

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: JNHST- 046

Title: Democracy Without Development: Leadership Failure and Nigerias Democratic Paradox

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality			✓	
Clarity			✓	
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: JPR- Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript under review addresses a profound and enduring crisis in contemporary African political economy: the deep decoupling of democratic political procedures from substantive socioeconomic development in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The author frames this structural disconnect as a "democratic paradox," tracking how the continuous preservation of civilian rule and electoral cycles since the historic transition in 1999 has fundamentally failed to alleviate endemic poverty, institutional decay, infrastructural deficits, and widespread human insecurity. The geopolitical significance of this study is exceptionally high. As the continent's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, Nigeria serves as a critical bellwether for the survival and legitimacy of democratic governance across Sub-Saharan Africa.

By centering the analysis on the concept of leadership failure, the paper confronts a pivotal debate in development studies: whether Africa's developmental stagnation is primarily driven by external post-colonial structural dependencies or by the agency-driven choices and rent-seeking behaviors of its domestic political elites. The scope of the paper is properly ambitious, attempting to connect macro-level political theories of democratic consolidation with the micro-level realities of state corruption, policy inconsistency, and citizen alienation. This makes it a highly timely and valuable contribution to contemporary democratic theory and West African sociopolitical scholarship.

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From a methodological standpoint, the study is designed as a qualitative desk review that relies on secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, institutional reports, and civil society indices. The literature synthesis draws upon prominent datasets, incorporating references from global governance trackers like Transparency International and human development frameworks from the United Nations Development Programme. This dual reliance on institutional data and academic commentary provides a useful foundation for mapping out Nigeria's macro-historical trajectory over nearly three decades of unbroken civilian governance.

However, the manuscript's current methodological and analytical framework requires a much higher degree of academic discipline to achieve publishable standards in a top-tier political science journal. While the text offers a compelling and passionate critique of state inefficiencies, it frequently reads as a descriptive commentary rather than an objective, structured academic inquiry. The narrative tends to treat the vast and heterogeneous Nigerian state apparatus as a singular, monolithic entity, largely overlooking the complex institutional dynamics and policy variations that occur between the federal center and the various state and local government areas. To establish a stronger scholarly foundation, the study needs to adopt a more disciplined qualitative methodology that systematically categorizes its secondary data based on clear variables, such as legislative oversight capacity, bureaucratic autonomy, and judicial independence.

The central thesis of the manuscript posits that democracy in Nigeria remains strictly procedural—characterized by the ceremonial and often highly compromised practice of periodic elections—without translating into substantive governance or tangible developmental benefits for the populace. The author constructs this argument by demonstrating how the post-1999 democratic landscape has been systematically captured by a predatory political elite. This elite capture has subverted formal democratic institutions into mechanisms for wealth extraction and patrimonial distribution.

Operating implicitly through a combination of public choice theory and neo-patrimonial frameworks, the paper argues that endemic corruption and systemic leadership failure are not accidental design flaws, but rational strategies employed by ruling factions to maintain political power and economic dominance. The manuscript effectively illustrates how this institutional subversion triggers a destructive societal loop: as successive administrations fail to deliver basic public goods, public trust in the state completely collapses, giving rise to profound political apathy, deep-seated regional and ethnic alienation, and a dangerous erosion of the rule of law. The author concludes that true democratic consolidation is

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structurally impossible in an environment where the formal procedures of the state are completely disconnected from the material survival and development of its citizens.

Recommendations for Manuscript Improvement**Formalizing the Theoretical Framework and Engaging with Neo-Patrimonialism**

The primary recommendation to elevate the manuscript's scholarly value is the explicit introduction and rigorous application of formal political science frameworks. The current draft describes leadership failure and corruption in a theoretical vacuum, relying on common sociological terms rather than established political economy models. The author must thoroughly revise the theoretical section to anchor the narrative within the concepts of neo-patrimonialism and prebendalism. Specifically, the paper should integrate Richard Joseph's foundational theory of prebendal politics in Nigeria to explain how state offices are treated as personal fiefdoms allocated to satisfy ethnic and factional clients. Furthermore, crossing this analysis with public choice theory will allow the author to demonstrate how the rational maximization of self-interest by individual politicians creates collective sub-optimal outcomes for national development, transforming the paper from a descriptive critique into a sophisticated theoretical model.

Disaggregating the State to Analyze Sub-National Institutional Variance

To avoid the analytical pitfall of treating Nigeria as a uniform political monolith, the author must incorporate a dedicated section that disaggregates the state apparatus. The manuscript currently blames "the government" as a whole for developmental stagnation, completely ignoring the complex dynamics of Nigerian federalism. The updated draft should explicitly separate the performance and accountability metrics of the federal government from those of the state governments and local government areas. By introducing a comparative sub-national analysis—contrasting states that have successfully implemented innovative developmental models or digital anti-corruption platforms with states experiencing near-total administrative collapse—the author can provide a nuanced view of where leadership failures are most acute and identify localized institutional arrangements that show resilience against elite capture.

Integrating Empirical Governance Indices and Quantitative Metrics

While the qualitative synthesis of literature is extensive, the manuscript's core arguments would be substantially strengthened by integrating concrete, empirical metrics of governance and human development. The author should transition from generalized claims of "endemic corruption" to presenting specific longitudinal data trends. The text should explicitly map out Nigeria's scores over the past decade on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, focusing specifically on control of corruption,

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regulatory quality, and government effectiveness. Graphing or systematically detailing these metrics alongside the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index values will provide a clear, empirical validation of the paper's core paradox: showing that while electoral participation continues, human welfare metrics remain stagnant or declining.

Critically Evaluating the Role of Electoral Security and Judicial Independence

The manuscript emphasizes that democracy in Nigeria is merely procedural because of ceremonial elections, but it fails to analyze the specific institutional bottlenecks that undermine these electoral processes. To provide a complete and modern perspective on democratic consolidation, the author should incorporate a detailed critique of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the role of the judiciary in resolving electoral disputes. This section should evaluate the transition to digital voting technologies—such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the Election Result Viewing Portal—analyzing whether these technical interventions have successfully minimized elite manipulation or if the battleground for electoral fraud has simply shifted into the judicial arena through controversial post-election court rulings.

Standardizing Reference Metadata and Repairing Bibliographic Gaps

A meticulous typographical audit of the concluding reference bibliography reveals widespread formatting inconsistencies, missing metadata, and incomplete source registries. Multiple contemporary citations tracking recent 2024 and 2025 development reports are missing essential publication components, such as specific volume indices, issue designations, precise page numbers, or valid digital object identifiers. The author must systematically audit the entire reference list to complete these missing details and ensure that every single entry conforms perfectly to a singular, standardized academic style manual throughout the document, such as the APA seventh edition or the Harvard style sheet. This standardization is an absolute requirement for the paper to be indexed properly in international political science databases.

Eradicating Typographical Anomalies and Digital Formatting Artifacts

Finally, the review copy features minor formatting shifts, uneven line spacing around major section transitions, and irregular paragraph indentations that detract from its professional presentation. There are a few instances of missing spaces between text blocks and citations, alongside minor typographical alignment slips directly preceding the bibliography. The author must manually proofread the entire document to eliminate these processing remnants. Ensuring that the manuscript possesses a flawless visual and typographic presentation will provide a polished, highly professional appearance that matches the structural importance of the political-economic data.

Editorial Recommendation

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This manuscript is recommended for **publication with major revisions**. The author has chosen a highly vital, original, and impactful topic by evaluating the decoupling of democracy from socioeconomic development within one of Africa's most critical democratic states. The qualitative approach is appropriate for a macro-level institutional review, the literature pool captures the core issues of West African statecraft, and the focus on elite capture and citizen alienation offers a valuable perspective for political theorists and policy planners.

However, to make the paper suitable, the author must move away from broad narrative generalizations and provide rigorous, structured analysis. Once the text is updated to include an explicit theoretical framework grounded in prebendalism, a disaggregated sub-national analysis of Nigerian federalism, longitudinal empirical governance indices, and a fully completed and standardized reference list, this manuscript will be a strong, highly analytical, and relevant addition to the field of African development studies.