PREBENDALISM AS THE ALBATROSS TO DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract  
There is, indeed, the rising crisis of misgovernance, glaring undemocratic practices, increasing cases of fraudulent elections, clear evidences of poor political representation and apparent signs of general underdevelopment in Nigeria. All these are largely, the results of the pervasive and endemic prebendalism in the country. Very worrisome is that prebendalism is ever getting more pervasive, critical and damaging as it continues to eat deeper into the political fabric of the Nigerian polity. Against this background, the study critically examined the issue of prebendalism as it obtains in the Nigerian politics and governance, critically analysed the implications of prebendalism on the nation’s democratic practice particularly as it concerns the conduct of democratic elections, effective representation and national development generally. In carrying out the study, information and data were collected through secondary sources of data collection. Consequently, content analysis technique was adopted for analysis. The findings of the study are that the prebendal intentions that induce fraudulent electoral activities and the actual use of public offices as prebends result to flagrant waste and misappropriation of national resources, hinder the conduct of democratic elections, forestall effective representation and impede overall national development. Given the fact that prebendal culture nurtures corrupt instincts and practices as well as undemocratic tendencies and should, therefore, have no place in modern democratic practice and for which it needs to be drastically controlled, the study recommended, among others, that the entire Nigerian citizenry should be reorientated to a better value system that essentially would entail seeking, occupying and using public offices purely for the interest of the citizens and for effective administration of national development. To effectively realize this, however, there needs to be a conscious and systematic effort by the government to create and preserve the growth of public sentiments and values among Nigerians that are consistent with selfless service, political democracy and overall good governance.  
**Key words:** Prebendalism, Democracy, Development, Democratic Elections, Effective Representation.
INTRODUCTION

Government should belong to the people and need to be for the people and, as well, by the people. This is the democratic ideal that is borne out of the innate desire in man for good governance, societal stability and development (Okafor and Oji, 2000). To realize this democratic ideal, however, electing people to participate in government should be freely and fairly done to allow for the true choice of the electorates to emerge. Very imperative too is that those elected must see the offices that they occupy as positions to be utilized to protect, serve, and advance the interests and well being of the generality of the citizens of the polity (Michael, 2008). This is very necessary as representative democracy, as opposed to direct democracy, has become the practice in virtually all the democratic societies in the world (Nwatu, 2008). In essence, two major ways to guarantee that power actually belongs to the people are to ensure that the political representatives emerge from within the parameters of democratic electoral procedure and process and that those elected use their offices to address the development needs of the citizens and that of the nation at large. This is very necessary because, in ideal democratic setting, political offices are means to serve the country and where only the honest and transparent that are elected in a free and fair election can have the opportunity to get into.

Contrarily, in Nigeria, these democratic ideals have not been significantly realized. This is attributable, in large part, to prebendalism, which has over the years characterized the nation’s political activities and government administration. The term prebendalism is usually said to be used first by Richard Joseph, director of the program of African studies at North Western University, USA, to describe patron client or neo-patrimonialism in Nigeria (Oluchukwu, 2010). Fundamentally, prebendalism refers to the practice of utilizing official positions by public office holders for selfish personal gains. Joseph (1987) conceptualized it as the pattern of political behaviour which reflects, as its justifying principle, that the offices of the state may be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of the office holders as well as that of their reference or support groups. Accordingly, he notes that in Nigeria, state political offices are primarily regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by the office holders to generate material benefits for themselves and for other ethnic, cultural or community groups.

Prebendalism as it obtains in Nigeria can be perceived from two major perspectives. One, as a situation where political offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by their holders and actually used as such to generate material benefit for themselves. Two, as a form of political clientele in which people ascend to political offices through the active support of power brokers (political God Fathers), ethnic or kin groups who must be rewarded in sundry ways including using the trappings of such office. From these two perspectives, prebendalism could be taken to mean the use of political offices for direct selfish personal gains or to indirectly benefit political masters, cultural groups or other kin groups.

It is necessary to note, at this point, that even though prebendalism obtains among the political and bureaucratic office holders, our focus of discussion and analysis here is essentially on the elected or appointed political office holders in Nigeria.
Undoubtedly, prebendalism has become the dominant and defining characteristics of the Nigerian State and her politics. Indeed, the political and social behaviours that have continued to dominate Nigerian polity and politics since independence is the prebendal tendencies among the politicians (Linus, 2006; Mala, 2010) Nigerians, basically as observed by Joseph, (1987) treat political offices as prebends and so seek or compete for them for prebendal purposes. In reality, indeed, most Nigerians that seek to hold political office are not motivated by true patriotism to serve the nation but are driven by greed and pathological urge to loot in order to enhance their parochial selfish interests. Ogundiya (2010) corroborates this as he asserts that Nigeria’s brand of politicking is essentially a prebendal enterprise engaged in, largely, for the crude appropriation of national resources. Indeed, Nigerians believe strongly that their political offices entitles them to unlimited and unbridled access to the resources of the state with which they can plunder not only to satisfy their material desires but also to service the needs or wants of their kin groups. Nigerians being so minded and characterized could, therefore, be said to be transforming government and governance into a prebendacy. Joseph (1987) affirms this as he contends that prebendalism has become very much widely spread in Nigeria and appears to have become the prevalent political culture. Indeed, as Egbo (2003) notes too greed, primitive acquisition and unending propensity to amass wealth have become a dominant aspect of the mental process of the average political office holder in Nigeria.

In the circumstance of prebendalism as it obtains in Nigeria, political office holders award contracts for white elephant projects and in total disregard of due process, approve fantastic car, furniture and travel allowances for themselves, budget huge sums of money on security votes for which account is not rendered, make huge returns to political god fathers or mentors from public purse, employ and payroll ghost workers, inflate contract sums, divert workers salaries, pervert electoral processes and procedure to ensure victory at pools, sell government property fraudulently, spend reasonable time considering motions and passing bills ostensibly meant to enhance their selfish corporate welfare at the expense of the public interest etc.

Further manifestation of the prebendal practice is the unjustifiable stupendous salaries and allowances which the political office holders at the various tiers of government in Nigeria approve and pay to themselves. For instance, a national legislature takes an average of ₦186 million naira annually as salary in a country where the minimum monthly salary for workers has just been grudgingly raised to ₦18, 000 and which translates to a meager ₦216, 000 annually (Tell, 2011) and were the income of the majority of the citizens is below $1 a day.

Specifically and at the Federal government level, there were apparent prebendal practices by the past presidents, ministers, senators, members of the House of Representatives. Indeed, they all, in varying degrees and levels, use their offices corruptly to enrich themselves. For instance, ex-presidents Shehu Shagari, Olusegun Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babaginda and Sani Abacha amassed wealth illegally through the instrumentality of their offices (Derin, 2007; Emma, 2006; Welch, 1987). As well, ex-governors Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu state, Gbenga Daniel of Ogun state, Alao Akala of Oyo state, Bala Tinubu of Lagos state, Ikedi Ohakim of Imo state, Joshua Dariye of Plateau state, Lucky Igbinedion of Edo state, Saminu Turaki of Jigawa, Orji...
Uzor Kalu of Abia state and Alanaieyeseigha of Bayelsa state were all reported to have corruptly used their offices for their selfish personal gains (Tell, 2012). Ex-Federal Ministers such as Fami-Kani Fayode of Ministry of Aviation, Fabian Osuji of Ministry of education and Broderiks Bonmi of police Affairs Ministry were also reported to have used their offices for corrupt enrichment (This Week, 2008). Some ex-Senators like Iyabo Obasanjo, Chuba Okadigbo, Evans Ewerem, and Adolphus Wabara were equally reported to have used their offices for corrupt personal gains. As well, members of the House of Representatives such as Bankole Dimeji, and Felicia Ette were reported too to have used their offices to loot and amass wealth. At the local government level also, there were reports that some local government chairmen, councilors and supervisors used their offices for purposes of selfish enrichment (Amujiri 2012; Halidu, 2012).

As it was with the past holders of the above offices, so it is still with the incumbents. Indeed, observations of the activities of the current holders of political offices at the various tiers of government indicate that they are all neck deep in prebendalism.

Very worrisome is that if the pervasive prebendal practice in Nigeria is left uncontrolled, it grows, intensifies and spreads like cancer to vital political and governance centres of the state with its negative multiplier effects. And for the fact that Nigeria is essentially a government managed economy and with a fledging democracy, the incidence of prebendalism becomes more damaging and critical. It is against this background that we consider it worthwhile to critically discuss the issue of prebendalism in Nigeria and with particular attention to its implications on the conduct of democratic elections, effective representation and overall national development and, with the major purpose too, to recommend measures to control the prebendal tendency.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Political culture:

Fundamentally, political culture refers to the attitudes, believes and values which underpin the operations of a particular political system (Lain, 1996). Beer (1974) and Hari (1997) similarly, conceptualize political culture as the commonly accepted rules in the political game and the shared orientations or beliefs towards political events and objects. Indeed, every nation is embedded in a particular political culture and such political culture assists in understanding the reactions and actions of people within that political community towards political issues, circumstances and developments. Thus, Dahl (1967) argues that political culture is a major factor in explaining various patterns of political behaviour and activities.

A given political culture is acquired and maintained through political socialization. Fundamentally, political socialization refers to the way a political community transmits its political culture from generation to generation (Nwabuzor and Mueller, 1986; Abonyi, 2006; Michael, 2008). It is, indeed, the process of learning through which individual members of a political community form their political attitudes (Ezeugwu and Okafor, 2011).
Similarly, as Dahl (1967) argues above, it is the political culture of Nigeria that majorly explains Nigerians’ pattern and style of involvement in politics, the procedures and instruments with which the political actors involved in electoral competition use to ensure victory, their perceptions in respect of acquisition and use of political offices and their evaluation of political actions events and decisions. Given this, our discussion and analysis is premised on political culture.

PREBENDALISM AND THE CONDUCT OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Fundamentally, democratic development involves the practice and sustainability of regular credible electoral conducts and processes. Indeed, one of the basic elements or cardinal features of democratic practice is the conduct of credible, free and fair elections. For this, therefore, the cardinal issue in a democratic polity could be taken to be the method of selecting people who govern at any point in time. This selection is done through election and for which election then becomes a crucial point in the continuum of democratization and an imperative means of giving voice to the will of the people which is the basis of government authority itself. (Mohammed, 2007). Indeed, credible elections is the hub around which the practice of ideal and sustainable democracy revolves and, as such, it is closely tied to the growth and development of democratic political order (Huntinghton, 1991). Ogundiya (2010) in this respect notes too that one of the hallowed elements of democracy is a free and fair electoral contest to determine who will be allowed to hold political office at any level and at any point in time. Indeed, for Egbo (2003) and Abonyi, (2005) election is the only means of guarating the credibility and sanctity of a democratic practice.

Unfortunately, elections in Nigeria, over the years, have lacked the basic ingredients of democratic election as they all have been characterized by pervasive and intense electoral fraud and violence. The respective studies of elections in Nigeria by scholars like Dudley (1982), Ogundiya and Baba (2004), Egwu (2003) Yakubu (1999) reveal that elections in Nigeria are characterized by massive electoral fraud and violence. This results largely from the fact that the acquisition of political offices in Nigeria has come to be seen primarily as a means to some form of economic empowerment, secured material life, influence and affluence and not as an opportunity to serve the people. Indeed, acquisition of political offices is perceived more as a means for personal economic aggrandizement than for public services. This, no doubt, intensifies unhealthy rivalry and competition for political offices that do trigger election rigging, violent conflicts and even coup. Indeed, the prevalent prebendal attitude does not allow for the conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria and this diminishes the credibility and legitimacy of elections specifically and democratic practice generally in Nigeria (The Nation, 2003).

The prebendal attitude or orientation explains significantly too the “sit-tight” syndrome among incumbent political office holders in Nigeria and their manipulation of the institutions of the state to win elections to remain in office. Indeed, an incumbent political office holder in Nigeria would certainly attempt to remain in office longer than it is prescribed constitutionally or without the popular support of the electorate. Such undemocratic desire and attempt, very
unfortunately, is usually borne out of the desire to continue to enjoy the prebends of the office. The third term tenure bid by former president Olusegun Obasanjo could pass as a classical case of this desire and attempt. On the other hand, the political leaderships of Independence Natural Electoral Commission (INEC) and the State Independence Electoral Commission (SIEC) who conceive of their offices as prebends too use them to actively collaborate with the greedy and selfish politicians to manipulate electoral laws, processes and procedures to ensure the victory of the “preferred party or candidates”. This collective electoral fraud has remained one of the banes of Nigeria’s democratic development (Tolu and Abe, 2011).

Generally and following the prebendal orientation to politics and political offices in Nigeria, electoral contests have become a do-or-die affair and where victory must be achieved by any means possible. For this, electoral contests in Nigeria is not approached with the spirit of sportsmanship where the best has to win and the looser, at the end of the game, congratulates the winner. Indeed, in most elections in Nigerian, both at the inter-party and intra-party levels, contestants to political offices would never want to loose and this results to the need for political opponents to be roundly insulted and intimidated out of the contest. This scenario, no doubt, explains the pervasive use of violence in the nation’s electoral activities and this has sever implications for democracy and good governance (Oke, 2011). Such, specifically had led to defective leadership input over the years and its corollary undemocratic and bad governance, irresponsible and unaccountable leadership usually characterized by stagnation in the nation’s development and growth process (Ogundiya, 2012). Egbo (2003:174) in this respect too specifically contends thus;

Democracy cannot take root where credible candidates and genuine patriots are cowed and sidetracked to pave the way for clowns and petty minded kleptocrats whose understanding of leadership and governance do not go beyond immediate self indulgence

Further is that at intra-party levels, most elective offices are earmarked for “sale” by political god fathers and the politicians who “buy” these offices naturally pay for them through the prebends of their offices. In this circumstance, greater importance is attached to stewardship to political masters than to the electorates and in which case the political class, according to Akiniyi (2012), becomes only accountable to itself and to its financiers. This orientation is understandable as faithful political godsons are usually rewarded with re-election and rebellions ones punished with recall or defeat at subsequent election (John, 2012). This is not supportive of internal party democracy and the conduct of democratic general elections. This is because in the circumstance where at intra-party elections, candidates are not freely elected, it would be very unlikely that the general inter-party elections would be fairly and freely conducted (Eme, et al, 2012).

Further still, and following the fact that the major objective for joining politics and acquiring political office in Nigeria has become prebendal in nature, the issue ideology in
governance and democratic party politics is relegated to the background. Ideally, ideology serves as a guide for an individual politician and for a political party’s development initiatives, policies, programs and actions (Abonyi, 2005). However, in the circumstance of prebendal politics, as it is in Nigeria, people get into office without any given ideological framework on which to govern and, in which case, purposeful and visionary governance becomes reasonably difficult. This is because a political leadership that emerges without an ideology certainly will lack development focus and discipline and may not subject itself to the rule of law and may, as well, not feel obliged to fulfill any campaign commitment or promise. As Akin (2010) and Shola, (2009) contend, when political party affiliation and activities are not ideology driven, the government that emerges in an election are usually not obliged to work and deliver democracy dividends to the people. Indeed, to really work for the state and make sacrifices, political office holders need ideological motivation and direction (Michael, 2008; Tatalo, 2013). On the other hand, a clear and distinct ideology gives the electorates a clear idea as to which party or candidate to vote for in an election and also provides a clear benchmark and templates by which the performance of political parties is eventually measured by the electorates and the general public.

Again, in the context of pervasive and apparent display of prebendal attitudes by political office holders as it is in Nigeria, the citizens have come to develop lukeworm and cynical attitude towards elections and electoral conducts (Akin, 2010). Indeed, the citizens generally have become apparently apathetic and cynical towards electoral activities as they conceive the acquisition and utilization of offices arising from elections as not serving their interest or advancing their well being (Akinyi, 2012). This political apathy substantially robs the polity of the vitality and dynamism that characterize democratic elections that are usually generated by massive and active participation in the electoral processes and conducts.

Generally, attempts at promoting proper democratic practice in Nigeria are hampered by the politicians who exploit the instruments of the state power to promote their personal agenda and to expand their personal fortunes. Indeed, under the prebendal atmosphere in Nigeria, the philosophical basis and fundamental ethics of democratic elections and politics are increasingly being swept under the carpet (Ogundiya, 2010; Omolulo, 2007).

PREBENDALISM AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Fundamentally, a representative democracy is the type of government where the citizens or the electorates are allowed to elect people to represent them in government and to act as their agents in making and enforcing laws (Nwatu, 2008). It is the opposite of direct democracy in which all the adult citizens participate fully and directly in the governance of their polity (Nwankwo, 1992). Most countries of the world, in contemporary times, practice representative democracy. In Nigeria representative democracy was adopted since independence in the quest to ensure the citizens’ participation in governance (even through indirectly) and in the effort to enhance grassroots and over all national development (Nwatu, 2008). Indeed, effective practice of representative electoral democracy do not only bring about the delivering of democracy dividends but builds bridges of social and political interaction between the people and their representatives. In Nigeria, elected representatives exist at both the federal, state and local
government tiers cardinally for the realization of the aforementioned objectives. For instance, at the federal level, we have the President, Senators and members of the House of Representatives. At the state level, we have the governors and the state legislators while at the local government level we have the chairmen and the councilors.

Unfortunately, prebendalism in Nigeria has significantly impeded the will and the ability of the political office holders to effective, represent the people. Ordinarily, people elected as representatives are deemed to be faithful stewards of the democratic system and process and know that their duty is to do the will of the electorates who they represent (Akin, 2010). However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria as political representatives display more of prebendal attitude to office holding (John, 2012). For instance, the elected parliamentarians in Nigeria, have not only lost grip of their constitutional duties of making laws but have equally tuned the National Assembly, the State Assemblies and even the local government legislative council into trade centres where the latest political stocks are exchanged for naira (Egbo, 2003; Oluchukwu, 2012). This prebendal orientation is, indeed, a diametrical opposite of an effective representative democracy as the central concern of the representatives has come to border more on how to share the state resources and not how to effectively represent the electorates and extend democracy dividends to the citizens.

Again, prebendalism, to a reasonable extent, explains the adoption of zoning as electoral principle in selecting candidates for elective positions by the political parties in Nigeria (Oke, 2011). In this context, representative democracy in Nigeria has come to entail, essentially, an invitation or selection of people to come and share for themselves the national cake. This orientation, no doubt, does not incubate any productive or effective representation. It is, indeed, inconsistent with the sustenance and development of effective representative democracy. As a matter of fact, when a representative position is used contrary to the interests of the electorates and primarily to amass wealth for the office holder, the moral basis for the occupation of that position becomes unjustifiable.

The case of poor political representation could be better appreciated when, for instance, one looks at the poor development status of the rural areas in Nigeria and consider that these areas have representatives at the federal, state and local government tiers and who are supposed to be addressing the development problems of these rural constituencies but observes to the contrary that these representatives pursue more of their selfish private interests and abandon all the pre-election commitments and promises of effective representation. For instance, the prevalent and common practice among them is to amass stupendous wealth, fly into their respective poor rural constituencies in private jets, drive around in posh cars and erect luxurious edifices, all to the chagrin of the poor people that elected them. This attitude as propelled by prebendal orientation does not, indeed, reflect effective representation as it should obtain in an ideal representative democracy. Moreover, the insatiable quest for wealth accumulation among these representatives do not only impede effective representation but dulls the democratic sensibilities of the citizens thereby posing a serious threat to the nation’s democratic consolidation. As Ogundiya (2010) contends, prebendalism in Nigeria has actually eroded the
fundamental values of democracy and its essential principle that government should be representative, transparent and accountable to the citizens. It is noteworthy that Nigeria, over the years, has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations for political transparency by Transparency International.

PREBENDALISM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Development is one social phenomenon that is desired and craved for by every society, group or community. The concept basically embodies all attempts to improve the living conditions of human existence in all ramifications (Gboyega, 2003). Deriving from this, national development entails, therefore, the ability of a country to improve the living conditions of its citizens by providing, for instance, basic social and institutional infrastructures like good roads, electricity, functional and affordable health and educational facilities and security services etc. Indeed, national development is the overall development or a collective social, economic, political, as well as, religious advancement of a country or nation (Tolu and Abe, 2011). In this sense, national development entails not only an economic issue but also a social and political one. Development, as a matter of fact, should pervade all aspects of societal life.

Unfortunately, as critical and essential as national development is, Nigeria since her independence, has not been able to achieve much in its development efforts. The low development status of the nation is evidenced by the fact that poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nooks and crannies of the country. This is even so inspite of the huge material, human and natural resources available in the country.

The inability of the country to achieve meaningful national development over these years, could be attributed to, in a major part, to prebendalism. In the circumstance of prebendalism as it is in Nigeria, political office holders and seekers perceive their occupation of offices not as an opportunity to serve and develop the nation but primarily to partake in the national cake (Egbo, 2003). The effects and implications of this full scale prebendal politics in Nigeria’s development is myriad and phenomenal. Generally, the effects of prebendalism in Nigeria manifests in the fact that the nation since independence has been characterized by virtual non – existence of visible social and economic development. Indeed, because political offices has come to be seen primarily as prebends, political office holders have significantly lost the consciousness that the power of the office they occupy actually belongs to the people and should be exercised or used for their benefit and to administer national development.

Specifically, prebendalism has negative impacts in the area of public policy making and implementation as financial gains, kick backs and bribes become the overriding considerations in the process. More often than not, the distributional consequences of public policies are the intended results of the private interests of the political office holders which have been instrumental to their design, passage and implementation (Mala, 2010). Indeed, the overwhelming prebendal practice in Nigeria has led to a situation where the wellbeing and interest of the citizens in the policy making and implementation activities and processes are largely sacrificed in preference to selfish interests of state political officials.
Again, stability and continuity of policies is not encouraged because of prebendal reasons. Basically, Nigerian political leadership do not build on existing policies. Rather, they prefer to jettison them for new ones for the sake of party politics and personal aggrandizement. Further, prebendalism and its associated corrupt practices result to diversion of resources from activities that are vital to poverty reduction, economic and social development. As a matter of fact, prebendalism in Nigeria has resulted to a reduction in the quality and quantity of goods and services available to the Nigerian citizens as reflected in the abysmal low standard of living as a result of waste and misplacement of priority in spending public fund (Emma, et al, 2012). Indeed, as Omololu (2007) notes, the political gladiators constantly manipulate the people and the political offices and processes to advance their own selfish agenda while the Nigerian society at large remains pauperized with the people wallowing in abject poverty.

Summarily, the inference from the foregoing is that prebendalism and development are, indeed, antithetical to each other. The two cannot cohabit and so where one is present, the other certainly suffers. It is, perhaps, in this context that Ilusoya (2009) contends strongly that any attempt to understand the problems of development and the challenges to democracy in Nigeria must come to grips with the problem of prebendalism and its associated corruption characterized by stupendous waste, mismanagement and misappropriation of scarce national resource. Certainly, in the context of Nigeria’s reckless drive for accumulation of private wealth via the instrumentality of state power, democracy and development cannot but remain mere rhetoric.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective, sustainable and proper democratic practice and national development would be difficult to achieve if the rampant and deep rooted prebendal practice in Nigeria is not adequately addressed and controlled. Realizing this control effectively entails the following:

One, that there comes into existence the right political leaderships at the various tiers of government in Nigeria with the requisite political will to bring about appropriate and sustainable reform measures to deal dispassionately and decisively with prebendalism in Nigeria.

Two, that there becomes a change in the mind set of Nigerian political office holders from prebendalism to the altruistic and ideal practice of using public offices to serve the people. By this, they should show willingness to and actually sacrifice personal selfish interests for the good of the majority of the citizens. In this case, the culture of seeing political offices as prebends need to be systematically discouraged and discarded. This could be achieved through effective political socialization by designated government agencies like National Orientation Agency or Ministry of Information. Through this, the right attitude and orientation towards political official positions could be cultivated among the Nigerian people. Indeed, such orientation could alter, in a positive manner, the average Nigerian’s perception of public office and politics.

Three, curbing prebendal tendencies in Nigeria entails, very importantly, on the part of government, a continuous vigilance over the kind of political culture that the nation is
developing and over the processes, both manifest and latent, of political socialization. In essence, Nigerian government need to create and preserve the growth of public sentiments and values that are consistent with representative democracy and that would encourage good governance. This becomes very necessary as political culture is the corner stone of political development.

Four, there is the need for enforcement of the principle of checks and balances. Checks and balances emphasis one arm of government being a watch dog over the other arm, each having been assigned its specific functions according to the principles of separation of powers. Of course, the existence of institutional checks and balances moderates the desire and actual use of public office for selfish personal or group interest. Indeed, adherence to the principle is necessary as power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Five and finally, Nigeria needs leaderships at the federal, state and local government tiers with apparent character of selflessness, discipline, honesty, personal sacrifice and exemplary public and even private lives. This is necessary as such leaderships would be less inclined to towards seeing and using public offices as prebends

CONCLUSION

The forgoing discussion and analysis reveals that Nigeria’s development process and the practice of ideal democracy, over the years, has been greatly circumscribed and profoundly constrained by prebendalism. Indeed, the institutions and offices of the state are not being significantly used to advance the interest and wellbeing of the greater majority of Nigerians. Rather, they are increasingly being utilized and manipulated for personal and other primordial interests and gains. The implication of this is that it will be difficult to attain any meaningful economic and socio-political development in Nigeria as long as prebendalism remains pandemic and unchecked.

The prebendal culture and practice that has been identified to be central to the problems of socio-economic and democratic underdevelopment in Nigeria is being perpetuated through political socialization. In this case, Nigerians are further learning, acquiring and increasingly developing the prebendal orientation, attitude and dispositions to the detriment of the overall sustainable democratization, national growth and development process.

Controlling the prebendal practice, entails a determined and systematic efforts involving, cardinally, socializing Nigerians into understanding and seeing public offices and their occupation as an opportunity to render selfless, honest and transparent services for the advancement of the nations welfare and development. This needs to be if proper democratic practice and meaningful national development is to be realized in Nigeria. Indeed, the more Nigeria continues to pay lip service to the control of prebendalism, the more it flourishes to the detriment of proper democratic practice and national development.

References


