

## SOCIO-POLITICAL NEOPHOBIA: THE BANE OF ADVANCEMENT IN NIGERIA AS A NATION

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### **Abstract**

*Neophobia, which can be defined as a fear of or aversion for new or unusual things, has emerged as a significant barrier to the social and political development of Nigeria. This study investigates the paralyzing impact that neophobia has on the political landscape of Nigeria, focusing on the ways in which it stifles creativity, hinders entrepreneurial endeavors, and fosters resistance to change. This study highlights, using examples from Nigeria's recent history, that neophobia is firmly established in the Nigerian mentality, making it difficult to address and overcome. The examples are drawn from contemporary Nigeria. In this piece of work, a qualitative examination of previously published research on neophobia and the impact it has had on Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape is utilized. The information utilized in this study came from a wide variety of secondary sources, including scholarly journals and books, books, and publications produced by the government, and online databases. We submit that Nigeria can begin to break free from the grips of neophobia and move toward a more progressive and affluent future by promoting education, encouraging critical thinking, and establishing a society that is more open-minded.*

**Keywords:** Neophobia, Politics, Nigeria, Advancement, Nation.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria as an independent nation is sixty-two (62) years old. When compared with other nations of the same "age" or even younger ones, it becomes obvious that it suffers retardation and stagnation (Chukwurah et al., 2020). The obvious question then is, "What is the cause of this? Or are there more than one cause? This essay argues that one obvious cause is socio-political neophobia. It argues that this syndrome is largely responsible for the lack of advancement in Nigeria as a nation. Neophobia is a term from two Greek words, namely neos, literally meaning "new, young," and phobos, which means "fear." In the context of this essay, it is understood as the fear of introducing anything new into the socio-political arena in Nigeria. In its chronic form, the fear can be abnormal and persistent. However, in its milder form, which can be applied to the Nigerian situation, neophobia is simply the deficit of readiness to try something new or the inability to change from routine. Additionally, it is the morbid fear of novelty or new ideas, and it includes the twin fears of success and failure.

The fear of implementing new ideas stems from the perception that they would change the status quo. It is a threat to individuals in the society who are comfortable with the current situation of things and feel that changes may destabilize them or throw them out of their comfort zone. Socio-political neophobia is a prison, and one that is unfortunately so, because new ideas, innovations, and changes bring about advancement in a nation. National advancement, in turn, provides circumstances that take care of the needs of its citizens and solves the very causes of fears and insecurities that make people behave and indulge in unwholesome and morally depraved ways. Accordingly, socio-political neophobia is a key determining factor that stagnates progress as it makes it difficult to accept innovations and changes, the two ingredients for advancement in progressive nations. It is, of course, foolhardy an endeavor to embrace every idea at face value since some may come with their attendant harmful effects. However, it is a smart attitude to embrace new

ideas, principles, and policies that have universal and objective values. This claim is justified by the global experience that new ways of thinking are critical to success, innovation, and effective problem-solving; and this is true of many advanced nations.

If the above is true of many progressive societies, then it is safe to argue that nations that lack advancement are nations that wilfully or deliberately militate against innovations. This paper maintains that Nigeria is one of such nations. To argue this out, the essay shall underline the elements and/or manifestations of socio-political neophobia among elites in the Nigerian nation. It shall advance arguments that the only panacea to advancement and growth in the nation is to dislodge socio-political neophobia and neophobic tendencies. It is hoped that, with the realities having been underlined, relevant suggestions would be made to serve as panaceas for greater advancement in Nigeria.

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to conduct a desk research on the paralyzing effects of neophobia on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The research design for this study involved a qualitative analysis of existing literature on neophobia and its effects on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The analysis focused on identifying common themes and patterns in the literature. The data for this study was collected from various secondary sources such as academic journals, books, government publications, and online databases. The search for literature was conducted using keywords related to neophobia, socio-political landscape, and Nigeria. The data collected was documented and organized systematically for analysis. The analysis of the collected data involved a thematic analysis of the literature. The literature was analyzed thematically to identify the common themes and patterns related to neophobia and its effects on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The themes and patterns identified will be discussed in detail in the study. Since this study is based on desk research, ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality do not apply. However,

it was important to ensure that the data collected from the secondary sources were credible and reliable. Therefore, the sources were carefully evaluated for their credibility and authenticity. The desk research methodology outlined above provides a structured and systematic approach to understanding the paralyzing effects of neophobia on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The analysis of the literature provide insights that can be used to inform policy and decision-making in Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Neoliberalism***

In the context of Nigeria's socio-political landscape, neoliberalism refers to the economic policies that have been adopted by the government since the 1980s. These policies include deregulation, privatization, and reduced government spending. Neoliberalism has contributed to the rise of neophobia in Nigeria, as individuals and groups fear the changes brought about by economic liberalization. Neoliberalism is an economic theory that advocates for free markets, deregulation, and reduced government intervention in the economy. It emerged in the 1970s as a response to the economic crises that affected many Western countries at the time. In Nigeria, neoliberal policies were introduced in the 1980s as a response to the country's economic crisis, which was caused by the decline in oil prices. Neoliberalism has been the dominant economic policy in Nigeria for over three decades. The policies have included the deregulation of markets, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and reduction of government spending. While these policies were intended to promote economic growth and development, they have also contributed to rising inequality, poverty, and unemployment in the country. (Ekanade O. V., 2014)

The adoption of neoliberal policies has also contributed to the rise of neophobia in Nigeria. Neoliberal policies require significant changes in the economy and society, which can be

disruptive and unsettling for some individuals and groups (Winkler, J. R., 2022). Many Nigerians, especially those in the lower socio-economic classes, have been negatively affected by these policies and may view them with suspicion or fear. In conclusion, the adoption of neoliberal policies in Nigeria has contributed to the rise of neophobia in the country. While these policies were intended to promote economic growth and development, they have also contributed to rising inequality, poverty, and unemployment. The lack of transparency and accountability in the implementation of these policies has also undermined public trust in the government, further exacerbating neophobia in Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

### *Political Culture*

Political culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms that shape political behavior in a society. Political culture has been studied most intensively in the context of established Western democracies. The classic study of political culture is *The Civic Culture* (1963) by American political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba (Winkler 2022). In Nigeria, the political culture is characterized by neophobia, which has impeded progress and development in the country. Neophobia is the fear or resistance to change, and it is often fueled by the perceived threat that change poses to existing power structures and societal norms. In Nigeria, neophobia is rooted in a history of colonialism and military rule.

The legacy of colonialism has left Nigeria with a political culture that favors the preservation of the status quo and the consolidation of power among a small elite. The military regimes that have governed Nigeria for much of its post-colonial history have reinforced this culture of neophobia, as they have used repression and coercion to suppress dissent and maintain their grip on power. The result of this neophobic political culture is a lack of willingness among political elites to embrace change and innovation. This has contributed to the stagnation of Nigeria's socio-political landscape, as progress and development require a

willingness to experiment with new ideas and approaches. Instead, political elites in Nigeria tend to resist change, often out of a fear that it could threaten their power and privilege.

Neophobia also affects the broader Nigerian population, as it can lead to a lack of trust in institutions and a reluctance to engage in political participation. Citizens may be hesitant to engage with the government or participate in political processes, fearing reprisals or feeling that their efforts will be futile. This lack of political engagement further reinforces the neophobic political culture in Nigeria, as it allows political elites to maintain their hold on power without accountability to the people. In conclusion, the neophobic political culture in Nigeria has had a paralyzing effect on the country's socio-political landscape. It has hindered progress and development, reinforced existing power structures, and discouraged political engagement among the Nigerian people. Addressing this neophobic culture will be crucial for Nigeria to achieve its potential and become a more vibrant and inclusive democracy.

### **Elements/Manifestations of Neophobic among Elites in the Nigerian Nation**

This subsection discusses the reality of socio-political neophobia as well as the elements and/or the manifestations of neophobic tendencies among elites in the Nigerian nation. To begin with, it is pertinent to state that neophobia is a natural tendency in humans. More generally, people tend to be creatures of habit and as it is said, habits are hard to change. For instance, people often spend decades in the same house, working for the same employer, driving the same car, and even eating the same thing every Friday night. Such familiarity also tends to have an impact on people's personal preferences. The more a person is exposed to something, the more they tend to prefer it, a phenomenon known as the mere exposure effect. Furthermore, there are times when sticking to the familiar can serve as an adaptive coping mechanism. Over time, constantly choosing the familiar might

play a part in hesitancy when it comes to the unfamiliar. Some fear of the unknown is normal and even adaptive. It is when this fear becomes excessive, distressing, and life-limiting that it represents a more serious problem. This is the point of this essay, namely that socio-political familiarity among the elite has become excessive, and they are averse to changes, resulting to neophobia. In the following discourse, the paper would outline and discuss a number of elements and/or the manifestations of socio-political neophobia among elites in the Nigerian nation.

*a) Selection and not election*

In many parts of the globe, public leaders are chosen into offices through electoral processes. Generally referred to as election, the process is meant to choose and designate individuals to represent the people into public positions in the polity. The credibility of the process depends on how free and fair it was conducted. In fact, in the words of Isiaq et al. (2018), "Periodic free and fair elections constitute one of the most significant institutions of liberal and participatory democracy." In Nigeria, however, the general opinion concerning the process of electing leaders into public offices is that it has hardly been free and fair. There may be different reasons behind this conclusion among which are thuggery and gangsterism (Sule B. et al. 2020), ballot snatching, acquired by gun, rigging or giving power to handpicked successors (Gichuki, 2014); complicity of security agents (Ajayi, 2006); complicity of even electoral officials both INEC and ad hoc (Aboh & Obem, 2022), and abuse of privilege of incumbency (Ayogu et al. 2019). In this connection Ayogu et al. write that, "presidents in Nigeria have changed the headship of key security agencies to make sure the elections favour them. There was also the issue of manipulating the appointment or sack of officials of INEC to field their cronies for political patronage."

As a result, it is generally assumed that most leaders who assume public offices are imposed rather than elected (Gichuki, 2014). Anazodo et al. (2015) have explicitly asserted that in Nigeria, “The leaders did not emerge from among the people; rather they were imposed on them by godfathers and political parties.” This has led many to believe that most leaders occupying public offices are not really the people's choice. Again, this has led many to believe that rather than “election,” the process is “selection” (Nweke, 2015). By selection here, is to be understood that the candidates are selected even before the exercise takes place and therefore rendering the election an exercise in futility. This has made many Nigerians to develop voter apathy in the past decades since Nigeria embraced democracy.

In all of these, the element of socio-political neophobia is manifested in the fear of allowing free and fair election to take place. In other words, the implementation of free and fair electoral process is still a new idea, which has hardly been allowed to happen. The people whose election is substituted by boardroom selection (Aboh, 2016) have the premonition that, if it does happen, they would not be voted into their desired offices. This is not surprising since such candidates have demonstrated that they have nothing much to offer but incompetence and under qualification or even lack the requisite academic qualifications (Oke, 2022). Additionally, the leadership of such candidates “is characterized by such negative features as lack of direction, neglect and drift, fraud and insensitivity to the plight of the citizens” (Ebegbulem 2011). For such candidates and their sponsors as well as supporters, the novel concept of free and fair election would be quite frightening, since they feel insecure and are fearful of what the future holds for them without the securing the position of power. Thus, they are averse to it. But the truth remains that as long as free and fair election is not enthroned, advancement in Nigeria would continue to elude the nation for the obvious reasons that the right people who can drive the advancement would hardly occupy the management opposition in the nation. But the irony, which is the thesis of this essay, is

that with innovations come advancement, and with advancement, even without power, citizens' futures needs are provided.

**b) Entitlement Mentality of Leaders**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, Bolaji Asiwaju Tinubu visited Abeokuta, where he put up a stiff verbal apologia as to why he had to be the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential flagbearer for the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Among other things, he was heard to have said "*emi l'okan*." This means, "It is my turn." This statement which smacks of nothing but an entitlement mentality, has come to be his revolutionary rallying cry in his march towards the seat of power in 2023. Okay (2022) interprets the statement thus:

Quite literally, '*emi l'okan*' in the Yoruba language translates as 'it is my turn'. It is neither a plea nor a bargain; it is a stake on a claim not given to negotiations. It is throwing down the gauntlet and challenging any objector to a duel. It is a readiness and an invitation to settle the score without further ado. In short, it is saying now or never.

The entitlement mentality in Tinubu's statement and its implication became clearer that day when he was heard to have said that he was among the founding fathers of APC and that he actually played a major role in enthroning Major General Muhammadu Buhari on the exalted position of the president of Nigeria (Oke, 2022). He sounded as if there was an agreement that once Buhari's tenure was over, he was to be the next president by default. This is short of nothing but prebendalism, (Osewa, 2022).

As appalling as the above truth is concerning Tinubu, it is also unfortunately true of many politicians and public office holders in Nigeria. This reality of "entitlement mentality" manifests

itself under different shades of colours. Some come in the form of party entitlements, namely that because an individual belongs to a given party, he automatically qualifies to occupy a certain position. Some happen from the viewpoint of sponsorship, namely that because one has financially sponsored the public office holder, one deserves to be appointed into a certain position or be given choice contract (Okagbu 2012). Writers call this practice “Godfatherism” (Osewa, 2022). Still some others lay claim to the “entitlement mentality” through the conduit of ethnic, tribal or religious affinity. Of course, all these have pejorative implications. They have also come with series of negative consequences that have hindered advancement at the local and national levels. For instance, from the point of view of ethno-religious entitlement mentality, Nweke (2015) avers that:

Nigerian governance, from the point of colonial independence, has been a display of ethnic/religious politics. Within the current democratic setting, ethno-religious politics entrench strong leadership tussle between the North (Muslims) and South (mainly Christians) giving rise to series of ethno-religious crises resulting in religious bigotry, born to-rule orientation, incessant killings and wanton destruction of property, insurgency and terrorism. The Yar'Adua administration bore the stings of Niger Delta militancy guised as ethnic struggle for emancipation from political cum developmental marginalization. After the 2011 general election that threw up Jonathan Goodluck as President from the region of Southern minority, the nation witnessed wide post-election violence in the North where comments of making the tenure ungovernable for the President preceded the current virulent Boko Haram insurgency.

In the above quote, Nweke validates the fact that the “born to rule” mentality does not only sound preposterous but that it is destructive and hinders national advancement in Nigeria. From

another angle, the entitlement mentality hinders progress and advancement in that candidates do not desire to occupy office because they have the administrative capacity, or the intellectual wherewithal to hold the office they arrogate to themselves or expect to be given. That is why many public office holders in Nigeria underperform; and when this becomes widespread, advancement is hindered. The challenge of socio-political neophobia in this case is that, because it is widespread, the beneficiaries of entitlement mentality would naturally have aversion for novel ideas coming from more competent hands outside their cycle. They are averse to the idea of appointment by competence, ability and how proficient the candidate is. Their phobia is quite understandable, since allowing these qualities to stand as criteria automatically disqualifies them. But the outcome of their refusal to all competent hands to be enthroned in position of power, would continue to be the bane of advancement in the nation.

*c) Recycling of Old Folks in Leadership Position*

The popular saying that youths are leaders of tomorrow has become obsolete in Nigeria. It is a saying that has indeed lost its meaning and lustre. That this is true is obvious since those who have ruled for the past four decades are still being recycled into public offices. These old folks demonstrate high level of “undivided focus on consolidating loyalty, scheming longer office tenure and silencing any dissension leading some to pursue violent methods” (Gichuki, 2014). From the viewpoint of the charter of the African Youth, a youth is one within the age bracket of 15 and 35 years. Meanwhile, according to Sommer (2011), the youths under the age of 30 constitute 70% of the population in Africa. Yet, of these percentage it is an unusual occurrence to see even a small number holding sensitive public office responsible for progressive activities and national advancement programmes. Onwughalu (2018) maintains that “Even within the intendment of our elitist political architecture,

those already ensconced in power are prone to muscle the youths out in the political equation.” This reality has even affected how Nigerian youths view education and academic pursuit. They feel that going to school is of no use, since even after graduation, they remain largely unemployed or involved in the running of the state. This reality has engendered the slogan among many Nigerian youths that “education is a scam.” Although this is sadly untrue, there is hardly a way of explaining it away since the same old folks have remained in government and politics since independence. For exam, although he claims to be 70 years old, 2023 presidential candidate of APC is generally believed to be far older than the said age (Kperogi 2022).

Moreover, it also sad that the provisions of the constitutions have tactfully precluded young and efficient minds from holding key positions in the nation, leaving tired minds to keep recycling old ideas. Onwughalu describes the situation thus:

Nigeria is one of the countries still operating a constitution with provisions that restrict the right of young persons to seek elective positions on account of age prescriptions. The least age for political office in the country is 25 years old for councillorship position, while the age limit for House of Representative and Houses of Assembly is 30 years (see Sections 65(5)(a) and Section 106(b) of the 1999 Constitution as amended. Sections 65(1)(a) and section 177(b) of the Constitution prescribes age requirements of 35 years for anyone vying for the post of Senate and Governor while President is 40 years (section 131(a)).

The above notwithstanding, it remains a reality that the youths are involved in political processes and activities that keep them at the periphery. Among these are campaigns, party delegates and but especially negative politics such as ballot box snatching, rigging and thuggery. However, they “are shut out from participating in formal political institutions and processes like

political parties' management, public administration, decision-making, and seeking elective offices at all the levels of government," (Onwughalu, 2018).

Moreover, there has been policies that have restricted participation of youths below the age of 30 in politics. This "restriction of participation by age serves to deny the youths the opportunity to contribute to policies and governance and merely restrict them to voting in elections." This "has affected the psychology of most people as they erroneously perceive leadership and decision making as exclusive preserve for old people or the elite," (Onwughalu, 2018). Thus, it is a normal occurrence in Nigeria to see someone who starts as a local government chairman rise to state house of assembly and to governorship position. Very often also, one sees a governor move to the senate and sometimes serves as minister or even attempt to vie for presidential office. Many present office holders in Nigeria served under Obasanjo since 1998. It is no surprise also to see a senator who has been in the house for eight (8) different tenures. Some even grow old and die serving, while the youths remain redundant and lie fallow.

With all these scenarios, there is a natural tendency for the old recycled folks to abhor new ideas, or innovations in policies and principles of government that would muddy the waters. This essay insists that as long as these people with obsolete ideas are averse to new ideas and changes, there would be no advancement in Nigeria. This is clear from the fact that countries that are advancing on daily basis such as Australia, Canada and France have the common denominator of youthful presidents. In fact, the major opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters South Africa in was pioneered by a young man who was as yet older than 32 years.

Additionally, in recent years, a 29 years old Ms. Bogolo Kenewendo took up the office of the Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry Botswana (Onwughalu, 2018). These were

all possible because the citizens of the respective nations were open to new things and changes and their recompenses were obvious advancement as new minds come with progressive ideas. In such nations, the old folks who would have held tight to power because of fears and insecurities concerning their upkeep and well-being are being taken care of by the advanced system of government and socio-economic system of operation. But while this is true of the aforementioned nations, in the nation Nigeria, the recurrent recycling of old folks in leadership positions has continued to be bane of advancement. Meanwhile, the socio-political neophobics continue to ensure that the status quo remains.

*d) Nominal democracy but despotic government*

The Nigerian system of government is said to be democratic. The term democracy itself literally means “rule by the people.” By description therefore, it is a system of government where by the people of a nation, or at least the majority, jointly choose their leaders through a free and fair election and the elected leaders *represent* the people and their interests. This means “that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to govern them,” (Zhizhi and Ibrahim). Thus, its ideology promotes peoples' will (Nweke, 2015). Where this is practiced to a considerable degree, and there are nations where it is done, democratic government is a key to sustainable national advancement. However, even a cursory look at the style of governance in Nigeria, is sufficient to conclude that “Nigeria is yet to achieve democracy or development,” (Chukwurah et al., 2020). This is so because as a nation, Nigeria has not as yet internalize true democratic culture, (Ogunjimi and Ogundeji, 2020). The first sign of how undemocratic Nigeria is as a nation is how people come into leadership positions. “All available means have been employed by Nigerian political leaders to 'grab' power including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism,

gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments and acts of brigandage as witnessed in the utterances of some delegates in the 2014 national conference,” (Anazodo et al., 2015).

It is clear therefore, that rather than democracy, Nigeria has been experiencing despotic form of government, which itself is an attack on, and rape of democracy. Indeed, those entrusted with the management of Nigeria “maintain rigid dictatorial approach as well as master-servant, rider-horse relationship with subordinates. In fact, it has been said that a Nigerian man is by nature and training an autocrat who demands nothing but respect and obedience from his subordinates, and those younger and lower in status than him,” (Odediran and Babalola, 2015). This has led some to designate the form of democracy in Nigeria as “the wrong side of democracy” (Aboh, 2016). The style of dictatorial leadership hinders advancement because individuals may operate from whims. Given the reality of human limitations, this style of government would permit only narrow progress. Additionally, it permits biases, whether they be ethnic, religious or political allegiance to constitute nuisance and stagnation in the polity. However, for the beneficiaries of such despotic government, the thought of introduce genuine and workable democracy poses a threat to them as they know that their ideologies would not be tolerated. Thus, they are antipathetic to any form of change from the status quo. This is nothing but socio-political neophobia, and as long as it keeps thriving, stagnation would continue to be the face of the nation.

*e) Bribery and Corruption*

It is very difficult for any academic paper to discuss advancement in Nigeria, without having to make reference to the twin vice of bribery and corruption. According to Anazodo et al. (2015), “Since the flag of political independence in 1960, Nigerian leaders and their regimes have been deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption and bad governance.” The presence of

endemic corruption in the nation is insinuated by the elicitation of the formation of agencies of anti-corruption enforcement. For instance, since the return of civic rule two of such agencies created to fight corruption are Economic and Financial Crime Commission and Independent Corruption and other Practices Commission.

Some pertinent questions that come to mind therefore are: what is the corruption in question? And what are its functions in the Nigerian Nation? Moreover, how endemic is corruption in the Nigerian polity? In this regard and from a general point of view corruption can be defined as abuse of power for private gain. This is in line with how Transparency International (2013) defines it, namely “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” In this connection, corruption covers a wide range of morally offensive or criminal acts. (Ubi, 2012).

Some of the functions of corruption in the polity is that humans theorize what beneficial and rewarding to them and they go for them. In other words, corruption lies in the fact that even though it is evil and can be penalized, people proceed to “bless” themselves at the expense of others. On how endemic it is, is seen in the underperformance of the Nigerian government. For instance, the government “claimed to have spent over N1trillion and N204 billion between 1999 and 2007 on power and road construction/maintenance respectively, yet we still live with epileptic power supply and unimaginable deplorable roads,” (Ubi, 2012). Anazodo et al. have also affirmed that,

Corruption in Nigeria has become so pervasive to the extent that young men and women do not see the essence of doing the right thing or going to school to learn because they see daily how illiterates and half-baked educated ones control billions of naira while the highly educated once conducting research that is contributing to

advancement of knowledge and the society are looked at with scorn. In this context, the people can hardly believe and respect their leaders.

The consequences of all this is that there is prevalent violence, insecurity, abject poverty, social dislocation, socio-economic and political instability. This too has made National integration to appear to be a reality beyond achievement. This is so because, as it is said, "A society that is unjust and devoid of equity and equality will inherently be unstable," (Anazodo et al., 2015).

The concept of socio-political neophobia comes in here, because the perpetrators are averse to any change in the status quo. This is so because the practice of bribery and corruption is as a result of insecurity and fear of the uncertainties about the future by perpetrators. Because they nation is not developed and has no social securities, its citizens make effort to avoid being financially stranded in times of needs (Chukwurah et al., 2020). Some practice bribery and corruption to amass wealth for themselves and their families which gives them a sense of security in terms of adversities such as sickness or crisis. Others practice it in order to invest or run abroad to look for better life or medical attention.

In all of these, there it is obvious that people are uncomfortable with, or even hostile to, new policies that would bring advancement and moral codes that can checkmate their excesses. Therefore, from points of view, bribery and corruption can engender phobia for change among perpetrators. However, this paper would insist that bribery and corruption would be superfluous if the society experiences advancement, whereby the citizens have access to amenities that would ensure some level of comfort and social security. Unfortunately, as long as these negative elements continue to thrive, they would continue to be the bane of advancement. At the end, there is a vicious cycle of bribery and corruption and lack of advancement. What a misfortune! What a disaster for a nation!

**Shunning Socio-Political Neophobia as Panacea for Nation**

### **Building and Advancement in Nigeria**

In the foregoing, this study has shown that the reason behind socio-political neophobia and therefore backwardness in advancement is that the neophobics unsure of the outcome of new ideas and innovations, namely whether it would favour them or not. For advancement to be possible therefore, the phobia has to be treated or overcome. This study proposes two ways, namely the treatment of neophobia and/or a concerted effort to enthrone a generation of young leaders, who are not averse to new ideas and innovations.

#### *a). Treatment/Avoidance of Neophobia as a Panacea for Nation Building and Advancement in Nigeria*

If neophobia is a condition where new ideas and or desire for innovations are abhorred, then there should be a remedy. Using “Food Neophobia” as a case study, one may adopt its therapeutic principles and apply for the treatment of socio-political one. Food neophobia is a condition where individuals are afraid to indulge in food that they consider as new or strange (Marcontell et al., 2003). Because of socio-economic exigencies, the introduction and, in fact, the production of new foods have become an imperative (Siddiqui et al. 2022). In their study, Siddiqui et al. (2022) affirm that novel foods are newly developed, innovative food. They are so called either because they have not been part of the food that has been traditionally eaten in a given environment or food produced using new technologies and production processes. In such cases however, there is a high propensity for people to indulge in consumption of the same types of food to avoid tasting new foods. But since introducing new foods has become necessary, such phobia has to be treated or avoided.

There are a number of suggested remedies. For instance, “Tasting foods is indicated as one of the most efficient means to ensure neophobia reduction in new foods and new food trends. Other factors identified to reduce food neophobia are education, income, taste and exposure to novel foods” (Saddiqui, 2022).

Similar approach has been adopted by other researchers, where a combination of contingency management, shaping, ignoring, desensitization, and relaxation training are recommended. Other treatment approaches are education and cognitive restructuring that target beliefs and attitudes towards new foods. (Singer et al., 1992).

From the above approaches to treatment and avoidance of food neophobia, the common factors are education, desensitization, training, tasting and exposure of new foods. The said researches have proven that these approaches have yielded positive results when properly applied or administered. This study therefore argues that the treatment or avoidance of new ideas or innovations that militate against nation building and advancement is achievable. Perhaps, education would play a key role to desensitize individuals who are insecure and cling to old ideas. Perhaps, insistence on training and exposure to new trends – as seen in advanced nations – that ensure security and peace can bolster courage in the neophobics to permit themselves to accept changes and be innovation-savvy.

***b). New Generation of Young leaders as a Panacea for Nation Building and Advancement in Nigeria***

The saying is attributed to Catherine Booths (the cofounder of the Salvation Army) that: “If we are to better the future, we must disturb the present.” It follows therefore, that if socio-political neophobics are averse to new ideas or innovations that promote advancement, then one solution is to introduce a generation of younger leaders who are innovation-savvy. This approach is akin to the affirmation by Thomas Kuhn's in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which is that new ideas, however well proven and evident, are implemented only when the generations who consider them "new" die and are replaced by generations who consider the ideas accepted and old (50<sup>th</sup> ed., 2012).

This approach also is suggested by the recent happenings in the Nigerian socio-political arena. The first is the *EndSars Protest* in 2020 (Cadmus F. & Bamgbose O. [2021]; Uwazuruike A [2022]; Ochi, I. B & Mark, K. C. [2021] and Raji, A. A. [2020]). While the second is the recent interest the youths of Nigeria have demonstrated in deciding who should be their political leaders (Dakuku P., 2023) especially with the emergence of the Labour Party (LP) candidate, Peter Obi and his running mate, Yusuf Ahmed Datti in contradistinction to the voter-apathy seen in the polity in previous decades. These two happenings have shown that the activities of the younger minds signal openness to new ideas and new political goodwill that promote growth and advancement in the society.

By and large therefore, one can safely state that a highly probable and workable panacea for advancement and nation building is a systematic dislodgement of socio-political neophobics. Younger minds with modern innovative charisma should be given the opportunity to bring new ideas and policies that can engender advancement.

### **Conclusion**

This paper set out to assert that Nigeria as a nation is suffering stagnation and deficit in advancement. It affirms that one obvious cause is socio-political neophobia, which has been defined here as the fear and aversion for new ideas and innovations, which the elite and leaders of Nigeria entertain. The study has shown that the insecurity and fear for enthronement of novel ideas by these self-serving elites are demonstrated through socio-political manipulative agenda. They ensure that rather by political leaders get elected, the workout processes that dubiously plant a candidate, a method better designated as “selection” rather than election. Another way they stagnate the advancement of the nation is by entitlement mentality whereby leadership position or contracts are restricted only to people who feel they nation owes them such favours even when they lack competence. Moreover, when the same people insist on ruling

the nation from independence till now, the nation is bound to suffer lack of advancement as they lack any new ideas or concepts that bring about developments. Additionally, the elites who are cause but beneficiaries of the failed nation ensure that what is called democracy in the nation is actually autocracy and this reality is fueled and fired by the unguarded vice of corruption which appears to be endemic. Through corruption, they are able to loot and amass wealth for themselves, with impunity at that.

All the above anomalies that cause backwardness are shrewdly secured by leaders and elites because they are petrified that if new ideas and innovative concepts are enthroned, they would be dislodged. Thus, they suffer socio-political neophobia. For things to change therefore, the phobia must have to be treated by helping them understand that if the society advances, security, peace and comfort would be accessible to all citizens, including themselves. But then, another approach for remedying the backwardness in the nation is the dislodgement of all the victims of socio-neophobia and bringing in younger folks. These are young minds who have fresh ideas and are driven by passionate love for the nation and are ready to take their land to the zenith of advancement.

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