

Problematic Democracy: Nigeria and Russia in a Comparative Context

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Abstract

This article compares democracy in Nigeria and Russia. Although universal democracy is often associated with Western liberal values such as egalitarianism, secularism, equality and free markets, individual countries of the world has ‘domesticated’ democracy to ‘suit’ their values and local contents. Thus, this paper contends that while Nigeria and Russia manifest some outward paraphernalia of democracy such as constitutionalism and periodic elections; several core elements of democracy are missing in both. The paper concludes that while democracy is an antithesis in Nigeria; it is an oxymoron in Russia.

Keywords: Nigeria, Russia, democracy, development, infrastructure, governance

Introduction and Conceptual Discourse

Structurally, this article is in three parts: an introduction and conceptual discourse, which attempts a brief discourse of democracy followed by the comparison of the brands of democracy practised by both countries, followed by a conclusion.

Russia and Nigeria had striking different experiences with regard to status, power, influence and size in the early stages of their histories, and while the former was an extensive empire and imperial power (1721-1917) that built the third largest empire in history with a population of 125.6 million in 1897;¹ the latter was a colony subjected to a '99 year lease' to Britain² and was never an empire in the sense of Russia, though the Oyo and Benin Empires flourished luxuriantly within (and beyond) its borders.

Democracy is relatively young in Nigeria and Russia – just about two and a half decades while both are not strangers to autocratic and repressive governments. Under its tsars, Russia was an absolute and autocratic state wherein democracy was foreign.³ Also, when the Romanov dynasty was thrown off the throne following the 1917 Revolution, Russia transmuted from *tsarist autocracy* to *communist totalitarianism* particularly under Josef Stalin, described Kaul as “a man who respected no rules or ethics”.⁴ As a United States’ classified document (released to the public in February 1994) pointed out, throughout Soviet history, political activities were illegal and impermissible and anyone who engaged in them took “a significant risk” as it almost always resulted in very “harsh treatment...including immediate arrest...loss of pay or jobs, longer prison term, forced labor or confinement in mental institutions”.⁵ Ironically, the two Russian leaders who attempted some forms of liberalisation and freedom got consumed in the process: Tsar Alexander II was killed in the streets of St. Petersburg on 13 March 1881 by a bomb thrown by a member of the radical People’s Will⁶ on the very day he signed a proclamation (the so-called Loris-Melikov constitution) that would have created two legislative commissions made up of indirectly elected representatives while Gorbachev’s ‘glasnost’ and ‘perestroika’ consumed his presidency and the Soviet Union. The tragic fate of these two reformers is the thesis of Lipman’s study.⁷ Ulyanov Aleksandr, Vladimir Lenin’s elder brother, was one of the six executed for the assassination of Tsar Alexander. Although, he was not one of those designated to throw the bomb at the Tsar, he manufactured the nitroglycerine used in making it. Ulyanov who carried out his own defence and refused to ask for imperial clemency said tsarist autocracy was responsible for their action. In his final address to the court, he said

Among the Russian people there will always be found many people who are so devoted to their ideas and who feel so bitterly the unhappiness of their country that it will not be a sacrifice for them to offer their lives...my purpose was to aid in the liberation of the unhappy Russian people. Under a system which permits no freedom of expression and crushes every attempt to work for their welfare and enlightenment by legal means, the only instrument that remains is terror. We cannot fight this regime in open battle, because it is too firmly entrenched and commands enormous powers of repression. Therefore, any individual sensitive to injustice must resort to terror. Terror is our answer to the violence of the state. It is the only way to force a despotic regime to grant political freedom to the people... there is no death more honourable than death for the common good⁸

The Russia Federation attained its current democratic status only after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. On the other hand, of its approximately six decades of statehood, Nigeria has had democratically elected governments for about two and a half decades while military dictatorship account for the remainder, climaxing with General Sanni Abacha's reign of terror, which, to a limited extent, qualifies as Nigeria's equivalent of Stalin's reign of terror. However, following Abacha's death in 1998, and the General Abdulsalam Abubakar's stint, the democratic process was restored in May 1999.⁹

Democracy is an omnibus concept that has been subjected to all shades of meanings, cataloguing, interpretations and application. Today, there is probably no concept that is subjected to antagonistic interpretations and contradictory practises as the concept of democracy. One reason for this pervasive contradiction is that democracy is the least objectionable form of government. Consequently, from the extreme left to the extreme right, states always lay bogus and questionable claim to democracy. Indeed, even military regimes, with records of pervasive violations of human rights and other anti democratic tendencies, sometimes lay claim to democracy.¹⁰ This is what Ekeh refers to as *democratism*, which, according to him, is the brand of rule that makes use of 'false principles of the institutions of democracy' while at the same time creating anti-democratic conditions.¹¹ This obviously informed Crick's description of democracy as the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs¹² or what Tocqueville calls 'democratic despotism'.¹³ Indeed, democracy is in the catalogue of Gallie's 'essentially contested concepts'.¹⁴

Any meaningful attempt at understanding democracy must proceed from its ancient definition as peoples' rule. The Greek words *demos* and *kratia* mean 'people' and 'rule' or 'authority' respectively. Thus, democracy refers to 'rule by the people'. This began in the first half of the 5th century B.C. among the Greeks, thus beginning with what Dahl calls the transformation from rule by few to rule by many.¹⁵ During the French Revolution (1789-1799), the French lawyer and political leader, Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794), defined democracy as a "state in which the people, as sovereign, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself all that it can do well".¹⁶ Abraham Lincoln authored what has since become the most famous definition of democracy. In an Address delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery on 19 November 1863 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Lincoln asserted that 'all men are created equal' and defined people-centred as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'.¹⁷ The most important attraction of this definition is that it stresses the principle of equality (since all men are supposedly equal) and makes the people the subject and object of governance or what a scholar terms 'the *raison d'être* of governance'.¹⁸ Thus, going by Laski's definition of equality as the absence of special privilege;¹⁹ a democratic state is often said to be one wherein the citizens have equal access to justice, job, power, privilege, etc. Indeed, Gamble describes a democratic state as a 'republic of equals'.²⁰ This is because democracy implies that there should be a substantial degree of equality among people both in the sense that all the adult members of a society ought to have, so far as is possible, equal influence on those decisions which affect their lives.

According to Robert Dahl, in every democratic state, the citizens are ‘political equals’.²¹ This is because, as Bottomore has pointed out, all human beings are remarkably alike in some fundamental respects – they have similar physical, emotional and intellectual needs.²² In 1646, in an article entitled ‘An Arrow Against All Tyrants’, Richard Overton (a puritan) wrote “For by nature, all men are equal...even so we are to live everyone equally”.²³ Indeed, in virtually all his major works, Alexis de Tocqueville insisted that history (the story of humankind) is synonymous with equality.²⁴

However, as fascinating as the concept of equality is, there exists a wide gulf between its theory and practice, and indeed between the theory and practice of democracy itself. There is hardly anywhere in the world where democracy is a republic of equals, apparently because “through occupation or wealth, some citizens are more able than others to influence political decisions”²⁵ From the Greek City States to the emergence of modern state, the concept of egalitarianism had been consistently negated. In the often eulogised Greek City States, which Palma referred to as the ‘birthplace of democracy’,²⁶ every inhabitant supposedly had a direct say on issues which directly affected the state. It must be pointed out however that in practice, Greek democracy was an exclusive one because a large part of the adult population was denied full citizenship i.e. the right to participate in politics whether by attending the meetings of the Sovereign Assembly²⁷ or by serving in public offices – for instance, women were denied the right of full citizenship so were longterm resident aliens (*metics*) and the enslaved. Indeed, the enslaved were no more than the property of their owners totally bereft of legal rights.²⁸ Thus, only the non-enslaved were allowed to vote yet by 430 BC, nearly half of the total population of Athens were enslaved.²⁹ Furthermore, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the Enlightenment French social and political theorist and one of the first thinkers to question absolutism in Europe, limited his notion of democracy to property owners while John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the British philosopher-economist, opined that only the propertied class should be enfranchised.³⁰ Moreover, the emergence of modern state meant some loss of rights by individuals since the state possesses the coercive machinery to compel its members to carry out certain tasks. Thus, the reality is that in most modern states, while the citizens may be free to express their views, they are made to live under the conditions prescribed by their states (leaders). Although, while democracy is not synonymous with *diktat*; the above consideration may have informed the submission that democracy can never represent the rule of the majority, because, more often than not, the people merely accept the dictates of the minority – the leaders.³¹

In sum, in every human society and organisation, there are bound to be inequalities in status, influence, contributions and rewards. Indeed, inequality is the bottom line of the Circulation of Elite Theory as postulated by its leading apostle, Vilfredo Pareto ((1848-1923)), the Italian sociologist and economist. By definition, elites are a group which influences power and re-defines the norms of society. They have pre-eminence over other members of the society by various acts of deference.³² The deference and influence of the elite on the other members of the society may have informed Pareto’s conclusion that “history is a graveyard of aristocracies”.³³

This calls to question the entire content and context of the egalitarianism vaunted by liberal democracy: more often than not, the concept of equality espoused by democracy is theoretical, hence, its dismissal by Letwin as the ‘leading fetish of our time’.³⁴ Even in a leading democracy like Britain, as Andrew Harding has pointed out, most people only engage in democracy when they vote in general elections every four to five years. While admitting that to an extent, voices are lost or misplaced, Andrew argued that “more often than not, they are simply not heard”.³⁵ In his penetrating study of American political system, Lees asserted that ‘elitist and inegalitarian traits have always existed in American society’.³⁶ Indeed, Patterson has pointed out that despite the lofty claim that all people are created equal, equality has never been ‘American birthright’. He cited the 1882 ban which made it impossible for the Chinese to immigrate into the United States as well as other sundry discriminations against the Chinese and other Asians which were not ended until 1965. He opined that these discriminations were premised on the assumption that the Chinese were an inferior people.³⁷ Also, the Rosa Parks incident of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama is well known.³⁸ However, despite all the odds, it must be conceded, as Lees has rightly opined, politicians in the United States have always recognised the importance of the common person with a strong commitment to liberty.³⁹ From our analysis so far, it appears that while government may be for all, it cannot be by all. As Julius Nyerere once averred, in every form of government, as far as the masses are concerned, power is something wielded by others – even if on their behalf.⁴⁰ Nyerere’s view aligns with that of Anderson who defines politics simply as ‘making choices on behalf of other people’.⁴¹ Today, government by all is neither possible nor practicable because, as Bealey has pointed out, with vast numbers of people in the modern nation state, direct participation in decision making by all is impossible.⁴² Ironically, democracy flourishes when and where citizens enjoy basic freedoms, have a voice in how they are governed and understand the workings of their governmental system. If the principle of representative democracy is worthwhile and workable in other climes; its practise in Nigeria and Russia is faulty and fraudulent. In Nigeria, no one represents or protects the interests of others: individuals, whether in the cabinet or parliament, can hardly be described as representatives of the people. Indeed, as Suberu has pointed out, a fundamental feature of democracy in contemporary Nigeria is the deep and profound distrust of Nigerians for their elected representatives.⁴³ This is not surprising given the endless abortion and frustration of the aspirations and hopes of the people by successive Nigerian governments. On the other hand, for close to two decades, Russia has practiced *monocracy* – rule by an individual. This assertion will be substantiated as we move forward.

Nigerian and Russian Democracy: Some Convergences and Divergences

Democracy is the least objectionable and questionable form of government because it presupposes that authority emanates from and resides with the people. Thus, enfranchised and eligible citizens of a democratic state possess the power of the ballot through which they participate in the sel(ection) of their representatives. Indeed, this is about the only or commonest privilege majorities of citizens of democratic states all over the world enjoy in their quest to participate in governance.

This means that competitive, free and fair elections are the sine qua non of democracy because they are a regular and a direct means of citizens' ability to influence the choice and emergence of the occupiers of the structural frame. Unfortunately however, despite their enormous financial and personnel implications,⁴⁴ elections in Nigeria and Russia can hardly pass the most rudimentary credibility test. Nigerian elections can hardly be described as elections as they are characterised by all sorts of malpractises and fraud. It is indeed instructive to note that controversies arising from widespread electoral fraud and malpractises had assailed Nigerian democracy virtually all through its entire post-colonial political history. It would be recalled that the military intervened in the democratic process on 15 January 1966 following an acrimonious election in the defunct Western Region. Again, the military sacked the Aliyu Shagari-led civilian administration on 31 December 1983 following pervasive post-election violence in several parts of the country. Also, the military-civilian administration of General Ibrahim Babangida collapsed following the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election presumably won by the late Moshood Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba. From the above, it is evident that Nigeria has a long history of failed electoral processes although since the commencement of the current democratic dispensation in 1999, five general elections had been successfully held. For all intents and purposes, Russian elections since year 2000 have been mere rehearsals and platitudes. There are excellent studies on the nature and pattern of elections in Russia, and a cursory glance at major newspapers and magazines around the world would confirm this assertion. For example, Treisman's study, particularly the section titled 'Manipulation and Fraud' provides insight into the questionable and fraudulent nature of elections in Russia.⁴⁵ Indeed, many Russians dismissed the 2012 presidential election as "a disgrace [and] not an election".⁴⁶

One major divergence between Nigerian and Russian democracy is regime change – while there have been regime change in the former; what exists in the latter is what Kathy and Will referred to as 'power vertical'⁴⁷ – exercise of power by a single person or what we prefer to call *monocracy*. Between 1999 and 2015, five general elections (which produced four presidents) were held in Nigeria. Indeed, the ruling All Progressive Congress defeated the People's Democratic Party of the immediate former president leading to the emergence of Mohamadu Buhari as president. Thus, like in other climes, Nigerian elections may not be foolproof; they are held periodically with the holders of the structural frame emerging there from.

Conversely, since the emergence of Vladimir Putin on the Russian political scene, elections have not been more than 'yes voice' to validate tenure elongation or continuity. As Harding rightly pointed out, elections in Russia are mere rituals which mimic and 'imitate democracy', but lack crucial elements of democracy.⁴⁸ According to Harding, the 2012 presidential election was

Vladimir Putin's Brezhnev moment...when he ceased simply being an elected leader and segued towards a lifetime presidency. Having neatly sidestepped the rules by doing a stint as prime minister (no Russian leader can serve more than two consecutive presidential terms) Putin can now go on and on. Brezhnev did 18 years, Stalin 31...who would bet against Vladimir matching Leonid?⁴⁹

It would be recalled that after two four-year terms as president (2000-2008), term limitations prevented Putin from running again so he picked Dmitry Medvedev to replace him. Medvedev made Putin prime minister but Putin remained 'the power behind the throne'. In December 2008, Putin secured amendments to the constitution: terms of office for the president and the Duma were extended to six and five years respectively. Putin has remained in office since thus creating what has been described as "the Putin forever model"⁵⁰ because, "most ordinary Russians consider any [election] outcome other than Mr Putin's victory unthinkable".⁵¹ This has created "apathy among some Russians and a softening of enthusiasm for the ruling elite".⁵² Among others, this has led to low turnout at elections. For example, voters' turnout in the 2016 parliamentary elections "was the lowest in Russia's modern history"⁵³ with only 28 percent of eligible voters making an appearance at polling stations in Moscow.⁵⁴ Indeed, a Russian compared voting to "urinating in a blocked toilet".⁵⁵ Thus, as Kathrin pointed out "18 years after Vladimir Putin first became president; attitudes towards election range from disinterest to cynicism...Kremlin's consultants find it challenging to keep up even the semblance of a competitive race".⁵⁶ This has earned Putin the title of 'vozhd' (maximum leader) in some quarters.

There is no doubt that democracy has brought untold succour or what Ronald terms 'political goods'⁵⁷ to humanity particularly in the Western world. Conversely, democracy has brought more pain than gain to ordinary Nigerians. Apparently, as pointed out earlier, it is absolutely impossible for all citizens of a state to practically participate in governance. However, the governed expect the government to fulfil certain basic obligations ranging from provision of security, power supply, potable water, good road network, functional health facilities, and viable educational system to provision of employment opportunities and payment of wages: Nigerian democracy has failed in virtually all.

Indeed, it appears that the older Nigerian democracy grows; the more it fails in the discharge of its social contract and constitutional responsibilities: there is no semblance of security for the lives and properties of Nigerians;⁵⁸ power supply is almost exactly nil;⁵⁹ potable water is a rarity;⁶⁰ Nigerians die in large numbers in road fatalities owing to extremely bad roads;⁶¹ health facilities are in shambles; the education sector suffers chronic under-funding and regular debilitating strikes; people lose rather than get jobs and wages occupy the lowest rung in the priorities' list of occupiers of Nigeria's democratic space.⁶²

In its editorial of 19 March 2014, the *Punch* observed that "this is not the Nigeria our founders envisaged. Things have changed and continue to change in a nasty sort of way. This is a failing nation – thanks in no small measure to successive governments and their prowling elites". In the same vein, Umasomba has pointed out that "Nigerian leaders are inured to the pitiable condition of life in Nigeria characterised by an acute unemployment, gruesome killings of innocent citizens by Boko Haram Sect, kidnapping... fuel scarcity, epileptic power supply and sundry life threatening activities that have daily defined the people's existence"⁶³ With unemployment rate of 18.8 percent, it is relatively easy for terror groups to swell their memberships by recruiting youth from Nigeria's overcrowded unemployment market thereby fuelling insecurity.⁶⁴ On 11 January 2018, over 70 people were murdered by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State (on 1 and 2 January) were given mass burial.⁶⁵ This sparked nation-wide condemnation of the country's porous security apparatus with the parliament warning that Nigeria was becoming red with blood of innocent citizens.⁶⁶ Yet, this is just one of scores of similar cases.

Conversely, to varying degrees, virtually all the above are opposite in Russia: the insecurity and killings by terror groups and herdsmen that pervade Nigeria is absent in Russia; about 96.9 percent of Russia's population has access to safe, clean water (the lowest in 25 years being 93.40 percent in 1990)⁶⁷ while the 1,088 TWh of electricity generated by Russia was the fourth largest in the world in 2017.⁶⁸ Conversely, the Spectator Index of the world's worst electricity supply in 2017 ranked Nigeria the second worst nation in power supply in 2017.⁶⁹ In terms of road network and functional institutions, Russia is well ahead of Nigeria. Also, Russia's literacy level of 99.7 percent almost doubles Nigeria's 51 percent.⁷⁰ According to UNICEF estimates, 10.5 million school age children were out of school in Nigeria in 2015⁷¹ while the UNESCO estimated that the country was home to 65 million illiterates in the same year. Furthermore, unemployment rate in Russia was 5.1 percent in November 2017 from 5.4 percent in the same month of the previous year.⁷² It is indeed not surprising that Nigeria was ranked 152 in a 188-country Human Development Index survey by the United Nations Development Programme in 2016 while Russia took the 49th position. According to the report, Nigeria belongs to the "low human development category...50.9 percent of the population [is] multidimensionally poor while an additional 18.4 percent live near multidimensional poverty".⁷³ One consequence of the malaise of poverty in Nigeria is what the Kaduna State Primary Health Care Development Agency referred to as 'severe acute malnutrition'. The Association estimated that 17,989 cases of severe malnutrition were reported in Kaduna State, northwest Nigeria, in 2017 and that "50 percent of under-5 deaths recorded in the state was due to malnutrition".⁷⁴

While the doctor-population ratio of Russia is one of the highest in the world (alongside Cuba, Belarus, Greece and Italy), that of Nigeria stands at 1 to 4,000, a situation the Medical and Dental Consultants Association of Nigeria described as appalling and unacceptable.⁷⁵ Moreover, while both countries are leading oil producing nations, Nigerians derive little or no benefits from the country's massive oil reserves. For example, apart from utilising oil revenues for the common good of its nationals, Russia has about 40 functional refineries and saturates both the domestic and international markets with refined petroleum products.⁷⁶ On the other hand, intractable corruption has not only ensured that Nigeria's enormous oil revenues are siphoned; it has ensured that the country's three refineries are in a state of permanent limbo. Thus, the country remains the only member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries that depends almost exclusively on importation of refined petroleum products, a situation the junior minister in the Petroleum Ministry referred to as a national 'shame'.⁷⁷

Another striking divergence between Nigerian and Russian democracy is the 'cost of democracy'. For all intents and purposes, Nigerian democracy is vampire democracy wherein the political elite suck the country dry through their lavish lifestyle and outlandish salaries and allowances. Nigeria's democracy is probably the best in the world with respect to elaborate investment in the comfort of the holders of the structural frame rather than in national development and human and material resources. Members of the Nigerian Parliament are probably the highest paid in the world. Basically, the Federations of Nigeria and Russia operate the same bi-camera legislature although Russia operates a federal semi presidential system (with prime minister and deputy prime ministers).

While there are 109 and 360 members in Nigeria's Senate (upper chamber) and House of Representatives (lower chamber) respectively; Russia's Federal Council (upper chamber) and State Duma (lower chamber) have 178 and 450 members respectively.⁷⁸ While a member of the upper chamber of the Nigerian parliament earns \$80,555 per month translating into well over \$8.4 million per annum; members of the Russian parliament earn less than \$90,000 per annum⁷⁹ whereas a member of Nigeria's lower chamber of parliament earns more than \$6 million per annum.⁸⁰ This implies that a Russian MP will have to work for between seven and nine years to earn what a Nigerian MP earns in one year. Yet, an overwhelming percentage of Nigerians live in horrendous poverty. Scholars have interrogated the nexus between the high cost of governance and Nigeria's underdevelopment⁸¹ suffice it to state here that while the ordinary Nigerian lives on less than \$1 per day, the Nigerian Parliament remains the poster-child of waste. With national minimum wage at \$50, no one deserves that much money while ordinary Nigerians are scavenging to make ends meet. And as the *Daily Trust* ruefully pointed out in its editorial of 18 June 2015 entitled "salaries, allowances for political office holders", it would take a working government employee on the national minimum wage the whole of his life to earn a Senator's monthly salary. In a similar vein, in a document by the Nigerian Labour Congress and a coalition of 40 civil rights groups in 2015, it was argued that the funds expended on the payment and allowances of 1,078 political office holders by the federal government [monthly] could pay the national minimum wage of 9,647,574 workers.

The document opined that the “foregoing raised issues of social justice in a country of about 170 million persons; whether it is right to dedicate this quantum of resources [3.87 per cent of the budget] to service this infinitesimal percentage [0.010] of the population”. Further, the document pointed out that “at a cost of \$1m per new megawatt of electricity, 50 per cent of the sum dedicated to paying these benefits can add 432.5 megawatts of electricity every year and finance [the construction of] 17,300 brand new classrooms.⁸² Indeed, annual budgetary allocation to Nigeria’s Parliament surpasses the annual budgets of 21 of Nigeria’s 36 states.⁸³ This culture of waste is unfortunately replicated at the state and local government levels.

Conclusion

The beauty and attraction of democracy is its core contents and concepts of equality, egalitarianism, secularism and constitutionalism. Democracy, as presently practised in Nigeria and Russia, is at cross-purposes with some of these concepts: in the former, citizens enjoy some freedom with a relatively viable and free press but the delivery of ‘democratic goods’ to the citizens at all the three tiers of government is inconsequential and almost exactly nil. On the other hand, citizens of the latter have access to comparatively larger amounts of ‘democratic goods’ but with an elaborate touch of autocracy and press censorship. The present arrangement that ensures that a significant proportion of Nigeria’s resources is expended on the payment of the wages and allowances of the occupiers of the structural frame while an overwhelming percentage of Nigerians is without security, life-supporting wages, jobs and basic infrastructures and amenities is the very antithesis of democracy, national development and fair play. Nigeria’s democracy remains the harbinger of trouble in the Nigerian state as it has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, fuelled corruption, exacerbated ethnic unrest and provoked unprecedented agitations by ethnic militias, strangled the economy and impoverished the masses.

The most cursory glance at available literature on Russian politics and society clearly indicates that Russia’s brand of democracy is bereft of the key concepts and contents of liberal democracy. This has given rise to the description of ‘Russian democracy’ in several shades and colours. Norris calls it ‘electoral autocracy’;⁸⁴ Evans labels it compromised and incomplete democracy;⁸⁵ Hille terms it ‘Putin-style democracy’⁸⁶; Lipman and McFaul (among others) call it ‘managed democracy’⁸⁷ while Nikolay describes it as ‘a mixture of authoritarianism and managed democracy’.⁸⁸ Indeed, it is instructive to note that an overwhelming percentage of literature on Russian politics includes either ‘failure’ or ‘myth’ in their titles.⁸⁹ One major flaw of Russian ‘democracy’ is what *The Guardian* of 20 April 2007 called ‘lack of electoral choice’ (gubernatorial elections were abolished in 2004 giving the president the power to appoint governors) since “the ballot box does not have the power of dictating or influencing who comes to power”.⁹⁰ Indeed, Solomon Ginzburg dismissed Russian elections as “imitation of elections” just like “many other [Russian] institutions that are imitations of democratic institutions”.⁹¹

Thus, as pointed out by the *The Guardian* of 4 December 2017, “a century after the revolution that dismantled Tsarist autocracy, Russia is still grappling with totalitarianism. The one-party tyranny of Soviet Union collapsed in 1917 but the promise of true democracy in Russia has failed to materialise”. Juxtaposed with the key contents and concepts of liberal democracy and viewed from any objective standpoint, Russia’s oxymoronic and autarkic democracy is soulless.

From the analysis above, it should be fairly clear that while Nigeria’s democracy provides larger quantum of freedom and ballot box power with little or no dividends of democracy accruing to the citizens; Russia’s mouthed democracy delivers larger amounts of ‘political goods’ to a populace with little or no press freedom and ballot box power. And as pointed out by Sergei Gulyaev, a onetime opposition member of parliament who was prevented from seeking re-election for voting against Vladimir Putin’s decision to re-appoint a Saint Petersburg governor, “there is de jure democracy [in Russia]; but in reality it does not exist”.⁹²

Notes and References

¹ See Rein Taagepera, “Expansion and Contraction Patterns of Large Polities: Context for Russia”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1997, pp. 475-504 and Russian Heritage, “1897 Census of Imperial Russia” retrieved from <http://www.findrussianheritage.com/online-projects/russian-ancestry-1897-census> on 5 December 2017.

² Lagos was annexed on 6 August 1861 under the threat of force by Commander Beddingfield of HMS Prometheus who was accompanied by the Acting British Consul, William McCoskry. The Oba {king} of Lagos, Dosunmu (spelled ‘Docemo’ in British documents) resisted the cession for 11 days while facing the threat of violence on Lagos and its people, but capitulated and signed the Lagos Treaty of Cession. Lagos was subsequently declared a British Colony on 5 March 1862. See “British Aggressions in Africa: Annexation of Lagos”, *The New York Times*, 20 October 1861; Antony G. Hopkins, “Property Rights and Empire Building: Britain's Annexation of Lagos, 1861”, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 40, Issue 4, 1980, pp. 777-798 and Preye Adekoya, “The Succession Dispute to the Throne of Lagos and the British Conquest and Occupation of Lagos” *African Research Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2016, pp. 207-226. For full texts of the Treaties that ceded Lagos to Britain, see Robert S. Smith, *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979: Appendixes ‘A’, ‘B’ & ‘C’ respectively titled ‘Treaty between Great Britain and Lagos, 1 January, 1852’; ‘The Treaty of Epe, 28 September 1854’ and ‘The Treaty of Cession, 6 August 1861’, pp. 135-141.

³ Part of the autocracy of tsarism was the rather long titles of the Emperors. For example, Nicholas bore proud and sonorous titles: 'Nicholas II, by God's grace, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, Tsar of Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberia, the Tauric Chersonese, Georgia, Lord of Pskov, Grand Duke of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volhynia, Podolia, Prince of Esthonia, Livonia, Courland, and Semigallia, Samogitia, Bielostok, Karelia, Tver, Yougoria, Perm, Viatka. . . Lord and Grand Duke of Lower Novgorod, Chernigov, Riazan, Polotsk, Rostov, Yaroslav . . . Lord and Sovereign of the lands of Iberia . . . and the Provinces of Armenia . . . Sovereign of the Circassian and Mountaineer Princes... Lord of Turkestan, Heir of Norway, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein Oldenburg, etc. etc.' See Edmund Walsh, "The Fall of the Russian Empire: The End of the Monarchy", *The Atlantic*, February 1928 Issue, p. 10.

⁴ T.N. Kaul, *Stalin to Gorbachev and Beyond*, New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991, p. xvi.

⁵ National Intelligence Council, "Dimensions of Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union", CIA Historical Program, n.d., pp. iii-iv.

⁶ Six members of the People's Will were subsequently sentenced to death by hanging: Vasily Generalov, Pokhomiy Andreyushkin, Vasily Osipanov, Petr Shevyrov and Ulyanov Aleksandr.

⁷ Kate V. Lipman, "Alexander II and Gorbachev: The Doomed Reformers of Russia", UVM Honors College Senior Theses. 158, The University of Vermont, 2017.

⁸ Quoted from Helen Rappaport, *Conspirator: Lenin in Exile. The Making of a Revolutionary*, London: Windmill Books, 2010, pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁹ Nigeria has had fifteen federal administrations (civilian and military) since independence on 1 October, 1960. While Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the first and only Prime Minister (October 1960-January 1966); President Muhammadu Buhari is the sitting President. In-between them were Lt. Gen. Johnson Thomas Umurakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi (16 Jan 1966 - 29 July 1966); Lt. Gen. Yakubu Gowon (1 Aug 1966 - 29 July 1975); Brigadier-General Murtala Ramat Muhammed (29 July 1975 - 13 Feb 1976); Brigadier-General Olusegun Obasanjo (14 Feb 1976 - 1 Oct 1979); Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari (civilian: 1 Oct 1979 - 31 Dec 1983); General Muhammadu Buhari (31 Dec 1983 - 27 Aug 1985); General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (27 Aug 1985 - 4 Jan 1993); Ernest Adekunle Oladeinde Shonekan (interim government: 26 Aug 1993 - 17 Nov 1993); General Sani Abacha (17 Nov 1993 - 8 June 1998); General Abdulsalam Abubakar (9 June 1998 - 29 May 1999); Olusegun Obasanjo (civilian: 29 May 1999 - May 29 2007.); Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (civilian: 29 May 1999-5 May 2010); Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (6 May 2010 - 29 May 2015).

¹⁰ Robert J. Mundt et. al. "Politics in Nigeria" in Gabriel A. Almond et. al. (eds.) *Comparative Politics Today*, New York: Longman, 2008, p. 706.

¹¹ Peter K. Ekeh, "Democratism Versus Democracy" in Festus Eribo et. al. *Window on Africa: Democratization and Media Exposure*, North Carolina Center for International Programs Publication No. 1, 1993, p. 51.

¹² Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964, p. 56.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, cited from Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, London: Pan Books Ltd., 1983, p. 117.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive list of Gallie's 'essentially contested concepts', see Andrew Coax et. al., *Power in Capitalist Societies: Theory, Explanations and Cases*, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1985, p. 30.

¹⁵ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, New York & London: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 1.

¹⁶ Andrew Gamble, *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought*, London: Macmillan, 1981, p. 91.

¹⁷ Full text of Lincoln's Address could be viewed at <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address. Both sites were assessed on 9 January 2018.

¹⁸ Nkolika E. Obianyo "Democracy on Sale: The 2007 Nigerian Elections and the Future of the Democratic Movement in Africa" in Victor Oguejiofor (ed.) *Nigeria's Stumbling Democracy and Its Implications for Africa's Democratic Movement*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 38.

¹⁹ Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 153. For a detailed examination of the origins, meanings, components and some of the factors that account for and promote inequality in the human society, see *ibid*, pp. 152-165 and Ernest Gellner *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 91, 93-110.

²⁰ Andrew Gamble, *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought*, p. 88.

²¹ Robert A. Dahl, *Participation and Opposition*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971, p. 1.

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- ²² T.B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964, p. 129.
- ²³ Quoted from A.P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938, p. 69.
- ²⁴ For a critique of Tocqueville's major political thought, see Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, London: Heinemann, pp. 4-8.
- ²⁵ Kenneth Janda et. al., *The Challenge of Democracy*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999, p. 13.
- ²⁶ Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies*, California: University of California Press, 1990, p. 14.
- ²⁷ The whole body of free born males (citizens) formed the Assembly or Ecclesia, a town meeting which every Athenian who had reached the age of twenty was entitled to attend. The Assembly met regularly – about ten times in the year and in extra-ordinary sessions. See George H. Sabine & Thomas L. Thorson, *A Theory of Political Thought*, New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. PVT. Ltd., 1973, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, p. 22.
- ²⁹ Winin Pereira, *Inhuman Rights*, The Other India Press, The Apex Press & Third World Press, p. 34. George H. Sabine & Thomas L. Thorson estimate that only a third of Athenians were slaves, p. 20.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Cited in A.A. Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 141.
- ³² B.W. Hodder, *Africa Today – A Short Introduction to African Affairs*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978, p. 53. For a detailed examination of the roles of the elite in the political process, see Kenneth Newton, *Second City Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, particularly chapter 8, pp. 165-193 and for the problems and privileges of elites, see P.C. Lloyd, "The Elite" in P.C. Lloyd et. al., *The City of Ibadan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 139-150.
- ³³ Quoted from T.B. Bottomore, p. 48. For a fairly detailed examination of the origins and characteristics of inequality, see John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, New York & Toronto: The New American Library, 1958, particularly chapter VII, pp. 69-83.

³⁴ William Letwin, *Against Equality*, London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983, p. 1.

³⁵ Andrew Harding, “Democratic Practise could be institutionalised in private and public spheres to help develop political debate and deliberation” retrieved from <http://blogs.ise.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/archives/23502> on 1 December 2017.

³⁶ John D. Lees, *The Political System of the United States*, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p. 79.

³⁷ Thomas E. Patterson, *We the People - A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006, p. 15. It must be pointed out however that there is probably no other nation that had fully opened her doors to immigrants from round the world as the United States. For example, between 1820 and 2000, about 65.2 million immigrants settled in the United States. Ibid, p. 6. Indeed, Dara Lind refers to America as “a nation of immigrants”: Dara Lind, “37 maps that explain how America is a nation of immigrants” <https://www.vox.com/2015/1/12/7474897/immigration-america-maps> retrieved on 11 December 2017.

³⁸ For a detailed analysis of the Rosa Parks incident and its consequences on American politics, see Fred R. Harris, *America's Democracy: The Ideal and the Reality*, Qakland: Scott Foreman & Co., 1980, pp. 106-110.

³⁹ John D. Lees, *The Political System of the United States*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Julius Nyerere, “Decentralisation” in Martin Minogue and Judith Molloy (eds.), *African Aims and Attitudes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 97.

⁴¹ Charles W. Anderson, *Statecraft: An Introduction to Political Choice and Judgement*, New York: John Willey & Sons, 1977, p. 3.

⁴² Frank Bealey, *Democracy in the Contemporary State*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 36. Frank asserts that while direct participation by all in decision making may be possible at what he calls the ‘micro’ level (e.g. village); it is not practicable on the ‘macro’ level (e.g. state or national): *ibid*, p. 42

⁴³ R.T. Suberu, “Constraints on the Process of Mobilization in Nigeria” in S.G. Tyoden (ed.) *Democratic Mobilization in Nigeria, Proceedings of the 15th Annual Conference of the National Association of Political Science*, University of Ibadan, 26 June – 1 July 1988, p. 118.

⁴⁴ For example, according to Nigeria’s electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, the Federal Government spent the sum of ₦122.9 billion (\$800 million) on the conduct of the 2011 general elections: *Punch*, 9 May 2013 while that of 2015 cost ₦1 trillion (about \$505million): Emmanuel Aziken et. al. “2015 election cost ₦1 trillion – INEC”, *Vanguard*, 1 February 2012. About 17.7 billion RR (about \$300 million) will be expended on the 2018 elections in Russia: Sergei Vadyashkin, “Russia to Shell out \$300 on the 2018 Presidential Elections”, *The Moscow Times*, 19 December 2017.

⁴⁵ Daniel Treisman, “Elections in Russia, 1991 – 2008”, Working paper WP7/2009/06, Higher School of Economics, Moscow: State University, 2009, particularly pp. 9-18.

⁴⁶ Kathy Lally and Will Englund, “Putin wins election as Russian President; opponents claim widespread fraud”, *The Washington Post*, 4 March 2012.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Luke Harding, “Hundreds detained after Moscow anti-Putin protest”, *theguardian*, 5 March 2012.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Kathrin Hille, “Changing the rules: what comes after a Putin election victory?” *Financial Times*, 4 December 2017.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² “Pro-Putin Party Wins Landslide Victory in Russian Election”, *Fortune*, 19 September 2016.

⁵³ Weston Phippen, “Vladimir Putin’s Big Win”, *The Daily Atlantic*, 19 September 2016.

⁵⁴ Shoun Walker, “Russia stays loyal to Kremlin in election with record turnout”, *theguardian*, 19 September 2016.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

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⁵⁷ Ronald Manzer, “The Essential Political Goods” in Paul W. Fox & Graham White (eds.) *Politics in Canada*, Toronto: McGraw-Hill & Ryerson Ltd., 1984, p. 3.

⁵⁸ See Emmanuel O. Ojo, “Nigeria’s Democracy: The Trilemma of Herdsmenism, Terrorism and Vampirism”, *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 9, 2017, pp. 13-26.

⁵⁹ While South Africa generates about 40,000 megawatts of electricity for a population of about 57 million and South Korea generates more than 83,000 megawatts for 51 million people; Nigeria currently generates a paltry average of 3,687 megawatts for a population more than three times that of either South Korea or South Africa: Sebastine Obasi & Chris Ochayi “Electricity generation averages 3,687mw in Q1’17—NBS”, *Vanguard*, 25 April 2017.

⁶⁰ Nigeria is one of the three countries in the world - along with Afghanistan and Pakistan - where polio is still endemic and where more than seventy million citizens have no access to safe drinking water. According to a 2014 general households survey by the National Bureau of Statistics, 10.4% of Nigerians had access to pipe borne water; 26.8% got water from bore hole (not necessarily owned by them); 33.3% obtained water from well; 24.4% from streams/ponds and 4.1% from water vendors. *The Nation*, 26 May 2014. See also H. T. Ishaku et. al. “Water Supply Dilemma in Nigerian Rural Communities: Looking towards the Sky for an Answer”, *Journal of Water Resource and Protection*, Vol. 3 No. 8, 2011, pp. 598-606.

⁶¹ While other factors such as poor driving culture, night trips, over-loading, dangerous driving, poor vehicle maintenance, expired vehicle tyres, etc could cause road fatalities; bad roads is a prominent factor. Indeed, the Federal Road Safety Corps pointed out that “bad roads are a major cause of road accidents” and cited the example of an inter-state road having 1,674 potholes: Andrew Ajijah, “FRSC laments bad state of Nigerian roads”, *Premium Times*, 23 February 2017. According to Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics, 1, 466 Nigerians died while 8,672 were injured in road accidents in the first quarter of 2017: “1, 466 Nigerians died in road accidents in 1st quarter- NBS”, *Vanguard*, 27 April 2017. In its Editorial of 10 March 2016, entitled “Disturbing road accidents statistics in Nigeria”, the *Nigerian Pilot* computed road fatalities in Nigeria thus: while 183,531 Nigerians sustained various degrees of injuries between 2009 and 2012, 30, 435 died; in 2013, while 40, 057 were injured, 6,450 died. According to the FRSC, 5,440 Nigerians died in road crashes in 2015 while 30,478 sustained injuries: Samuel Ogundipe and David Ndukwe, “Nigeria’s roads of death: 15 people killed daily”, *Premium Times*, 21 September 2016. See also “Nigeria increasingly losing bread winners to road accidents — FRSC”, *Daily Post*, 25 September 2017.

⁶² Nigeria's acute unemployment problem is a consequence of paucity of industries and the neglect of agriculture. Since the discovery of crude oil, successive Nigerian governments had paid mere lip service to the development of agriculture and the diversification of the economy. Industries which would have provided jobs for millions of Nigerians have either folded up or relocated elsewhere. The Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, NACCIMA, estimated that in Lagos State alone, more than 9,000 businesses had either shut down or relocated to other countries due to harsh operation environment, particularly power related problems. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, 3.7 million and 4 million Nigerians lost their jobs in 2016 and 2017 respectively: Toyin Olasinde, "3.7 million Nigerians lost jobs in 2016, says NBS", *The Guardian*, 10 March 2017 and Everest Amaefule et. al. "Four million Nigerians have lost their jobs this year –NBS", *Punch*, 23 December 2017.

⁶³ Chijioke Umasomba, "The Centenary Celebration: Another Elite Jamboree", *Nation*, 4 March 2014.

⁶⁴ "Nigeria's unemployment rate rises from 14.2% to 18.8%", *Vanguard*, 23 December 2017.

⁶⁵ Anuoluwapo Adeseun, "Here Are Photos from the Mass Burial of Benue Victims of Fulani Herdsmen Attacks", *Nigerian Monitor*, 11 January 2018.

⁶⁶ Ameh C. Godwin, "Herdsmen killings: Nigerian now painted red with blood of innocent citizens – Reps", *Daily Post*, 17 January 2018.

⁶⁷ Index Mundi, "Improved water source (% of population with access) - Country Ranking" retrieved from <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SH.H2O.SAFE.ZS/rankings> on 11 December 2017. See also "WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation" <http://www.wssinfo.org/>

⁶⁸ China was first with 6,015; followed by the US with 4, 327 while India was third with 1, 423. See Enerdata, "Global Energy Statistical Yearbook 2017" retrieved from <https://yearbook.enerdata.net/electricity/world-electricity-production-statistics.html> on 1 December 2017.

⁶⁹ Of the 137 countries surveyed in the report, Yemen ranked as worst electricity supply nation in 2017, followed by Nigeria, Haiti, Lebanon and Malawi. Prince Okafor, "Nigeria ranks second worst electricity supply nation in 2017", *Vanguard*, 16 January 2018.

⁷⁰ See Index Mundi, “Russian Literacy” retrieved from <https://www.indexmundi.com/russia/literacy.html> retrieved on 12 December 2017; Megan Behrent, “Education, literacy, and the Russian Revolution”, *International Socialist Review*, No. 82, 2016 and Muhtar Bakare, “65 million Nigerians are illiterates – UNESCO”, *Vanguard*, 17 December 2015.

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⁷³ United Nations Development Programme, “Human Development Report 2016”, pp. 2&6.

⁷⁴ Agency Report, “17, 000 cases of acute malnutrition recorded in Kaduna in 2017”, *The Nation* and “Kaduna records 17,000 cases of acute malnutrition in 2017”, *Daily Post*, 3 February 2018.

⁷⁵ Joe Chukindi, “One to 4,000 doctor ratio unacceptable – MDCAN tells FG”, *Daily Post*, 21 January 2018 and “Doctor-People Ratio Improving, Shortage of Specialists Persists”, *Financial Tribune*, 7 February 2017 retrieved from <https://financialtribune.com/articles/people/59036/doctor-people-ratio-improving-shortage-of-specialists-persists> on 10 December 2017. See also, Christopher Gerry and Igor Sheiman, “The Health Workforce of the Russian Federation In the Context of the International Trends”, Basic Research Program Working Papers Series: Public and Social Policy WB BRP 01/Psp/2016, pp. 1-24.

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