

NATURE AND CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: SCENARIOS AND CHALLENGES (A PERSPECTIVE OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC (1999-2015))

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ABSTRACT

The doctrine of democracy requires that the legitimacy of an elected representative obtained by popular mandate, should metamorphosed into effective representation of the interest and desire of the citizens to produce decent living standards through good governance. In the light of the above, the paper interrogates the concept of democratic governance, the essential elements, its practices and challenges in the political and socio-economic climate of Nigeria. The paper posits that the practice of democracy in Nigeria requires mutual commitments from both the leaders and the lead, to adjust their attitudes toward the attainment of the universally acceptable tenets of democracy. This would help to overcome the challenges of democracy discussed in the paper and engender sustainable socio-economic and political development. The paper made use of secondary data and the descriptive cum historical approach in the analysis of the subject matter under interrogation. The data generated were systematically analyzed in a manner that would ensure a clear understanding of the phenomenon. The study concludes by advocate for the strengthening of the democratic and especially the electoral institution to promote good and accountable governance. There is also the need to discourage godfatherism, fight corruption and adhere to the rule of law amongst others. If these practices are adhered to, in the view of the paper, it would foster a culture of good governance, which focuses on goal achievement to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness in governance delivery.

Key words: Democracy; Governance; Transparency; Accountability; Electoral challenges.

Introduction

Democracy has become the most popular form of governance in the world. Most leaders now identify with democracy or want to be seen or described as democratic. In the last decade according to Enemu (Cited in Anifowose and Enemu, 2008), the world has witnessed the emergence of mass organization in Africa, Asia and Eastern

Europe, that have risen to demand an end to dictatorial rule and its replacement with democracy. Nigeria also has come to terms with the notions of democracy after a protracted military rule. Since the enthronement of democracy in May, 1999, the country has witness about sixteen (16) years of uninterrupted civil rule and expectations

are high despite the challenges ahead, democracy has become institutionalized in Nigeria (Ukaegbu, 2010). However, it has been contended that Nigeria's political quagmire and the failure to engender an equitable and developmental oriented nation can be partly blamed on defective political institutions and structures coupled with the incapacity of the Nigerian government to tackle these problems decisively (Azeez, 2010; Adamolekun, 2002; Levy, 1968). This paper therefore, examines some of the problems and challenges of democracy such as the electoral system, internal party democracy and godfatherism, as well as offer suggestions that would sustain Nigeria's constitutional democracy. The paper adopts the descriptive cum historical approach in the analysis of the subject matter under interrogation. The paper is divided into four sections. Following this section is the conceptual/theoretical analysis; the next section deals with an analysis of Nigeria's democratic experience in the fourth republic while the last section has the conclusion and recommendation.

Methodology

The analysis of data in a qualitative research (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973) entails the classification of things, persons and events as well as the properties which characterizes them. In line with this viewpoint, data analysis in this paper was chronologically and categorically organized. The aim was to ascertain the driving interests relevant to the debate on the problems and challenges of democratic institutions and this approach provides a useful way of understanding the phenomenon. Hence, data were majorly sourced from books, dailies and periodicals, government publications, seminar and conference papers amongst others. Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the data gathered which was presented in a narrative.

Conceptual/Theoretical Discourse

Democracy, which derives from the Greek word *demos*, or people, connotes a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Democracy can be understood as an ideology, a concept or a theory. The meaning of democracy can be summarized as:

“A mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement is that where all members of the collectivity enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly- one that is to say, which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise” (Beetham, 1992: 40).

Democracy is certainly a set of ideals or principles about freedom, but it also consists of practices and procedures molded through a long, often convoluted history. Democracy is the institutionalization of freedom, it is more than just a set of specific government institutions; it is dependent upon a well - understood set of values, attitudes, and practices - all of which may take varying structures and terminologies among the cultures and environments of different societies worldwide (Heywood, 2007). Democracies rest upon fundamental principles, not uniform practices. It is a form of governance in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens, directly, or through their freely elected representatives. Democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule and individual rights. One of the prime functions of democracy is the preservation of such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion, the right to equal protection under law, the opportunity to organize and participate

fully in the economic and cultural life of society, as well as the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn, protects their rights and freedoms (Fenichel, 2004).

The concept and practice of democracy has been criticized by several schools of thought. For example, the classical scholars like Vilfredo Parato (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1857-1941) view democracy as no more than a foolish delusion, hence, political power is always exercised by a privileged minority, an elite which manipulate and control the masses and a setting where the resources of the state are unequally distributed to the advantage of the elite class (Heywood, 2007). In the Marxist view, political power cannot be understood narrowly in terms of electoral rights, or in terms of the ability of groups to articulate their interests by lobbying and campaigning. Instead, political power reflects the allocation of economic power, and in particular the unequal ownership of productive wealth. Consequently, power cannot be evenly dispersed in society as long as class power is unevenly distributed (Heywood, 2007). In spite of these criticisms, democracy has become one of the most acceptable systems of governance which emphasizes indicators of electoral democracy encompassing, universal suffrage, elections that institutes voter preferences and unbiased choice among alternatives, which become the basis for constituting holders of public office (Dahl, 1989).

Categorizing Democracy

Fundamentally, democracy can be categorized into direct and representative. In a direct democracy, citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can take part in the making of public decisions. Such a system is essentially practical with relatively small numbers of people - in a community organization, tribal council etc. to discuss

issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote (Emerson, 2012; Tibi, 2013). For example, in Switzerland, many important political decisions on issues, including public health, energy, and employment, is subject to a vote by the citizens. However, today, as in the past, the most preferable form of democracy, whether for a town of a small number or a nation of millions of people, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and implement programs for the public good. However, a third model, the Marxist model also sometimes called the People's democracy exists. This model extends the equality of all citizens from the political to the social and economic sphere of life (Held, 1993). All democracies are systems in which citizens freely make political decisions by majority rule. Although, majority rule, is not by itself automatically democratic. For example, what justification would permit 51 percent of the population to take decisions that undermines the remaining 49 percent in the name of the majority (Heywood, 2007). In a democracy, majority rule must take cognizance of individual human rights that, would serve to protect the rights of minorities and dissenters - whether ethnic, religious, or political. The principle of majority rule and minority rights characterizes all modern democracies, no matter how varied in history, culture, population, and economy (Fenichel, 2004; Heywood, 2007).

A discourse of democracy would rather involve a discussion of democratic governance or the concept of good governance; since it is generally acknowledged that democratic ideals represent the tenets of good governance. Democratic governance connotes the exercise of power of an authority with the purpose of managing the affairs of a state. Democratic governance is based upon the enforcement of the fundamental values of democracy in the exercise of power (Crawford,

2000; Becker and Raveloson, 2008). According to Ogundiya (2010:204), "it is only when we appraise the manner in which the affairs of a State are run that we can classify governance into good/bad, successful/unsuccessful". Failure of governance according to him indicates that people in positions of political power have mismanaged the economy and other social institutions. Hence, democracy cannot succeed in a political setting without the application of good governance (UNESCO, 2005).

Theorizing Democracy

Democracy, as a theoretical concept, has extensively been the subject of deliberations and debate. The notion of democracy speaks not only of the nature of government, elections and power, but also of the nature of society, community and humanity. In the political philosophy of more recent centuries, the concept of democracy has evolved through numerous manifestations. It has been used as the basis for a utopian society, a means to protect citizens from government, a tool for the advancement of human development, a form of free-market politics, and a way to guarantee stability in a pluralist society (Russell, 2002; Igbuzor, 2005). Ongoing theoretical thought and the efforts of various democratizing groups continue to keep the long-standing questions of the nature of democracy and politics at the vanguard of the debate. Viewed strictly as a tool or mechanism, representative democracy is defined only as a system of government in which people vote to select those who will determine policy and act as their political leaders. The act of voting provides all citizens with a direct interest in the activities of government and an opportunity to participate in governance. The results of the election confer on those elected the legitimacy to govern and the responsibility to decide

political issues on behalf of their constituency (Logan and Matters 2010; Osaghae, 1999).

Electoral participation thus, becomes the key form of interaction between those elected and the citizenry and provides the fundamental basis for the operation of the democratic system. It also affords the electorate (citizens) the opportunity to ensure that those elected political office holders, who failed to deliver good governance, are voted out. Some writers and some participants in democracy-building processes contend that, politics must be viewed as a way of living and social decision making rather than as an instrument of control or influence. Democracy thus becomes a moral concept-a way of life. Political participation also needs to be expressive, allowing a citizen to feel a part of the process. In this view, democratic participation is conceived of as a medium to build both citizenship and community. Substantial citizen participation in government decision making is essential to achieve an equitable and humane society (Macpherson, 1977 and Barber, 1984; Adedeji, 1997). The practice of democracy in Nigeria requires mutual commitments from both the leaders and the lead, to adjust their attitudes toward the attainment of the universally acceptable tenets of democracy that would engender sustainable socio-economic and political development (Sharma, 2007). Leaders must be committed to operate an open, transparent and accountable government that respects the rule of law (Fayemi, 2001). It is however argued, that democracy will not function as intended in Nigeria except citizens assert their rightful and significant roles in the democratic process (Welzel and Inglehart, 2008).

Components of Democracy

Democracy as a concept is made up of various elements that serve as the bedrock and building blocks for the expression, exercise

and interaction of the democratic culture in building an equitable society. Some of the core variables of democracy are discussed below.

Fundamental Rights and Responsibilities

Democracy hinges upon the principle that government exists to serve the people. In other words, the people are citizens of the democratic state, not its subjects. Because the state protects the rights of its citizens, the citizens in turn, give their loyalty to the state. In an authoritarian system, by contrast, the state demands loyalty and service from its people without any reciprocal obligation to secure their consent for its actions. In a democracy, core fundamental rights include freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of assembly, and the right to equal protection before the law. Freedom of speech and expression, especially about political and social issues, is the lifeblood of any democracy. Consequently, democracies are usually filled with different expressions of ideas and opinions in a participatory democracy. Though freedom of speech is a fundamental right, it is not absolute; hence a person cannot use such right to incite violence. Slander and libel, are usually proven, defined and controlled through the courts. The challenge for all democracies, is that of maintaining equilibrium among these various human rights; protecting freedom of speech and assembly while countering speech that incite to violence, intimidation, or subversion of democratic institutions (O'Donnell, 2005 ; Diamond and Leonardo, 2005; Rindermann, 2008). Citizenship in a democracy has the responsibility to participate actively in the nurturing and growth of democracy. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active not passive, since the success or failure of the government will affect the whole society. Citizens must fulfill their civic responsibilities-

they must submit themselves to lawful authorities and vote in periodic elections to enthrone the government of their choice that would be accountable. At a minimum, citizens should educate themselves about the critical issues confronting their society so as to actively participate in the public life of their community and nation (Welzel, and Inglehart, 2008; Russell, 2002).

Rule of Law and Constitutionalism

The concept of the rule of law connotes the supremacy of the law above every citizens of the state. It protects fundamental political, social, and economic rights and defends citizens from the threats of both tyranny and lawlessness. Democratic governance exercise authority by way of the law and are themselves subject to the law's constraints. Whether rich or poor, ethnic majority or religious minority, political ally of the state or peaceful opponent - all must obey the laws (Preuss, 1991). A constitution stipulates the fundamental obligations of government, the limitations on state power and citizens responsibilities, this is vital for any democracy. A constitution defines the basic purposes and aspirations of a society for the sake of the common welfare of the people. All citizens, including the nation's leaders, are subject to the nation's constitution, which stands as the supreme law of the land. Constitutionalism recognizes that democratic and accountable government must be matched with clearly defined limits on the power of government. All laws, therefore made, must be in accordance with the constitution (Dahl, Shapiro and Cheibub, 2003).

Democratic Elections

Democracies conduct periodic free and fair elections open to citizens of voting age. Credible elections are fundamental in guaranteeing the consent of the governed and elections serve as the primary instrument for

translating that consent into governmental authority. Democratic elections are competitive. Opposition parties and candidates must enjoy the freedom of speech, assembly, and movement essential to openly criticize the government and to bring alternative policies and candidates to the voters. Democratic elections are periodic (Odeh, 2010). Elected officials are answerable to the people who must decide either to renew their mandate or to vote them out of office. However, the election processes must be free and fair so that the election results are acknowledged as legitimate (Foster, 2010).

Religious Freedom and Tolerance

Citizens in a democracy should be free to decide their religious preference. Freedom of religion includes the right to worship alone or with others, in public or private, or not to worship at all, and to participate in religious observance, practice, and teaching without fear of persecution from government or other groups in society. Like other fundamental human rights, religious freedom is not created or granted by the state, but all democratic states should protect it (Golden, 2010). Religion is exercised within the context of a democratic society but should not take it over.

Free and Independent Media

The arena for communication and has become dominated by the media- radio and television, newspapers, magazines, the Internet and satellite television. The media in a democracy have the responsibility to educate and inform the citizens accurately, timely, with unbiased information about public policy and political activities. Another responsibility of the media is to serve as a watchdog over government and institutions in the society through objective reporting and investigative journalism. The media can also take a more active role in public debate serving as a forum for groups and individuals to express their

divergent points of view (Abagen, 2009; Foster, 2010).

Political Parties and Loyal Opposition

The right of individuals to associate freely and to organize themselves is fundamental to democracy. Political parties recruit, nominate, and campaign to elect public officials; draw up policy programs for the government if they are in the majority; offer criticisms and alternative policies if they are in opposition; mobilize support for common policies among different interest groups; educate the public about public issues; and provide structure and rules for the society's political debate. In some political systems, ideology may be an important factor in recruiting and motivating party members while in others economic interests or social considerations may be the driving force (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). The concept of loyal opposition is a vital one to democratic societies. It shows that all sides in a democracy share a common commitment to its basic values. Political competitors do not necessarily have to share similar political thought but, they must tolerate each other and acknowledge the legitimate and fundamental role each has to play. Also, the laws of the state must ensure tolerance and civility in political activities. At the end of every election, the losers accept the judgment of the voters and if the incumbent party loses, it should hand over power peacefully. The winning party should run an inclusive government and both sides should cooperate in solving society's common problems (Abagen, 2009).

Interest Groups/NGOs

Interest groups and nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) are vital in nurturing the culture of democracy in a given society. Interest groups exist to organize and advocate for the interests of their members and society; Interest groups/NGOs try to supplement or

even challenge the work of the government by advocating, educating, and mobilizing attention around major public issues and monitoring the conduct of government and private enterprise. Citizens of a democracy may be a member of a number of private organizations including interest groups (Roschild and Chazan, 1994). Various traditional interest groups have been structured around economic issues, business, farm groups and labour unions which wield powerful influences in most democratic systems. However, in recent times, the nature and number of interest groups has increased and proliferated tremendously to include almost every area of social, political, cultural and even religious activity (Russell, 2002).

Conflict and Consensus

Human beings in a society possess varieties of contradictory desires and demands leading to conflicts of interests in social, political and religious matters. It is pertinent to acknowledge that many of these tensions, even paradoxes, are inherent in every democratic society. Democracy is in many ways nothing more than a set of rules for managing conflict. At the same time, this conflict must be managed within certain limits and result in compromises, consensus that all sides accept as legitimate. A democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of intellectual and political conflict as well as the need for tolerance (Golden, 2010; Jawondo, 2011). From this standpoint, it is essential to recognize that many conflicts in a democratic society borders on differing interpretations of democratic rights and social priorities rather than on determination of clear-cut right or wrong issues.

Nigeria's Democratic Experience: The Fourth Republic in View (May 29, 1999-May 29, 2015)

One of the doctrines of participatory democracy is smooth transition of the reins of government (either by the party in power or by the opposition) through credible, free, fair and periodic elections. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, changeover of governance has been orderly while elections has been periodic in Nigeria. Although, this change has only affected one political party in power at the national level, until recently when the opposition won the presidential elections and took over power for the first time on May 29, 2015 (Vanguard, 2015; Daily Post, 2015). Between 1999 and 2015 four different civilian regimes have emerged and there have been three successive transitions from one civilian regime to another. These include the Obasanjo's regime, from 1999-2007; the Yar'Adua/Jonathan's regime, from 2007-2011; the Jonathan's regime, from 2011-May 29, 2015 and the Buhari's regime that commenced on May 29, 2015). Despite these achievements, the credibility, freeness and fairness of the electoral process that necessitated these transitions have been a thorny subject of debate in national discourse (Omodia, 2009; Guardian, 2015; Omojuwa, 2015). Some of the challenging issues in the Nigerian democratic process such as corruption, electoral issues, godfatherism and internal party democracy are discussed below.

Electoral challenges

A credible, fair and periodic election is a crucial factor in the survival of any political system. It has always been argued that one of the problems facing majority of post-colonial African states is that of how to sustain and consolidate their democracy through credible elections (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1989). The conduct of free, fair and credible periodic elections by unbiased electoral body and the

adherence to democratic principles of governance remain the major factors that can prevent electoral violence in a democratic society (Kolawole, 2007; Adesote and Abimbola, 2014). These two main factors are the challenges which the fourth republic has been grappling with from 1999 to 2015 general elections. Since 1999, five civilian administrations have been installed, while four general elections have been conducted under a civilian administration in the country's drive towards democratic consolidation. Thus, between 2003 and 2015 there has been the successful transition of one civilian administration to another. For example, in 2003, the incumbent president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was reelected. In 2007, Late Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua of the same PDP was elected President. In April 2011, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, who was sworn in as Acting President following the demise of President Umaru Yar'Adua, was elected as President (Aniekwe and Kushie, 2011). And recently, on May 29, 2015 we witnessed the election of President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Peoples Congress (APC) (an opposition party), in an election that has been mostly adjudged as free and fair (Adewole, 2015).

Though the democratic process was consolidated in the period between 2003 and 2015, various elections conducted during these periods were infested with electoral frauds leading to a number of electoral conflicts/violence resulting in killings, displacements and destruction of property worth billions of naira. Though, the election of 1999 was not devoid of malpractices and violence, the 2003 and 2007 general elections were adjudged to be worst elections in the fourth republic. These elections were characterized by massive rigging, vote buying, assassination, political thuggery, corrupt practices, deliberate disfranchisement of the populace, and outright disregard for the rule

of law, compromise of justice, etc (Albert, 2007; Animashaun, 2010; Aniekwe, and Kushie, 2011).

The 2003 general election conducted under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo was said to have been one of the most corrupt and fraudulent elections in post-colonial Nigeria (Kurfi, 2005). The election was characterized by various forms of electoral frauds which range from ballot stuffing, intimidation, killing, and assassination amongst others. Various political commentators have argued that there were no elections in 2003 but merely the intimidation of voters and the selection of already decided winners by elites and caucuses (IFES, 2011; Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of over ninety civil society groups, in its report on the 2003 general elections, gave a vote of no confidence in the elections. The group stated that Both Domestic and International Election Observers documented massive irregularities that characterized the elections and refused to endorse it as free and fair (TMG, 2003; Agbaje and Adejumbi, 2006). For example, Human Rights Watch reported that between April and May 2003, close to one hundred people were killed and many more injured during federal and state elections in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

The 2007 election was also said to be flawed elections. The election was worse than the 1999 and 2003 general elections (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In the run-up to the elections, there were several incidence of pre-electoral violence leading to political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political parties. Evidence showed that between June and August 2006, about three gubernatorial candidates were assassinated among which was Dr. Ayo Daramola, PDP gubernatorial candidate of Ekiti State. The IFES-Nigeria documented

incidences of both pre and post electoral violence across the country, putting the total at 967, which included 18 deaths from January 13 – April 30 2007 (Omotosho, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2007; IFES-Nigeria, 2007). There were also reports of massive irregularities in the 2007 general elections characterized by intimidation of voters, inflation of voting figures, declaration of result where elections were never held or not conclusive, as well as manipulation of the security services (Animashaun, 2008; Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). The evidence of these anomalies was apparent in the inaugural speech of late President Umaru Yar'Adua where he admitted that the 2007 general elections that brought him to power were ridden with inconsistencies. He thereafter inaugurated a twenty-one member Electoral Reform Committee headed by justice Uwais to reform the electoral process. The upturning of the various cases of electoral irregularities in the judgments dispensed at both Tribunal and Appeal courts lays credence to these assertions. For instance, states like Edo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo which were purportedly won by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), were lost to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Labour Party respectively (LP) (Aniekwe and kushie, 2011; Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

The 2011 general elections were generally acceptable by both local and foreign observers to be partially fair when compared with the 2003 and 2007 general elections. It was a marked improvement from previous elections held; though, the election witnessed several incidences of pre and post electoral violence in parts of the country (Human Right Watch, 2011; Bekoe, 2011). For instance, in Ado-Ekiti, the Ekiti State Capital, two supporters of the PDP identified as Ayo Kehinde Faluyi and Michael Ipindola were killed by assassins dressed in police uniform during a brawl between the supporters of the PDP and the ruling Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

(Oladoyinbo, Nwaoko and Olukoya, 2011). In Akwa-Ibom, political campaign took a destructive dimension at both Ikot-Ekpene and Uyo where the clash between loyalists of the PDP and ACN also resulted in the death of many while several were wounded. The presidential campaign office of Goodluck Jonathan/Namadi Sambo situated along Abak Road was set ablaze. Some 127 Peugeot, 307 Salon Cars and 157 Keke NAPEP tri cycles belonging to the state government were burnt. Close to 20 other vehicles belonging to well meaning Nigerians were equally burnt at different locations while about 51 suspects were arrested in connection to the political violence at Uyo (Akpan-Nsoh, 2011). In Edo and Benue States, pockets of violence were also recorded (Aliu, 2011; Nwakaudu, 2011) while, election violence incidences were also recorded in Niger State. In Suleja for example, hand-held explosives were thrown into the venue of the Niger East Senatorial campaign flag-off by unidentified persons while angry youth protesting the results of the elections stormed the Nigerian Christian Corpers' Fellowship Secretariat in Minna, and locked up 50 corps members serving in the State in the building setting it ablaze. Post election violence was recorded in some parts of Northern Nigeria, such as Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri, Kaduna etc., after the INEC declared Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP as winner of the April 2011 presidential election. This incidence resulted in the killing of about ten corps members in Bauchi state. (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

The 2015 general elections was an obvious improvement on previous elections which was described as fair notwithstanding reports of pockets of irregularities, logistics problems and issues of violence. The elections were better in terms of organization, reduced incidences of violence and in general conduct (Observer, 2015). For example, the African Union praised the conduct of the general

elections but however notes that those aggrieved on the conduct of the elections can seek redress in the court of law and avoid incidences of post election violence. On its part, the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) reported that the elections were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere within the framework that satisfactorily meets the continental and regional principles of democratic elections (Vanguard, 2015). Irrespective of the above submissions, the 2015 recorded a number of irregularities and violence across the country. For example, in Ondo, Rivers, Edo, Anambra, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, and Osun States, there were reports of incidences of late arrival of voting materials, card reader failure, late accreditation, late voting despite large turnout of voters. There were also pockets of violence intended to intimidate voters and electoral officials as well as reactions and accusations due to alleged irregularities after the declaration of results. Notwithstanding the 360,000 police officers and military personnel deployed nationwide to provide security for the 2015 elections, it was reported that more than 50 persons lost their lives during the presidential election (Glum, 2015; Omojuwa, 2015; Raheem, and Gbolagunte, 2015; Vanguard, 2015; Onuegbu, 2015; CDD, 2015).

The multifarious nature and dimensions of these challenges (though not insurmountable) indicate that a lot of overhaul is needed to set the electoral systems and processes right.

Godfathers Politicking

Godfather in the religious sphere represents one who sponsors a child (i.e. godson) at his baptism and promises to oversee his religious education; in the social circle, it connotes someone who undertakes the guidance or mentoring of a younger person to a responsible adulthood. Godfathers are role models who through their good conduct, wealth of experience and contributions to

societal development command influence and respect in the society. In a political setting, this concept is synonymous to intermediary, mentoring, benevolence, support and sponsoring. According to Bassey and Enetak (2008), the concept is an ideology that is championed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest. Kolawole (2004) views godfatherism as an institution of political king making by which certain political office holders glide their way to political power. Thus, godfatherism is an affiliation dependent on political surrogacy involving financial and moral support where the godfather is the chief financial and the godson the primary receiver. Though, as the association progresses, the godfather stands to reap his investment. Ogundiya (2010) avers that godfatherism has been the pivot propelling both the incidences of violence and corruption that have become endemic in the Nigerian political development. Political officials who came to elected office through the influence of a political godfather incur a debt which they must service without end throughout their tenure in office. Godfathers wield a lot of influence in the control of state policies and the economy, undermining the corporate existence of the state (Human Right Watch, 2007; Majekodunmi and Olanrewaju, 2013). Their activities discourages basic democratic values, obstructs the selection of qualified candidates for elective posts thereby stifling the democratic process. In Nigeria, godfathers have been wielding significant influence in politicking since 1953. In the fourth republic, a number of godfathers stand conspicuous. For example, from 1979, Dr. Olusola Saraki of Kwara State operated as a financier or benefactor to Alhaji Adamu Attah the Governor of Kwara State. When the association turned sour, he withdrew his support. Dr Olusola Saraki then shifted his

support to Chief Cornelius Adebayo who was in the Unity Party of Nigeria even though remained a member of the National Party of Nigeria. Chief Cornelius Adebayo eventually won the gubernatorial election in Kwara in 1983. Dr. Olusola Saraki was clearly the deciding factor in the election as he had proved that whichever candidate he backed could win the election party affiliation notwithstanding (Ayoade, 2008). Furthermore, Dr. Olusola Saraki, upstaged late Mohammed Lawal in 2003 and installed his son Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki as Executive Governor of Kwara State from 2003 to 2011.

Another example of the significance of political connections is the Anambra case where Chris

Uba installed Dr. Chris Ngige as Governor for only one term as he had signed an agreement which states that "I SHALL NOT seek re-election or stand for nomination to recontest the gubernatorial seat of Anambra State for a second term" (Ayoade, 2008: 126 cited in Adeyemo, 2004:18). Before his election, he had also signed a covenant of relationship on March 28, 2003 where he pledged to be subservient to Chris Uba. On May 5, 2003 he was purported to have signed three undated letters of resignation as PDP Candidate, Governor elect, and Governor respectively (Adeyemo, 2004). Consequently, if he reneged on his pledge the appropriate letter would be dated and submitted as a letter of resignation (Adeyemo, 2004). Chris Ngige was alleged to have reneged on his promises within six weeks of his inauguration as Governor. Thereafter, Ngige was abducted by the Police on July 10, 2003 and was claimed to have resigned as Governor on July 10, 2003 using the pre-signed letter of resignation of May 5, 2003; he was however rescued by a telephone call he made from where he was kept. That attempt to remove him from office failed. However, Ngige's election as Governor was invalidated by the Supreme Court while

Mr. Peter Obi, who actually won the election, became Governor (Adebanjo 2004; Agbo, 2004a; Agbo, 2004b).

Internal Party Democracy

There is a general consensus on the concept of intra-party democracy (internal party democracy) built around some basic principles such as selectivity, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, participation, and representation (Mimpen, not dated). Internal party democracy (IPD) connotes the scale and the extent to which a democratically organized party is measured in comparison to other parties (Cular, 2004). It implies that party structures and organizations are participatory and inclusive, serving as vehicles for building democratic leadership and values (Mohamed, 2006). Lack of internal party democracy is a major reason why Nigerian political parties lack the expected degree of institutionalization principally in the area of internal cohesion and discipline. Essentially, lack of IDP results in general dissatisfaction among party affiliates who share similar interests and seek avenues to capture governmental power to pursue same. This often results to disenchantment, rivalry and crisis among party members; and frequent decamping of aggrieved party members to other parties where their aspirations can be accommodated. The phenomenon which gives the impression that politicians are inconsistent or too ambitious is at times often a matter of political survival (Adejumobi, 2002; Okoosi-Simbine, 2005; Dode, 2010). Significant aspects of political development in any democracy are the convening of party congresses and the conduct of transparent and successful primaries to elect leaders and flag-bearers respectively. In Nigeria, the lack of internal party democratic culture is apparent among the registered political parties particularly in the conducts of parties' primaries; a few prominent, powerful and

influential individuals completely hijack the parties' machinery. The Fourth Republic has witnessed a trend virtually among all political parties where party primaries are usually predetermined with party 'godfathers' having the final say in the selection of both party leaders and candidates (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012).

Corruption

Corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources and power for private/selfish gain. It has also been defined as the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain and identified as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means or a misuse of public power for private benefits at public cost (Kaufmann, 1998b; Obayelu, 2007; Andrig and Fjeldstad, 2011; Alemika, 2012). Democracy cannot be predicated on a fragile and unstable political base, corruption has partly been responsible for the fragility and volatility of democracy in Nigeria. Corruption has greatly eroded the fundamental values of democracy and the essential principles of accountability and effective representation (Damania, Fredriksson, and Muthukumara, 2004; Adedoya, 2013). Since 1999 according to Ogundiya (2010) corruption as a phenomenon has been contending with the democratic project. Consequently, democracy has remained grossly unstable as a result of rampant bureaucratic and political corruption. The level of corruption therefore, has adversely affected the performance of the economy as resources which would have been deployed to facilitate development have been diverted into private pockets and into individual foreign accounts. This is indeed the reason for high level of poverty, insecurity, widespread diseases, and high level of unemployment (Gray and Kaufmann, 1998; Mauro, 1998; Colombatto, 2003; Haarhuis, 2005; Abdulmalik, 2013). All these problematic

provide unsuitable ground for democracy to thrive.

For instance, a report submitted to the United States Congress by the Secretary of State John Kerry, titled: "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012" alleged massive corruption at all levels of the Nigerian government. The document under the chapter on Nigeria in the latest report made available, Section 4, which deals with "Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government," reported Massive, widespread, and pervasive corruption at all levels of government and the security forces. The report noted that though Nigerian law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. It also scored the judiciary low noting that judges were easily bribed and litigants could not rely on the courts to render impartial judgments (Adedoya, 2013). Furthermore, a House of Representatives Committee led by Farouk Lawan charged with investigating the fuel subsidy programme from 2009 to 2011, released a report in 2012 showing massive fraud, corruption, and inefficiencies in the operation of the program. The report alleged misappropriation of nearly half the subsidy funds, with poor or nonexistent oversight by government agencies; hence, estimated government money lost to endemic corruption and entrenched inefficiency amounted to 1.067 trillion naira (\$6.8 billion). The committee recommended reform of the oversight and enforcement mechanisms and further endorsed investigation and prosecution of culpable officials. In late July the EFCC began arraigning suspects, first with a group of 20 indictments, including 6 oil companies and 11 individuals. By the end of the year 2012, EFCC initiated prosecutions of approximately 50 cases related to the subsidy scam. Majority of these cases involved companies and

individuals who had fraudulently received subsidy revenue. Investigations and trials had not produced any convictions (Abdulmalik, 2013; Adedaja, 2013). Also cited was the stealing of #32.8 billion (\$210 million) Police Pension Fund, which led to the arraignment of 6 suspects including a director at the Police Pension Office, Atiku Abubakar Kigo, (who later rose to become permanent secretary in the Ministry of the Niger Delta) and the criminal charges against former Governor of Bayelsa State, Timipre Sylva, for laundering close to #5 billion (\$32 million) of funds belonging to the state. The report observed that though charges were instituted on February 24, 2012, the court adjourned the trial until January 2013. Other corruption cases cited in the reports were the arrest of former minister of Works and Housing, Hassan Lawal, for 24 counts of fraudulently awarding contracts, money laundering, and embezzlement of #75 billion (\$480 million); arrest of Mr. Dimeji Bankole, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and Deputy Speaker Usman Nafada for the alleged misappropriation of one billion naira (\$6.4 million) and #40 billion (\$256 million) respectively; arrest of former Ogun State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, former Oyo State Governor, Chief Adebayo Alao-Akala, former Nasarawa State Governor, Alhaji Aliyu Akwe Doma, and former Gombe State Governor, Muhammed Danjuma Goje. The four governors allegedly misappropriated #58 billion (\$372 million), #25 billion (\$160 million), #18 billion (\$115 million), and #12.8 billion (\$82 million), respectively. Their trials began in December 2011 and continued at year's end (i.e. 2012), the report noted (Adedaja, 2013; Anyagafu, and Sam-Duru, 2014).

Given the fact that allegation of a crime does not necessarily translate to conviction, yet, one tend to wonder if all the cases of corruption chronicled above were mere

allegations that lack substance. One tends to agree with the United States report that the government of Nigeria is encouraging corruption by the actions so far demonstrated. It is either high public and political officials accused or convicted for corruption in Nigeria are granted freedom, pardoned, exonerated or that the case would linger on inconclusively (Babalola, 1995; Federal Office of statistics, 2000; Sadiq, 2006; Bassey, 2011; Ibeh, 2013). This immunity of some persons from prosecution by government without reasonable justification is a wrong signal to provoke more corrupt, violent and insurgent tendencies (as the case with Boko Haram) that could lead to economic disintegration and possible state collapse.

Conclusion

Democracy has been defined as a system of governance in which the people of a particular country decides how they are to be ruled and by whom. It is therefore, a system of rule which emanates from the people; for such a system to receive the acceptance of the people and be workable, it should internalize the culture, norms and values of the people. The Nigerian democratic trajectory has been plagued with electoral and social vices which have impeded its rate of development. Ensuring free, fair and credible elections remains a farce in the Nigerian democracy. The problem of ensuring internal party democracy via the conduct of free and people oriented party primaries has been made worse by ambitious godfathers who single handedly pick candidates and impose such on party members. Thus, these vices are all hinged on the moral decay of societal values and good norms which have been abandoned because of greed, primordial and corrupt ambition of politicians, their followers and society at large. Therefore, for democracy to function properly, the citizens should be allowed to genuinely choose their leaders for political offices and

also to vote them out when necessary. This would in turn ensure accountability, good governance and democratic development. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is no perfect democratic culture anywhere in the world; hence, democratic governance, through consensus building, internalization and harmonization of the core values of society, acceptable to the people should be actualized, maintained and sustained.

The Way Forward

A lot has been said in this paper about the nature and problems of Nigerian democracy. In this section, suggestions of some possible ways to mitigate these problems and sustain the democratization process in Nigeria are highlighted below:

- **Political Culture:** Our political actors should realize that politics is a game and not a battle; there should be no absolute winners or absolute losers. They should learn the culture of tolerance, accommodation, compromise and participation of all actors including those who hold divergent views. The political actors should learn to be gracious victors or gallant losers and there should be no winner takes all syndromes. In Nigeria, once you fail, you are relegated by your successful opponent until you are no longer in a position to compete with him. This behavior by our political elites always results in violence as a means of settling scores.
- **Strengthen the electoral process and political parties:** For a democratic political system to have enduring legitimacy and stability, the election process must be widely perceived to be free, fair and transparent. The electoral process must therefore be strengthened to avoid crisis of legitimacy when government is put in place. This can be done by enhancing

neutrality of electoral bodies. The government should allow the INEC to conduct elections and declare result without undue interference.

Political parties also are very vital institutions of democracy and are veritable agents for inculcating acceptable political norms and practices in the citizens. Measures should be put in place to ensure internal party democracy so that credible aspirants are elected by the people.

- **Discourage godfatherism:** This could be achieved via encouragement of equal participation of all party members in primaries and the reduction of the high cost of nomination forms for candidates so that prospective candidates would not need to pay allegiance to “money bags” political godfathers.
- **Rule of Law:** There should be a conscious effort to entrench the rule of law in the polity if democracy is to thrive. The fundamental rights of citizens should be respected and guaranteed, this would entrench a new democratic culture and stability in Nigeria. Also, jurisdictional and financial autonomy should be accorded the judiciary to enable the body carry out its jurisprudence functions. The judiciary has been proactive in stabilizing the democratic polity particularly since 2007; hence, they should be protected from interference and undue pressure from other arms of government.
- **Security:** The level of insecurity of citizens and properties today is alarming. Almost nobody is sure of his/her safety; consequently, the security operatives (especially the police) should be restructured and retrained to keep abreast with current systems and strategies for intelligence gathering, crime prevention and control.

- Education for All: It is clear that political parties in Nigeria have failed in their role of political socialization, interest articulation, interest aggregation and political communication. The government should therefore ensure that education is made compulsory and free up to senior secondary school level and should include civic education in schools curriculum. There should also be a deliberate literacy programme directed at generating civic interest and awareness on the part of the citizenry, especially the illiterates in the society. The National Orientation Agency should spearhead this programme, political parties and civil society groups should be involved to ensure that Nigerians have ultimate utilization of their constitutional rights in a democracy.
- Corruption and Law Enforcement: Political corruption in terms of financial and electoral fraud has engendered citizens' lack of confidence, political and economic instability in the polity. The legislatures continue to make laws while, the executive arm of government continue to establish anti-corruption agency but little or nothing is done to enforce these laws through these agencies. Applicable laws should be enforced against corruption from top-bottom so as to discourage it.
- Good Governance: Promote good governance through accountability, probity, transparency and due process in all government activities to engender development which is the hallmark of every successful government.
- Fight Poverty: A democratic culture cannot thrive in a society where the rate of poverty is very high as in Nigeria. The government should therefore, embark vigorously on poverty alleviation programmes, diversify the economy and invest in other sectors of the economy (apart from crude oil) to provide more job opportunities for the teeming unemployed people. The current increasing number of the unemployed poses great threat to the security of individuals and the political stability of the nation.
- Strengthen Civil Society: Civil society has been playing active roles since 1999 in advocacy and mobilization of the citizenries' participation in the democratization process. The reformists within civil society, who have demonstrated the capacity to incorporate community and citizens inputs in both advocacy and the resolution of public policy issues, should be encouraged to perform their functions to ensure democratic stability.

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