

## NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY OR KLEPTOCRACY?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the nature and system of Nigeria's government and governance to ascertain if truly she is practising/operating democracy or kleptocracy. In doing this, researcher embarks on conceptual clarification briefly on democracy as a common concept and ponders much on kleptocracy for proper understanding. After which the researcher looks at features of democracy and kleptocracy, symptoms, effects and remedies/solutions to kleptomaniac instincts. Questionnaire was employed as the tool of eliciting responses from the respondents while paired simple statistics of data analysis was used for the collected data. Finally, recommendations were made as means of remedying the idea of operating kleptocracy in the guise of democracy.*

**Key words:** inflation, Constitutional democracy, kickback, gratification, governance

### **Introduction**

Since 1999 that Nigerians thought they've started practicing democracy which is expected to be the government that will be ushering dividends of a responsible government as their functions, yet, reverse is the case. Constitutional democracy with which accountability is one of its major watchwords is even the one that is more worse than any other government which people think they cannot questioned its financial authority, such as military regime.

Looking at the ways and manners through which most of democratic government of the day spends public funds, especially in Nigeria since 1999, this calls for concerns if truly people at the helms of affairs are rulers or leaders and if what they are practicing is truly democracy or Kleptocracy?

This is because, considering the administrative style of these people (rulers or leaders), most especially in the area of finances as regards huge amount of money allocated as budget on projects which are either white elephant projects or sub-standard ones compared to the quality and quantity of those projects and money allocated to or even total refusal of payment of salary and allowances of workers, including retirees and pensioners emoluments. While these people (rulers or leaders) are eager to execute contracts because of cost inflation, kick back associated to such and unchecked awards of those contracts to friends and cronies as a conduit pipe of draining public funds for egocentric motives against the oath of office to serve the electorates interests.

Conceptual clarification

### **Democracy**

This is a concept that could be seen as everyday song because it has been variously defined by different scholars on different topics that has to do with grass-root governance, election and electoral process. Therefore, there is no need of over-flogging on this particular concept again. The only definition of democracy which will be considered here among many others is; Democracy is a system of government that empowers the electorates(masses) to hire and fire, in a free fair and credible election (which means a system of government that give electorates the mandate “*power*” to determine their representatives among many contestants by voting-“*hiring*”, and when such a representative failed, they still have the power of “*firing*” voting him/her out of office through the same process of voting. Adisa, 2011).

## **Kleptocracy**

Though this concept seems to be new in the field of administration but it is not because its ideology is what people don't want to be associated with but which most people practice in their daily life of administrative style. This is because people with kleptomania tendencies exhibit some of these behaviours. Recurrent failure to resist impulses to steal objects that are not needed for personal use or for their monetary value, kleptomania is an irresistible impulse to steal, stemming from emotional disturbance rather than economic need. It is also said that it is a recurrent failure to resist stealing, increasing sense tension immediately before committing the theft, pleasure, gratification, or relief at the time of committing the theft. As known various scholars have given diverse definitions of the concepts, few of which will be considered.

According to Wikipedia (2019) Kleptocracy (from *kléptēs*, "thief", *kléptō*, "I steal", and – *kratía* from *krátos*, "power, rule") is a government with corrupt leaders (kleptocrats) that use their power to exploit the people and natural resources of their own territory in order to extend their personal wealth and political powers. Typically, this system involves embezzlement of funds at the expense of the wider population.

Furthermore, kleptocracy is a government ruled by corrupt politicians who use their political power to receive kickbacks, bribes, and special favors at the expense of the populace. Kleptocrats may use political leverage to pass laws that enrich them or their constituents and they usually circumvent the rule of law.

## **Symptoms**

Kleptomania symptoms may include:

- Inability to resist powerful urges to steal items that you don't need
- Feeling increased tension, anxiety or arousal leading up to the theft
- Feeling pleasure, relief or gratification while stealing
- Feeling terrible guilt, remorse, self-loathing, shame or fear of arrest after the theft

- Return of the urges and a repetition of the kleptomania cycle (*Daron Acemoglu et al 2017 Retrieved from Wikipedia*)

### **Tenets/features of Kleptocracy**

There usually be a sign or mode of identification for any particular ideology even also sickness ditto to kleptocracy as system or form of government and these are;

1. Autocracy,
2. oligarchies
3. nepotist
4. dictatorships, and
5. military juntas

governments in which external oversight is impossible or does not exist. This lack of oversight can be caused or exacerbated by the ability of the kleptocratic officials to control both the supply of public funds and the means of disbursement for those funds. Kleptocratic rulers often treat their country's treasury as a source of personal wealth, spending funds on luxury goods and extravagances as they see fit. Many kleptocratic rulers often engage in secretly money laundering to foreign countries to provide for themselves if removed from power by any means.

This type of governance is mostly common in developing countries because their economies are based on the export of natural resources. Such export incomes constitute a form of economic rent and are easier to siphon off without causing the income to decrease easily. (Chayes, Sarah 2017 *Retrieved from Wikipedia*).

### **Other Features are**

People with kleptomania typically exhibit these features or characteristics:

- Unlike typical shoplifters, people with kleptomania don't compulsively steal for personal gain, on a dare, for revenge or out of rebellion. They steal simply because the urge is so powerful that they can't resist it.

- Episodes of kleptomania generally occur spontaneously, usually without planning and without help or collaboration from another person.
- Most people with kleptomania steal from public places, such as stores and supermarkets. Some may steal from friends or acquaintances, such as at a party.
- Often, the stolen items have no value to the person with kleptomania, and the person can afford to buy them.
- The stolen items are usually stashed away, never to be used. Items may also be donated, given away to family or friends, or even secretly returned to the place from which they were stolen.
- Urges to steal may come and go or may occur with greater or lesser intensity over the course of time.

Examples of countries that has one time or the other experienced or experiencing kleptocracy according to the German anti-corruption in early 2004, (NGO Transparency International) released a list of what it believes to be the ten most self-enriching leaders in the past two decades. In order of amount allegedly stolen USD, they were:

1. Former Indonesian President Suharto (\$15 billion – \$35 billion)
2. Former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (at least \$10 billion by 1986, equivalent to about \$21.6 billion in 2014 dollars)
3. Former Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko (\$5 billion)
4. Former Nigeria Head of State Sani Abacha (\$2 billion – \$5 billion)
5. Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević (\$1 billion)
6. Former Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc") (\$300 million – \$800 million)
7. Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori (\$600 million)
8. Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko (\$114 million – \$200 million)

9. Former Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Alemán (\$100 million)
10. Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada (\$78 million – \$80 million)

Looking at the above symptoms and features, it becomes an indisputable fact that rulers with kleptomaniac instinct could be regarded as insane why/ because why would somebody be stealing materials not needed and even using paraphernalia of office they are holding in thrust of the electorates in laundering money belonging to such public/electorates/masses much more than what their generation unborn can use to the detriment of the living populace thy are governing.

According to EFCC (2019 Website) while some Nigerians had been prosecuted for different offences, some notable Nigerians which are public office holders ranging from appointed, selected to elected ones that have been alleged of various corrupt practices, are still undergoing trials while some were found guilty of allegations against them.(This is christened “ **high profile, oil subsidy, etc matters being prosecuted by EFCC**”)

### **Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of the rule of law and kleptocracy.
2. There is no significant relationship between assets declaration by the public office holder and kleptocracy.
3. There is no significant relationship between electing and or appointing qualified people and kleptocracy.

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		No	%	no	%	no	%
1	Considering the tenets of democracy, are you of the opinion that Nigeria is truly practicing democracy?	12	10	108	90	120	100

2	Do you agree that poor salary of the elected officials lured them to be kleptocract?	00	00	120	100	120	100
	Do you suggest constitutional amendment to include the following against for any public official found guilty of kleptomania of any form?						
3	0- <del>₦</del> 1million-5(five) years imprisonment	114	95	06	05	120	100
4	<del>₦</del> 1- <del>₦</del> 5million-10(Ten) years imprisonment	115	95.83	05	4.17	120	100
5	<del>₦</del> 6- <del>₦</del> 10million-20(Twenty) years imprisonment	113	94.17	07	5.83	120	100
6	<del>₦</del> 11- <del>₦</del> 20million-50(Fifty) years imprisonment	109	90.83	11	9.17	120	100
7	<del>₦</del> 21- <del>₦</del> 25million-Life imprisonment	112	93.33	08	6.67	120	100
8	<del>₦</del> 26million+ (and above)-Death penalty	116	96.67	04	3.33	120	100
9	That Technocracy: Government by the expert/ specialists in a particular area to run the Government.	117	97.5	03	2.5	120	100
10	Do you subscribed to the idea that National assembly be run on part-time basis?	108	90	12	10	120	100
11	Is it true that placing all public officials on the same salary scale with civil/public servant will reduce the kleptomaniac syndrome?	106	88.33	14	11.67	120	100
12	Can you say that Nigerian leaders are accountable to the masses?	12	10	108	90	120	100
13	Do you agree that high cost of governance promotes kleptocracy?	70	58.33	50	41.67	120	100
14	Apart from National assembly, are you of the opinion that all political offices be held on part-time basis	105	87.5	15	12.5	120	100
15	Do you see judiciary aiding and abetting kleptocracy ?	114	95	114	05	120	100
16	Is it true that signing of freedom of information bill into law will curb kleptomaniac instinct from our	108	90	12	10	120	100

	leaders?						
17	Is removal of severance allowance will make democracy work in Nigeria, for it will be left for service minded people?	117	97.5	03	2.5	120	100
18	Do you think yearly declaration of assets by the political office holders will prevent kleptocratic habits?	112	93.33	08	6.67	120	100
19	Are you in support of the idea that declaration of assets be part of screening exercise for political contest and or appointment.	115	95.83	05	4.17	120	100
20	In order to discourage kleptocracy, do you agree that the day anybody is found guilty of false assets declaration he/she be removed from office, be tried, jailed and be banned from political participation/appointment for life.	113	94.17	07	5.83	120	100

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2:

1. On hypothesis 1: Which says; There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of the rule of law and kleptocracy.

### Questions

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		No	%	No	%	no	%
	Do you suggest constitutional amendment to include the following against for any public official found guilty of kleptomania of any form?						
3	0- <del>N</del> 1million-5(five) years imprisonment	114	95	06	05	120	100
4	<del>N</del> 1- <del>N</del> 5million-10(Ten) years imprisonment	115	95.83	05	4.17	120	100



5	<del>₦6-₦10</del> million-20(Twenty) years imprisonment	113	94.17	07	5.83	120	100
6	<del>₦11-₦20</del> million-50(Fifty) years imprisonment	109	90.83	11	9.17	120	100
7	<del>₦21-₦25</del> million-Life imprisonment	112	93.33	08	6.67	120	100
8	<del>₦26</del> million+ (and above)-Death penalty	116	96.67	04	3.33	120	100
15	Do you see judiciary aiding and abetting kleptocracy ?	114	95	06	05	120	100
16	Is it true that signing of freedom of information bill into law will curb kleptomaniac instinct from our leaders?	108	90	12	10	120	100
20	In order to discourage kleptocracy, do you agree that the day anybody is found guilty of false assets declaration he/she be removed from office, be tried, jailed and be banned from political participation/ appointment for life.	113	94.17	07	5.83	120	100

**Table 3:**

**PAIRED SAMPLE STATISTIC**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std.Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair YES	112.6250	8	2.82527	.99888			
1 NO	7.3750	8	2.82527	.99888	52.684	7	.000

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is greater than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be rejected. Which is to be restated *that there is significant relationship between effectiveness of the rule of law and kleptocracy*. Which means that if the rule of law is effective there will not be room for kleptomaniac idea or practices of kleptocracy.

Table 4:

On hypothesis 2: Which says; There is no significant relationship between assets declaration by the public office holder and being kleptocratic.

**Questions**

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		No	%	No	%	no	%
2	Do you agree that poor salary of the elected officials lured them to be kleptocract?	00	00	120	100	120	100
10	Do you subscribed to the idea that National assembly be run on part-time basis?	108	90	12	10	120	100
11	Is it true that placing all public officials on the same salary scale with civil/public servant will reduce the kleptomaniac syndrome?	106	88.33	14	11.67	120	100
17	Is removal of severance allowance will make democracy work in Nigeria, for it will be left for service minded people?	117	97.5	03	2.5	120	100
18	Do you think yearly declaration of assets by the political office holders will prevent kleptocratic habits?	112	93.33	08	6.67	120	100
19	Are you in support of the idea that declaration of assets be part of screening exercise for political contest and or appointment.	115	95.83	05	4.17	120	100

**Table 5**

**Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair YES	76.3333	6	52.90999	21.60041			
1 NO	27.0000	6	45.74713	18.67619	1.341	5	.238

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is greater than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be rejected. Which is to be restated *that there is*

*significant relationship between assets declaration by the public office holder and being kleptocratic.* Which means that if assets declaration is made compulsory pre-requisite screening before, during and after being in office, it prevent the ideology of kleptocracy.

**Table 6:**

On hypothesis 3: Which says; There is no significant relationship between electing and or appointing qualified people and kleptocracy.

**Questions**

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		No	%	No	%	no	%
1	Considering the tenets of democracy, are you of the opinion that Nigeria is truly practicing democracy?	12	10	108	90	120	100
9	That Technocracy: Government by the expert/specialists in a particular area to run the Government.	117	97.5	03	2.5	120	100
12	Can you say that Nigerian leaders are accountable to the masses?	12	10	108	90	120	100
13	Do you agree that high cost of governance promotes kleptocracy?	70	58.33	50	41.67	120	100

**Table 7**

Paired Samples Statistics							
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair YES	52.7500	4	50.81584	25.40792			
1 NO	67.2500	4	50.81584	25.40792	-.285	3	.794

From the above analysis, it is clear that t-calculated is LESSER than t-table. The interpretation of which is that the hypothetical statement will be accepted. Which means that certificate has

nothing to do kleptomaniac tendencies/instincts but a thing of mind upbringing, moral and societal value.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Considering all the aforesaid evidences it becomes an indisputable facts that Nigerian government under majority of our rulers (calling themselves leaders) are ruling us with kleptocracy in disguise of democracy, because it is crystal clear that they have not exhibited major tenets/ features of democracy except regular and periodic elections which supposed to free, fair and credible but which has always been do or die by using power of incumbency to retain and perpetuate themselves or imposed their preferred candidates in power against the interest of the electorates. Therefore in order to avoid this, the following recommendations were made;

- ✓ That law should be made effective on everybody and that nobody be treated as a sacred cow before the law, that anybody alleged, investigated and found to be guilty is punished according to the laws of the land in order to serve as deterrent to others intending to do such.
- ✓ That assets declaration be made compulsory pre-requisite screening before, during and after being in office, it prevents the ideology of kleptocracy.
- ✓ That though qualification/certificate does not prevent people from stealing/diverting/embezzling public fund, but oath of office can include portion that says that anytime it is established against me to have possessed any property beyond and above my official and legal earnings, that all my credentials/certificates be rendered useless and not worthy for any appointments, selection and or elective posts afterwards.
- ✓ That our laws be amended to include items 3 to 8 on the questionnaire.

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