, hence the public alarm and almost nationwide protest. While the government that we perceived to be composed of most of the Nigerian plutocrats insists that deregulation has become an official government policy which cannot be reversed, the NLC, TUC and the CSOS argue that there is need for the government to first raise a committee to audit crude importation, fuel importation in order to determine appropriate pricing of fuel before thinking of the removal of the subsidy and determining the price of the fuel. The question is, how do we explain that none of the country's refineries is working at full capacity? Why should the level of corruption in the oil sector and other sectors be condoned? If Nigeria is the 6th largest oil producing country in the world, why should she pay as much as the government is proposing per litre of petrol?

The logic behind all this, is that the 'common Nigerians' have begun to capture some of the ploy and antics of the Nigerian plutocrats in government. The policy of removal of petrol subsidy happens to be the straw that broke the camel's back. It stimulated and catalysed the citizenry to rise for social change, to defend their rights and the democracy that they believe in and fought for, and to oppose the overwhelming hegemonic control of the cabal over the Nigerian masses for the past fifty years. The massive and intensive protests are designed to draw the attention of the government to more salient, philosophical and constitutional matters, protests that are meant to usher in good, accountable governance. As Eriye (2012:11) remarks:

Laws are laws only if the people continue to obey them. Once they cross the fear barrier, you are on your own... policies are meant for people. You don't crush them just to make a policy point. If they say they don't want, even if you believe your position is superior,

you back off. It happened in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and is on-going in Syria.

To Ihonvbere (2004), what is so interesting about Nigeria and its peoples is that all the citizens demand the good things of life: from good governance to basic human needs. They are also of the view that things have not gone too well in the direction that they wished because the nation's leadership has failed to rise to the challenges. Thus, followership has become trivialized, commoditized, contaminated and corrupted. The challenge, therefore, is for all to brace up in finding democratic solutions to the failures of the past and the challenges of the present. He opines that the consequences of this benign neglect are huge. They include, cynicism and general distrust of government, susceptibility to manipulation, low capacity to understand and support good public policies, subversion of public policies by the urban-based elite, bureaucrats, politicians and the so-called middle class. Thus, rather than evolve structures, implementable ideologies, relationships, networks and enabling environments to build a nation-state that will stand the test of time, the power elite prefer to criminalise and bastardise some of the institutions established to foster democratic governance.

IV. CONCLUSION

The paper examines how democracy has been threatened by the domination of the plutocrats and kleptocrats in the various Nigerian corporate bodies and institutions. It emphasises that the Nigerian government is one whereby wealth and the benefits that wealth brings lead to a concentration of power in the hands of those with disproportionate access to financial resources. In other words, due to the tilting to plutocracy and institutional disfigurement precipitated by inordinate greed and parochial interest, the nation's nascent democracy is gradually losing its grip, lustre and aura both locally and globally.

The masses are not only disenchanting, disillusioned and disconnected from the polity, but have also lost confidence and trust in the government. This was demonstrated in the recent nationwide strike and protest orchestrated and prosecuted by the combination of the NLC, TUC and some civil societies in Nigeria. Granted that every democracy is often spiced with some other ideologies like plutocracy, capitalism and socialism, there cannot be real democratic institution if the setting is predominated by a class that is only interested in feathering its own nest and whose policies and programmes do not in any manner attempt to alleviate the precarious state of the citizenry. It suffices to argue that apart from the imperialistic principles which are the basis of all the problems of the developing world, the Nigerian plutocrats and their allies have contributed optimally in squandering the hope of their

people by vitiating the aspirations and expectations of the dividend of independence.

Our thinking, therefore, is that the country should evolve or generate any ideology(ies) that would be a building block and not a stumbling one and one that is capable of stifling and frustrating the imperial ambition of the plutocrats and kleptocrats that constitute serious hindrance to, and fetters unjust structures, policies and manipulative strategies. The Nigerian millionaires and billionaires should have a rethink and re-invest their 'wealth' in their own country rather than investing in other countries that have already attained optimal advancement in various spheres of life. Though every nation has its own peculiarities, problems and solutions, it is our feeling that Nigeria should take a cue from developed nations in relation to models of development. Many wealthy elite in developed democracies first consider investing in their own countries before giving consideration to other countries. For instance, investors such as Warren Buffett of USA, William Henry (Bill) Gates—an American business magnate and investor, Ted Turner—an American and the founder of Cable News Network (CNN), Carlos Slim Helú of Mexico, Bernard Arnault of France, Larry Ellison of USA, Lakshmi Mittal of India, Amancio Ortega of Spain, Eike Batista of Brazil, Mukesh Ambani of India are all top 10 wealthiest men in the world and investors that contributed maximally in economic development of the world beginning from their country. Furthermore, these wealthy individuals do a lot to develop their societies via donating to charities, heavy taxation as well as the establishment of foundations that fund education, research and the control of diseases. This is not the case with Nigerian wealthy persons. However, there are quite a number of Nigerian technocrats and bureaucrats though in the minority, who have indeed, contributed in no small measure towards the economic and political development of the country by investing largely in the country. The likes of Alhaji Dangote, Ibetu, and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo fall under this category.

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