

CONTEXTUALIZING DICTATORSHIP IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A STUDY OF CHINUA ACHEBE AND OKEY NDIBE'S SELECTED TEXTS

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ABSTRACT: Nigeria is in the confederacy of democratic nations and is assumed to be blossoming. The manner of political leadership in the country has exposed even the fledgling democracy to the vagaries of uncouth behaviors with its affiliated oppression, tyranny, and brutality. This is such that the players in the politics of the callous unleash injustice and act without recourse to the rule of law. The consequent rumblings by its citizenry emanating from the undemocratic actions by the leaders are succinctly captured in Nigerian literature, such as in Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. (2021). These texts ventilate the anti-democratic processes prevalent in the politics of the country's leadership from the period after independence to the present time, spanning the first republic, 1963, to this present political dispensation. This paper, therefore, using a qualitative method, makes a literary analysis of the issues of failure of democratic liberties and highhandedness by political leaders, using the trajectory of political science concepts of democracy, illiberal democracy, and liberal autocracy as key tools. It examines the political processes and behaviors in the afore-mentioned texts, and specifically focuses on the leadership styles and activities of the key actors, which are against democratic tenets. The paper believes that the governance deficit in the country results from non-adherence to the ideals of democratic principles by those at the helm of affairs, and advocates the rule of law and enthronement of true democracy to ensure a peaceful and harmonious nation.

KEYWORDS: autocracy, democracy, dictatorship, governance, illiberalism, leadership, liberties

Introduction

Nigeria is a democratic nation, but this has been more in nomenclature than in practice, evidenced by the manner of governance inherent in the system since the inception of civilian rule. Democracy in Nigeria's leadership is rife with autocracy, manipulation, and corruption, starting with the checkered electoral process. This scenario is aptly captured by Nnoli (2003, p. 168) when he notes that "The democratic political process of Nigeria's civilian politics and some of the other African states does not enable the masses of the African people to have a say in their political affairs." African political leaders manipulate every democratic process to their advantage and against democratic tenets that benefit the masses. Hence, the mode of political leadership in the country has exposed the supposed democracy to vagaries of uncouth political behaviors with the concomitant effect of oppression, autocracy, and dictatorship. Nnoli (2003, p. 166) stated that:

African politicians have invented the one-party system of government as an institutional mechanism for maintaining power in spite of the wishes of the people. This is an organization of sycophants (i.e., parasitic and flattering followers) of the leader, and its function is to legitimate the whims and caprices of the leader.

This style of leadership is exemplified by the President Bola Tinubu government of Nigeria, where the All Progressives Congress party, APC, stifles the voice of opposition and does not allow any form of castigation or criticism. As a result, the people are usually treated as enemies and subjected to all oppressive tendencies. Lending his voice to the unending insensitivities of democratically elected African political leaders, and the reckless abandon of the democratic principles, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1991, p. 23) observes that:

[...] the reality of contemporary events places much emphasis on the use and misuse of power. This reality is heightened in an acrimonious environment where social, economic and political power are subjected to varied manipulations by miscellaneous groups and communities.

These growing, disturbing trends are succinctly captured in Nigerian literature as seen in the selected texts that open up the existing undemocratic political processes and suppression of political liberties in Nigeria. This paper therefore examines political transformations in Nigeria from the first republic, 1963 to the present time.

Literature Review

Scholars have studied Achebe's and Ndibe's texts under different themes and theoretical perspectives as such and have opened up other vistas of criticism. Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* have been widely studied by researchers such as, Dicken's (2017), "Political Transformation in the Nigerian Novel: A Postcolonial Study of Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Aluko's *Chief the Honourable Minister* and Akpan's *The Crunch Eaters*." This paper appraises how three texts capture the political transformation in Nigeria over the years, beginning from the First Republic, independence, 1960 to 1966, interspersed with military coups of 1966 and 1983, and transition to democratic rule accounting for the present time. "The paper reveals that despite the many political transitions that have taken place in Nigeria, positive political transformation remains a mirage" (Dickenson, 2017, p. 235). And as contained in the texts, "the first two works capture situations during the first Republic while the third work illustrates situations during the Third Republic and beyond" (Dickson, 2017, p. 236). The essay indicates that successive political administrations in Nigeria over the years have remained problematic. It highlights further the fact that "the society in all the three novels, including *A Man of the People*, is one bedeviled by corruption and immorality where all segments of the society are affected: individuals, communities, social institutions, and the polity" (Dickson, 2017, p. 243-4). And so, the democratic attainment of political leadership in Nigeria remains a mirage.

Writing on Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* in a paper entitled "Amechi Akwanya's Theory of Representation of Thought and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*," using a postcolonial analysis, the paper echoes the fact that the political problem in Nigeria stems from ineffective leadership. The essay highlights the importance of representation and the link between language and concepts in the production of meaning. The paper discusses Achebe's use of Pidgin English to reveal the oppression and pains of the downtrodden, reiterating that: "Achebe assigns Pidgin English more meanings to express the troubled phase of Nigeria history... of the leaders as represented in the language of the common characters" (Eze, 2022, p.70). Akwanya (2022), in "Steamed into Well-Done Mutton: The Solar Plague and Discursive Formation in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*," lays bare the text's constructional logic using the concept of discursive formation. He highlights the fact that there are various entryways to the discussion of *Anthills of Savannah*, which have been done mainly under the umbrella of discourse analysis, under the thematic spheres as follows:

[...] like the politics of postcolonialism (kalpakli), women emancipation (Shamim), ideological concerns (Olusola), the metaphors of Anthill (Opata), the poetics of care and solidarity (Akwanya), the discursive value of naming (Olaluwiye), and so forth" (Oboko, & Ile et al, 2022, p. 352).

This underscores the various and multiple critical attention already given to the text and, by extension, Achebe's texts.

Critical reviews on Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* include that by Mkandire (2020) in the essay, "Alienation and Despair in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*." This study uses postcolonial and existential theories to project alienation and despair as the leading causes of frustration, anger, and helplessness that push the people into protests. He states that the: "text depicts poor governance, political oppression, and economic exploitation and suppression of human rights as the main causes of alienation and despair" (Mkandire, 2020, p. 2363). The writer further describes the text as: "a satirical and allegorical representation of Nigeria in the grip of dictatorship foisted upon it by the military in the last four decades" (Akingbe, 2013, p. 158) in "Rallying Against Dehumanization: Repudiating Military Brutality in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*." Likewise, Edwin Onwuka argues that the text, *Anthills of the Savannah* deals with the military in African politics. These discussions, wide as they are, leave a vacuum that is being filled by this paper, highlighting the undemocratic practices by the political leaders, described as illiberal democracy.

Methodology

This paper applies a qualitative methodology of literary analysis of issues of dictatorship and autocracy in the country's leadership using the afore-mentioned texts as the primary data. This methodology involves the interdisciplinary application of political concepts of illiberal democracy, democracy and liberal autocracy as key tools in analyzing the political processes and behaviours of the key characters in the texts. Specifically, the paper examines the leadership styles and the brutality of the key actors: Chief Nanga, Major Sam and General Isa Palet Bello, whose acts are against democratic principles and so better described as illiberal democracy or dictatorialness. Secondary data of analysis includes journals, reviews and critical books on the concepts and the literary texts.

Analysis

Illiberal democracy, according to Darinself (2022), is situated against the ideals of liberal democracy, whereas "liberal democracy is more than a system wherein parties lose elections. The author notes, it is also one where individual rights and liberties are secured and the rule of law upheld." Respect to human dignity and the constitution is the hallmark of democracy; hence illiberal democracy thwarts and neglects the constitution. Illiberal democracy hides under the guise of liberal democracy to perpetuate illegality and unconstitutionality. Davenport (2000, p.3) observes that illiberal democracies reveal that "States may look like a democracy with elections, parties, and judiciary, but this does not mean that they will act like one about their interaction with citizens." They insincerely portray democratic principles and ideals by manifesting some false features of a democratic polity. In such situations, electorates go to the polls to exercise their franchise, but it gets thwarted by the electoral managers. The citizens in this dispensation lose the powers and freedom to interrogate their leaders or hold them accountable. "This type of system is difficult to comprehend for it challenges expectations that specific changes in government structure would accompany improvements in the way that citizens are treated by authorities" (Davenport, 2000, p.3). All these are in direct contrast to true democratic ideals. These identified features are equally dominant in a liberal autocratic state whereby there are usually no elections, and where they ever exist, the people are without choice as such elections are highly rigged and manipulated. Likewise, in an illiberal autocracy, there seems to be political freedom as individuals enjoy some elements of freedom to organize or to protest.

There is equally a thin line between illiberal democracy and liberal autocracy. Illiberal democracies are usually likely to end in a coup. Political leaders in this dispensation give some concessions that may make them stay in power, looking for the presidency for life, or extension of tenure. Such leaders employ state powers and apparatus, such as the media and the police, to clamp down on perceived opponents considered as threats to their continued stay in power. The tenets of political liberties, freedom, accountability, and the rule of law are therefore lacking in an illiberal democracy. The activities of the political leaders in such dispensation run counter to the practice of democracy, a situation prevalent in Nigeria. Hence, the trajectories of leadership, democracy, illiberal democracy, and liberal autocracy seem to correlate with each other in the leadership structure in the Nigerian society. These issues, which hold sway over the political atmosphere of the country are succinctly captured in textual narratives understudy: Achebe's *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. These novels have for long been consistent in presenting the poor leadership situations prevalent in some African countries.

Leadership, Political Structure, and Character

In the practice of democracy in Nigeria, the tenets of fairness, transparency, and the rule of law are jettisoned and subverted, giving vent to autocracy and dictatorship. This scenario has persisted in Nigeria, especially since the onset of the second republic, which spanned from October 1, 1979, to December 31, 1983, marking the introduction of the Presidential system of government in Nigeria. The reality of the unfortunate situation is such that every regime in Africa, military or civilian, perpetuates oppressive mechanisms against the people, while the leaders exhibit corrupt tendencies against the constitution and the rule of law. In this scenario, it is observed that political oppression and manipulation are sustained by force, while:

Communities are pitted against one another in a vicious attempt at divide and rule. Resort to ethnocide enters the agenda of politics. Intrigues in the corridors of power replace democratic decision-making.

Political opponents of the leaders are physically liquidated or reported as being “missing” [...] The political leader must rely extensively on the army and police that now constitute the pillars of the regime [...] (Nnoli, 2003, p.167).

The structures as enunciated in the foregoing are anti-democratic and portray political regression and physical manhandling characteristic of dictatorship and autocracy. These situations are highlighted in the narratives under reference.

Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, all termed political novels. Each of the texts has a similar description relating to a bad leadership structure. Thus, *A Man of the People* is termed a fictional representation of leadership crisis in Nigeria” (Farafina, 2020, p. 3). The text's narrative is replete with incidents of corruption and highhandedness by the leaders. Ezenwa-Ohaeto in “Patriots and Parasites: The Metaphor of Power in *Anthills of the Savannah*” states that: “*A Man of the People* “examines political power and its consequences [...]”. It ends with a coup while *Anthills of the Savannah* explores the consequences of that coup” (H. Ehling 1991, p.24). The misuse of power results in the failure of leadership in both cases bringing in a military overthrow of the reign of tranny. It is stressed that: “the novel is an attempt to give a reflection of the real leadership situation in Nigeria [...]” (Farafina, 2020, p.10). The description of *Anthills of the Savannah* is not very different from that of *A Man of the People* as a chronicle of continuous struggle by the people to overcome a history of suffering brought about by bad government. It is argued that:

Anthills of the Savannah peruses and probes into the world of power and military dictatorship, and a sequel of *A Man of the People* which ended with a military takeover, and turned out to be prophetic in real life (Achebe, 1966, p. 35).

In line with this, David A Maughan Brown, (1991, p. 12) posits that:

[...] the obsession with ‘Leadership’ is so pervasive in *Anthills of the Savannah* such that leadership finds direct expression and reference to leaders who openly looted our treasury, whose effrontery soiled our national soil (Farafina, 2020, p. 11).

This situation not only characterizes the current leadership doldrums in Nigeria, but also adds to the argument of Akwanya, who observed in *No Longer a Tribe* that:

[...] failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being” (Akwanya, 2022, p. 159).

The bottom line in the description of these novels is that the structure of political leadership is faulty as a democracy.

Ethical leadership finds other meanings in the illiberalism manifest in the democratic structure which is fraught with authoritarianism. Kalapi Sen uses the word “sovereignty” (Okike 2028, p. 116) in describing *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) as widely acclaimed political novels with the power of the state over the citizens unrestrained by the rule of law. He posits that sovereignty is a positive tenet in modern politics with the attributes of freedom and democracy but for him, ironically, when applied in reality, it depicts despotism and presents a neo-colonial situation. He succinctly adds that,

Achebe depicts such dictatorial regimes in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* [...] as a result of the misuse of ‘sovereignty’ by the nation's leaders which forces the free citizens of the state to live in perpetual claustrophobia (Okike, 2018, 116).

Following the extrapolations on Achebe's texts. Farafina (2020, p. 13) argues that: “*A Man of the People* portrays mediocrity, hypocrisy, decadence of morals, egoistic attitudes and corruption [...]” (4). While highlighting the incidents of despotic sovereignty over the citizens, Kalapi Sen observes that:

[...] the initiation of this situation can be traced in the unnamed fictional state of *A Man of the People*, which mirrors a post-independence Nigeria, and ends with a military coup to counter the nepotism of the

ruling parties in the democratic set-up. The legacy of dictatorial rule seemed to be carried forward and given a monstrous form in *Anthills of the Savannah*, which ends with the death of the trio: Sam, Chris, and Ikem” (Sen, 2018, p.116).

These dictatorial regimes are evident in both *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, yet, the monstrosity of the political decapitation tends to gain in magnitude as represented in Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*.

Falola (2023) reviews Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* as a leadership curse in Africa and its consequences. He highlights the highhanded style of leadership exemplified by Isa Palet Bello and wonders: “why African leaders crave power by all means, spend a fortune to gain it and even risk their lives for it” (Falola, 2022). He expresses the fact that leaders rigged elections and do all they can to buy the loyalty of the populace to allow them to stay in power. Following the same line of thought, Nweze (2023, p.7) reports that:

The novel’s opening pages give the detailed story of oppression, corruption, egregious human right abuses, brutal killings, and other ills visited on the Madian populace by the higher echelon of the military.

The level of oppression and stack negation of the rule of law give rise to another version of leadership that depicts anti-democracy, presenting a state full of corrupt and tyrannical leaders.

Ndibe acting as a mouthpiece of the majority of Madians who, at the dawn of independence, thought that their lives would be better than it was during the colonial period shows that what the nation inherited from the English was placed in the hands of politicians who sucked its blood until it became anemic” (Mkandawire, 2020, p. 2365).

These overviews chronicle the fact of non-democratic, autocratic, dictatorial and despotic styles of leaders that is rife in a supposed democratic dispensation. All are described as illiberal democracies as they counter the basic structure of democracy, whereby leaders come to power through the process of election, but end up with selection. It becomes obvious that the political process and leadership style in the narratives are a subversion of the people’s choice and wishes and therefore a negation of the principles of democracy.

Images of Dictatorialness and Autocracy in the Texts: The Illiberal Democracy

The wrong notion of democracy and the faulty characters of the supposed democratic rulers are starkly evidenced in the actions and inactions of the major characters in the selected texts of Achebe and Ndibe. This is because “there is always a self-interest and intention in the promises of politicians to the people aimed at retaining the political power which is a narcissistic propensity and a hubris syndrome” (Ulogu & Udogu, 2018, p. 106). And soon after they have gained power, the leaders, according to Nnoli (2003, p. 168), transform to:

Political gods, the life-presidents, the political sit-tighters, the ubiquitous one-party system, the muzzling of the press, the arrest and detention without trial of political opponents, the disappearance of political dissenters, the burning desire to control what books are read in schools, all these factors which singly in various combinations characterize most of the African States stood in very sharp contrast to the free political enterprise of Nigeria.

The fictional characters in the texts: Chief Nanga in Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, General Sam in *Anthills of the Savannah*, and Major Isa Palet Bello in Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*, at one time or another, misused their powers and exhibited a sit-tight mentality. Their quest for power led them to seek a life presidency. Chief, the Honourable Minister Nanga was a class teacher, who later joined politics, and gained popularity for championing political propaganda. He transitioned from an unknown backbencher in the reigning governing political party, the POP, to clinching an empty ministerial seat. This sheer opportunity for political power instils in him a desire for more power, pushing him to seek re-elections.

He is described as the man who “had that rare gift of making people feel-even while he was saying harsh things to them that – there was not a drop of ill will in his entire frame” (*A Man of the People*, 1966). Nanga employs all manner of political gimmicks to lobby and cling to power, while the

people feel swayed and dance to his tune in expectation of a favour leaving off massive corruption. Hence, Psalm (2018) observes that:

[...] the system is denied of checks and balances since everyone's goal is to 'grab' all the fund he can grab. Like a cartel of thieves, the cabinet's primary motive in government is just obvious. Then loyalty is to themselves, hence Odili's narrative exposes their blind support for the Prime Minister even when they suspect his policy is likely to cost the nation dearly.

This tendency of political leaders to cling to power is fed by the naivety and vulnerability of the masses, and the over ambition and greed of the leaders as exemplified in Chief Nanga whose desire to cling to power is revealed in the analogy made by Odili the narrator in the text. He muses:

A man who has just come in from the rain and dried his body and put on dry clothes is more reluctant to go out again than another who has been indoors long enough to be able to say: "To hell with it..." (*A Man of the People*, 1966).

From this analogy, we understand the culpability of the people in advancing the inordinate desires of the political leaders. This scenario of using divergent strategies runs through the texts under study.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Gen Sam is smart enough to clinch the position of the president. He employed the state apparatus of the media and press to hound his perceived opponents who incidentally are his childhood friends, Chris Oriko and Ikem Osodi. Sam desires a life presidency and would not tolerate any form of opposition. Hence, he falls out with his friends, Chris and Ikem, who express a different idea about his ambition. Sam also punished the Abazons for questioning his life presidency. He calls for a referendum or plebiscite on this matter, and he is out to deal with any opposition. Akwanya (2022, p. 356) points to the fact that Sam "being the president of Kangan quickly becomes infused in his mind with holding out, against and overcoming his boyhood friends, Chris and Ikem, and perhaps, more importantly, living long." Ironically, Sam tries to impose a one-man rule on the people. Unfortunately, the people of Abazon failed to agree mutually to this until the wrath of the President, Sam, descended on them. He denies them water by ordering the stoppage of the water borehole in the area. The same was done by Chief Nanga to the people, for allowing their son Odili to campaign against him. The leader of the Abazon bemoans their fate by saying:

Sometime ago, we were told that the Big Chief himself was planning to visit our village and see our suffering. Then we were told again that he was not coming because he had just remembered that we had said no to him two years ago. So, we said if he will not come, let us go and visit him instead in his house (*Anthills of the Savannah*, 1987).

Gen Sam played on their intelligence by pretending to care about their complaint as he asked Professor Okong to humour the people and promise them that "their problems, not complaints will receive his Excellency's attention" (Achebe, 1987, p.16). Earlier on this same issue, Sam had an argument with Chris on the manner of reception of the Abazonians on a protest to His Excellency. Gen. Sam does not hesitate to remind Chris that he is still a soldier and not a regular politician. Sam employs all manner of intimidation to subdue the voices of his friends.

Most especially, Sam used the State media outfit, the Gazette, to haunt his friends Chris and Ikem at the height of their crises. He declares Christopher Oriko wanted, accusing him of regicide. One of the radio announcements consistently rends the airwaves with accusation coming from the National Gazette that:

[...] the commissioner for Information Mr. Christopher Oriko, who had not been seen in his office or his residence for the past one week had according to unconfirmed reports left the country in a foreign airline bound for London disguised as a Reverend Father and wearing a false beard" (*Anthills of the Savannah*, 1987).

Such propagandist tactics are used to cover the dictatorial tendencies of the leadership. Similarly, the announcement in the National Gazette on the promotion of Major Johnson Ossai to the rank of full colonel are all in disguise of the rule of law, and constitutional, democratic principles, which in all

ramifications are all ploys to perpetuate illiberal democracy. To this, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1991, p.25) affirms the fact that “the major character known as His Excellency is a personification of military power in the novel and his meeting with his commissioner proves an indication of the use of power at the apex of the societal structure.” Sam exudes absolute power, reminding even his childhood friends, commissioners, and subjects that he is in charge.

Similar forms of brutality and oppression in the guise of autocracy are presented in Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* (2000). For example, the instance of the shenanigans of court prosecution of Bukuru is a show of deceit and political grandstanding. This is because the State apparatus used in his arrest and prosecution is a tool of the government, and the whole exercise is in futility. The government of Madia, led by Major Palat Bello, spends time and money to follow due process in their affairs as a cover-up for evil acts. The adjournment of cases and the employment of psychiatrists to examine Bukuru who is intimidated to believe he is mad for proclaiming the Head of State a rapist and a murderer point to that fact. This is revealed by Dr Mandi, one of the psychiatrists working on Bukuru to understand his state of mind, as a madman or a normal man. In their interaction, Dr Mandi reveals to him that he has received orders to confirm him a madman. He tells him:

The intention behind his trial: the State, my friend has decided to try you as a mad person. That’s the only reason the case was adjourned after what happened in court, you must understand why (Ndibe, 2021, p. 67).

Shamelessly, the State adopts every democratic apparatus of due process to allege and confirm him mad and goes ahead to enact a law and backdate it for the sole aim of finding legitimate grounds to silence the voice of his protest. Bukuru was warned: “You can’t publicize dirty secrets about the Life President and hope to sleep peacefully” (Ndibe, 2021, p. 68). The government of Major Palet silenced the voice of the people of Madia, represented by Buruku.

Earlier, the government led by Prime Minister Ashiki was riddled with fraud and corruption, and embezzlement of common patrimony. The cabinet ministers and government functionaries lived lavishly while the masses were daily impoverished and brutalized. During this regime, Madia was described as “the stranglehold of the most vicious kleptocracy anywhere on our continent – a region in which ministers and other public officials looted whatever was within their reach, and much that wasn’t” (Ndibe, 2021, p. 110). These negative testaments are features of illiberal democracy as they run counter to the principles of accountability and transparency inherent in a democratic setting.

Silencing the voice of the people is an anti-democratic principle found common in the government of Madia. Democracy provides rights of expression, criticism, and protection, but in Madia, the reverse is the case. Even as one of the commissioners, Dr. Titus Bato, the Commissioner for National Planning, refuted the report of the Hunger Institute that declares Madia the poverty hub, describing it as useless and untrue. The Commissioner, who appears before the Parliament to explain the situation in an interaction with the members, becomes contemptuous of the Parliament by ignoring the questions put to him, and eventually resorts to vituperations. Dr Bato arrogantly suggests the death of Madians as a way of reducing population and solving the food crisis. His suggestions provoked agitation and condemnation in the House and led to chaos. Still, he refused to tender an apology to the House and to the Madians as was requested of him. The news of his refusal to apologize sparked off protests. The people took to the streets. The masses, the university students, and the labour unions decide to embark on a strike, and national protest, and a street demonstration. The government descends on them with the force of law, using the police against the people, thereby silencing the people’s right to expression and association. The police employed all manner of intimidation and weapons to disperse the protesters. At the end, some people were killed, whereby “eyewitness accounts estimated that between twenty and thirty corpses were taken away in two police trucks” (*Arrows of Rain*, 2021). The leaders make sure that the voices of the people are silenced using government apparatus, including the media, the court, and other arsenals in the guise of democracy. This continues in the reign of Major Palat after the coup. Political leaders in Nigeria have continued to use propaganda to rationalize and perpetuate their autocratic modes of democratic rule.

Conclusion

Nigeria does not practice a distinct style of political leadership. This is because the political parties that produce leaders have lost their sense of political ideologies and manifestos that guide their actions. The electoral system is rife with inconsistencies and fraud, making it impossible to achieve a free and fair election of leaders. This paves the way for the emergence of corrupt leaders who blatantly subvert the constitution of the federal Republic, to give vent to the vagaries of undemocratic exercises of power only by the arrowheads of government. A known democracy operates on the principles of inclusivity and liberties, unfortunately, the predominant style of political leadership inherent in the country is anti-democratic and best described as illiberal democracy or liberal autocracy. Thus, the leadership challenges in the nation result from the non-adherence to the democratic ideals by those at the helm of affairs who twist the rules to suit their whims against the people, leaving them vulnerable and insecure. The paper observes the clueless and rudderless style and practice of vagaries of government as the leaders make all possible effort to impose their will on the people in the guise of rule of law. It advocates a guided style of leadership that upholds the rule of law for a peaceful and harmonious nation. This paper seeks a conscious implementation of the electoral guidelines that makes it possible for Nigeria to have free, transparent, and fair elections of its leaders. A true democracy advocates purposeful adherence to the constitution and the people's voice as a definitive approach to enthroning a lasting democratic government in Nigeria.

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