

## The Concept and Models of Representation

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**ABSTRACT:** *The model of representation is a theoretical framework that delineates the manner in which elected officials or political representatives are anticipated to advocate for the interests, desires, and necessities of their constituents. This study elucidates various models of representation, each presenting distinct viewpoints on the functioning of this representation. Several prominent models of representation in politics include the trustee, delegate, partisan, and political representatives. The findings indicate that there are several elements that pose challenges to the functioning of representative government. These problems include defection, corruption, and the absence of clear ideological frameworks within political parties. The study concludes by offering recommendations for increasing representative governance through practical means, including the participation of all individuals, the promotion of political equality, and the cultivation of a sense of political responsibility.*

**KEYWORDS:** Representation, models, trustee, delegate, ideology, corruption.

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the most common democracies used by countries around the world is representative governance. This gives residents the chance to give a select few people the authority to speak for them and represent their interests in government. The people (the electorate) that these representatives represent are responsible to them in turn. In this form of democracy, as opposed to direct democracy, elected individuals speak on behalf of a group of people. (Victorian, 2007). Indirect democracy may be traced back to the ancient Greeks, where the idea of representation first appeared. Over time, democracy has continued to strive using this strategy. Representation is the art of having elected representatives act on behalf of the voters throughout the duration of their term. The length of time varies from nation to nation.

In the United States of America, as in Nigeria, elections for the National Assembly take place every four years and are also for a four-year term. Loeper (2016) asserts that almost all contemporary Western-style democracies operate using some variation of representational democracy. For instance, India is a federal parliamentary republic, whereas the United Kingdom is a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy. While the United States of America is governed by a federal presidential republic, France is governed by a unitary semi-presidential republic. Accordingly, depending on the type of administration a country uses, representational democracy can serve as a component of both parliamentary and presidential systems of government. As a result, the models of representation that representatives use to represent their constituents are referred to as such.

As mentioned above, there are various types of representational models that various nations use, and whatever model they ultimately opt for depends primarily on what suits them at the time. These models include, among others, the mandate model, trustee model, and delegate model. This chapter's topic centered on representative democracy and detailed its definition, characteristics, and application in Nigeria, the United States of America, and Britain.

### ***The Representative Democracy Idea***

When the voices of those being represented (the electorates) are heard and sufficiently taken into account during the decision-making process, democracy as a notion of governance continues to evolve. In other words, it works better when enough people are actively or indirectly participating in decision-making through their representatives. Every nation that chooses representatives on a regular basis to represent its citizens' interests is said to be engaging in representational democracy. According to Jonathan (2021), if a nation holds elections, it almost likely practices representative democracy. Therefore, representative democracy is a form of governance in which individuals elect representatives to make legislative or policy proposals on their behalf and cast votes on those proposals. It is a type of indirect democracy as opposed to direct democracy, where citizens vote on proposals for public policy directly. As a result, under a representative democracy, the electorate, not the institutions of government or the powerful figures in politics, has the authority to choose representatives.

The first known state in the western hemisphere to use a representational form of government was the ancient Roman Republic. Because it gave the people and their elected representatives' absolute power, representative democracies today more closely resemble the Roman than the Greek types of democracy. One of the founding fathers of representative government in 13th-century Britain was Simon de Montfort, the 6th Earl of Leicester, who in 1258 presided over a legendary parliament that deposed King Henry III of all power. A second de Montfort parliament, which convened in 1265, advanced this procedure by including regular people as members. The Glorious Revolution and the enactment of the Bill of Rights in 1689 were the results of innovations made by the English Parliament during the 17th century.

The United States Constitution, which established a legislative House of Representatives that is directly elected by the people every two years, was drafted in response to the American Revolution in 1787. Up until the Seventeenth Amendment was passed in 1913, U.S. Senators were not chosen by popular vote. Black people and men and women without property did not acquire the right to vote until the 19th and 20th centuries. Crossing borders and continents, representative democracy has persisted. Since direct representation is too laborious and inefficient, along with the general busyness of the populace, to effectively represent themselves directly, the majority of countries in Africa and Europe practice representative democracy. Jonathan (2021:3) claims:

Most likely, a representative democracy is where you reside. Most people are subject to some type of representational democracy. Nearly every nation in the Western Hemisphere and every member state of the EU are representative democracies. You can almost certainly say that if you live in a democracy, it is a representative democracy. This kind of government is prevalent throughout most of the world.

The daily administration and decision-making are handled by elected officials under Switzerland's semi-representative democracy. However, residents have the right to call a referendum on any law they believe to be anti-people and to threaten their unity, security, and fundamental human rights, as well as to propose modifications to the constitution. The ability of the people to choose their representatives and cast votes for laws and initiatives that will benefit them has persisted in representative democracies. (Electoralates). The election of these representatives is a competitive process since candidates must persuade voters through their manifesto, which also serves as a social contract they are entering into with the people to represent their interests rather than their own.

However, "money politics" predominates in most developing nations, such as Nigeria, where the majority of candidates for political office lack any formal campaign platforms and instead choose for vote-buying, character assassination, and acrimonious politics. People in this category are primarily interested in finding ways to win the election, so they focus on gaining party tickets by paying money to acquire delegates in order to accomplish so. Instead of outlining their ideas to improve the situation of the people if elected, candidates' focus during campaign periods is directed towards ethnic and primal beliefs that assert that it is their region or political area's turn to create the next representative.

Political parties, which are meant to be the foundation of democracy, are frequently created without any substantive political ideologies. Accepting the aforementioned claim, Etalong (2018) noted that:

Democracies are identifiable by their political parties. They are the foundation and ideal environment for political stability in any society, and they play a significant role in the political

stability of a nation. Political parties have failed in Nigeria due to the execution of their political platforms and a lack of political ideology, which is the main cause of blame. Because political parties in Nigeria lack substantive political ideologies, they are motivated more by institutional control, resource control, and power than by providing effective public services, which is why political office should be sought after in a democracy like Nigeria. The reason why appointments are made in accordance with the whims of the party heavy hitters and not always on the basis of merit and ability is due to this drift in intentions and reasons. In some other circumstances, appointments are also made in accordance with "federal character," which has not improved the democratic form of government, but rather made matters worse. As stated by Woll (1989):

The ultimate goal of a political party is to manipulate and control the ways that the nation's economic resources are distributed. Political parties are organized groups of citizens with a common interest that are typically represented by a political ideology. Their goal is to win public office in an election against one or more other similar organized groups. Political parties' primary goal is to seize and maintain control over the government so they may make decisions on how to distribute funds. For instance, the selection of candidates for various jobs is based on party loyalty rather than competence, making the appointee answerable to his party or godfather rather than the general public.

The politics of defection, which are practiced by politicians who feel mistreated during their party primary and fall short of securing their party ticket, also place restrictions on Nigeria's representative democracy. In order to pursue their own political aspirations rather than the interests of their constituents, they frequently choose to cross over to another political party (particularly the one in power or a significant opposition party). According to Edet (2017), the growing incidence of political defections is concerning since it fosters instability inside political parties. Lack of internal democracy is a contributing factor to this issue and diminishes Nigeria's ability to maintain its democratic system. The political party is one of the key institutions necessary for the democratization and maintenance of democracy, he continued.

Political parties are known to have a strong ideological foundation in advanced democracies like the United States of America, Britain, Germany, and others in order to advance the agenda of the electorate for whom they actively campaign and not just to win their votes and gain political power. For instance, in the United States of America, the Democratic Party is motivated by the idea of equality on all fronts, equal opportunity regardless of age, sex or gender orientation, ethnicity, and religion. They support ideas that will increase the economy and cut back on government spending. The Republican Party, on the other hand, supports a strong national defense, minimal government, individual responsibility, and free markets. These political parties ardently campaign for elective posts based on the ideals and worldviews contained in their party philosophy that they hold dear, not on the basis of ethnicity or religion.

However, that is not the case in the majority of African nations, particularly Nigeria, where elections are decided solely by religion, regionalism, and ethnic grouping without any discernible manifesto or ideology. Instead, what clouds the election process are frequently slogans like "It is the turn of my ethnic group, It is the turn of my region, It is my turn," which pit the electorate against one another with the usual results of electoral violence and the loss of life and property.

### ***Many forms of representation***

Trustee, delegate, partisan, and political representatives are the four main categories of representation. Below is a quick discussion of them.

#### ***Trustee***

When making judgments on behalf of the people they represent, an elected person in this situation ultimately relies on their own judgment. This is predicated on the idea that elected officials feel their supporters choose them because they have faith in their ability to advance their interests.

#### ***Delegate***

In this situation, elected leaders only see themselves as a reflection of their constituents. Even if it violates the elected official's conscience, their actions will, to the extent that it is practicable, reflect the preferences of the constituents.

#### ***Politico***

This type of representation combines the trustee and delegate types. Until their voters force them to adopt the delegate model on a particular subject, elected officials generally follow the trustee model.

#### ***Partisan***

This refers to the voting procedure that mandates voting along party lines, regardless of the voter's personal and constituency opinions. This has increased in frequency in recent years as a result of hyper polarization.

### ***Characteristics of the Representation Model***

We shall now briefly review some of its characteristics after establishing that the term "model of representation" refers generally to the art that depicts the role, behaviors, and actions that elected officials perform in representative democracies to provide the benefits of democracy to the population.

#### ***Participation of all***

In order to exercise their constitutional right to choose their representatives in parliament, this feature promotes the idea that all individuals who are of voting age are constitutionally eligible to cast ballots and be elected. This characteristic makes the process more efficient and successful by

ensuring that the best candidate is chosen to advance the "people agenda." The supply of efficiency and a separate representative, in accordance with Smarter (2022), is the primary characteristic of representational models. In a representative democracy, representation models help to ensure that choices may be taken swiftly and effectively, causing the least amount of damage to society. Every choice would need to be put to a vote if representation were accomplished by direct democracy. While representative democracies occasionally use referendums (such as the Scottish Independence or Brexit referendums), if every political decision had to be decided by referendum, this would not only be extremely difficult to organize but would also be exceedingly ineffective. Other nations, like Nigeria, hold town hall meetings where the public is invited to share their opinions on a proposed policy or program. This model was used during the process of amending the constitution, which involved civil society organizations and the general public through a referendum. However, this process is plagued by anomalies because the majority of Assembly members always use their influence to make changes that will benefit them for the rest of their lives rather than the wider population. This is especially true since that the National Assembly, particularly the Senate, has become a place where former governors can retire.

### ***Equality in Politics***

Political equality in this context refers to a scenario in which every vote is equally weighted. In the representation model, each electorate is granted one vote, which they fiercely preserve because it gives them the ability to choose who will represent their interests. Contrarily, "vote buying" is the new normal in some developing nations, where the electorate is convinced to sell their vote for a small sum of money under the pretence that their votes won't count because of the imposition of a "favorite candidate" and the manipulation of the electioneering process. Once more, the influence of incumbents is crucial in eroding Nigeria's democratic system. This frequently occurs when an incumbent governor or president utilizes public funds to sponsor and assist the selected candidates of his party. Since the Governors or President are seen as the party's leader at the state and federal levels, respectively, they are free to choose who will succeed them in the National Assembly, at the state level, and at all levels of local government. In situations where the delegates insisted on a particular candidate with support from the party leadership, the Governor becomes enraged and decamps to another party or, better yet, supports another candidate from the opposition party to prove to his party that he is all-powerful and mighty. They essentially distribute the party tickets and fund the campaign process with the "peoples' commonwealth."

As a result, in Nigeria and some other African nations, the problem of political equality and voting often does not count. Political equality is, however, unequivocally upheld in nations like the United States of America, Germany, France, and a few others. The electorates are aware of the influence of their votes and take advantage of it by choosing leaders who speak up for their interests. This was clearly demonstrated in the recent American election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Due to the electorate's ample and equal ability to choose the candidate they wanted to represent

them, Joe Biden won the election in spite of Donald Trump's incumbent status and access to all state resources.

### ***Politics as Responsibility***

If a representative is judged to be lacking or is failing to meet the expectations of their constituents, they may be dismissed from office in a representative democracy. The recall process is used to do this. In this procedure, voters choose to re-elect a representative who isn't doing a good job. This can be done by obtaining the electorate's (voters') signatures on a petition against the representative that is addressed to the electoral authority in charge of the election and who are eligible to vote under the constitution. In turn, the electoral authority will carry out an excise to check the validity of the signatures gathered in order to start the recall procedure. However, due to the systemic decadence brought on by money politics, such a process has failed in Nigeria. For instance, in Nigeria, residents of Kogi West attempted to recall Senator Dino Maleye but were unsuccessful because they could only collect 5% of the required 51% of voter signatures. Samuel (2018) claims that in a vote that needed a 51% majority to pass, just 5% of voters actually participated. Only 18,742 of the 189,870 signatories had been verified as of Saturday's exercise.

The fact that the representatives are 'above the law' and those they represent shows unequivocally that the electorates lack the capacity to recall those they have chosen. However, in the United States of America, recalling incumbent members is a simple procedure because the people (voters) is given the right to do so by the constitution. Additionally, the constitution is strictly upheld, and there is a high regard for the rule of law. In California, there have been 179 efforts to recall state elected officials since 1913, according to Shirely (2022). Eleven recall campaigns garnered enough signatures to be placed on the ballot, and of these, six of them succeeded in having the elected individuals removed from office. (voters).

The characteristics of representational model elements were also emphasized by other theorists and researchers. The work of Longley (2021), who emphasized the following characteristics of representative democracy, stands out among them. The constitution, which provides the fundamental laws, values, and framework of the government, specifies the authority of the elected representatives;

Recall elections and ballot initiative elections are two examples of limited direct democracy that the constitution may allow;

Other government leaders, such as a president or prime minister, may also be chosen by elected representatives; a separate judicial system, such as the U.S. The Supreme Court may have the authority to deem representative laws unlawful.

In other representative democracies with bicameral legislatures, he said, one chamber is not chosen by the electorate. Members of the House of Lords in the British Parliament and the Senate in Canada, who hold their places by appointment, descent, or formal duty, are notable examples. That

is to say, representative democracy is applied differently in different countries depending on what works best for them. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that representative democracy stands in stark contrast to totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and fascism, all of which deny or severely restrict the electorate's ability to choose its representatives.

## CONCLUSION

The success of representative democracy in producing a government that is truly "by the people, for the people" depends on the ability of the people to communicate their desires to their representatives and the willingness of those representatives to carry them out.

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