

## **An Appraisal Of Nigeria’s Democratic Consolidation And Economic Development: Experiments And Projections**

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**ABSTRACT:** *After years of military and authoritarian rule, great expectations accompanied the resumption of civilian rule in Nigeria in May 1999. For a country that has suffered severe deterioration in its economy and politics over the fifty years of military rule, the assumption that a civilian rule would herald a dawn of peace and a deepening of democratic values and norms in the society was understandable. This paper sets out to analytically x-ray the country’s political cum economic penchant and to ascertain to what degree its democratic principles have been consolidated upon from the inception of its democratic rule. The paper finds that consolidating democracy in Nigeria is tough and challenging but not entirely hopeless. Nigeria is a country with thriving democratic spirit but is ruled by tyrants and despots who have both the inclination and resources to scupper agitations for democratic reforms. Nigeria’s, like citizens in established democracies, want constitutional democracy and all the rights, privileges and benefits associated with democracy.*

**Keywords:** *Appraisal, Nigeria, Democratic, Consolidation, Economic, Development, Experiment, Projection*

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### **I. Introduction**

After years of military and authoritarian rule, great expectations accompanied the resumption of civilian rule in Nigeria in May 1999. For a country that has suffered severe deterioration in its economy and politics over the fifty years of military rule, the assumption that a civilian rule would herald a dawn of peace and a deepening of democratic values and norms in the society was understandable. However this assumption did not take into account the deep –seated division inherent in Nigeria’s body polity, these were not the product of military rule even if it had exacerbated them. The scale and intensity of conflict in Nigeria since the end of military rule challenges the assumed teleological link between military disengagement from politics, demilitarization of Nigerian society and consolidation of our democracy in that order. With thousands dead in communal and ‘religiously’ triggered conflicts and an exponential increase in societal violence many have argued that even after a decade of transition to civil rule it is still too early to talk about democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Indeed, the fact that the public still casts doubts on the states capacity to manage domestic crises and to protect the security of life and property underscores primarily the depth of disenchantment with the state of things. As Nigeria drifts down the path of increasing violent conflict, perhaps we should first move away from current disappointment and ask if anything could really have been different from the current situation given the provenance of civilian rule. Without being complacent about consolidation in the context of a democratizing polity, I think it is pertinent to first interrogate the notion of democratic consolidation in its variegated forms – especially in the context of transition societies. The notion as currently conceived gives the impression of a pre-conceived destination – a model to which we all should aspire in the world. This model parades a uni-dimensional list that concentrates on the promotion of the dominant neo-liberal paradigm with a number of mantras; have elections and every other thing will follow! Private good, public bad, deny the importance of ideas, contestation and struggle and focus on the external. In short, imitation democracy works period! Nigeria has become a debilitating example of this uncritical regurgitation of the consolidation dogma in the current leadership search for endorsement and acceptance by the outside world. Egwu (2003)

So in trying to make an analytical x-ray into the question of democratic consolidation and economic development in the Nigerian context, we must ask for certain conceptual clarification – what does it mean to be a consolidated democracy? Is there any known consolidated democracy in the world and more importantly, is democratic consolidation achievable in a country with a prolonged history of authoritarian rule, and in which the ethics, value and practice of militarism have become systemic rather than ad-hoc? Can we understand consolidation outside a historical context that traces the roots of the democratic project? Is economic development achievable in a democracy of this sought? (Okechukwu 2008) Going further, the future it is said belongs to the things that can grow, whether it is a tree or democracy. Gone are the days when the Government’s view of the economy short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. Industrialization has always constituted a major objective of development strategy and government policy.

Through industrialization, developing nations aspire to achieve higher economic growth, and to eventually attain developed nation status. Yet, it remains doubtful whether the approach of industrial policy-making in Nigeria has indeed been successful in transforming her economy. The objective of the paper is to ascertain the level at which the Nigerian polity have been able to deliver the much expected socio-economic development and political dividends of democracy, and to what extent this persistent phenomenon has engendered a disillusioned citizenry which has inevitably put a big question to the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. This paper therefore seeks to explicate the crises of economic development and comatose democracy in Nigeria, appreciating its challenges and prospects.

## **II. Gauging Theories on Democracy and Economic Proclivity**

The very idea of democracy as enunciated by the ancient Greek means *demos kratos*, which literally translates into people's power. Yet to many, the very idea of people's power means nothing but mob rule, to this school of thought giving power to the people amounts to a dictatorship of the masses over the more enlightened and better educated political elites. From this perspective and obvious fear of the tyranny of the majority, many societies began working into the system certain measures which would preclude the tyranny of the masses. For example in the U.S the president is not only chosen by popular vote but by an electoral college to ensure spread. Yet this seemingly elasticity of conception and society-specific amendment of the purest ideals of democratic rule has led some scholars to wonder aloud whether human societies can actually come up with an ideal democratic society.

According to T.S Elliot when a word acquires a universally sacred character... as has today the word democracy. I begin to wonder, whether, by all attempts to mean, it still means anything at all Potter (2003). With the characteristic vehement elegance of the French, De Jouvenel even puts it more forcefully as thus "all discussions about democracy, all arguments either for or against it are stricken with intellectual futility, because the issue is indefinite" Jouvenel (1949). It can be seen from the foregoing that while democratic warriors go into battle for political supremacy, the very concept of democracy itself has become a site of Homeric intellectual battles. This has led George Orwell to observe with usual perception, "Those who wish to defend a regime, whatever its nature may be, will call it democracy". Indeed, as far back as 1849, Guizot has observed, "such is the power of the word democracy, that no government or party dares to raise its head, or believe its own existence possible if it does not bear the word inscribed on its banner" Guizot (1849). Despite the difficulties in capturing the word democracy, scholars have been engaged in different strategies for defining it in dynamic motion: that is viewing democracy itself as it unfolds in actual reality and as a function of several other contradictions. The most successful of these is the concept of polyarchy as enunciated by Dahl; this is not a mode of governance but a sustained attempt to situate the democratic process within an overarching architecture of several key features. According to Beetham, these features constitute the clustering of practice.

These features interalia;

- . Freedom of speech
- . Freedom of association
- . The supremacy of the will of the people
- . Regular elections
- . Accountability and transparency.

Under these schemes of things a country is described as democratic if it combines most of the features, as semi-democratic if it combines some of them and none democratic if all or virtually most of these are missing in the polity. Beetham (1968)

On economic development, one of the key thinkers in twentieth century Development Studies was W.W. Rostow, an American economist and government official. Prior to Rostow, approaches to development had been based on the assumption that "modernization" was characterized by the Western world (wealthier, more powerful countries at the time), which were able to advance from the initial stages of underdevelopment. Accordingly, other countries should model themselves after the West, aspiring to a "modern" state of capitalism and a liberal democracy. Using these ideas, Rostow penned his classic *Stages of Economic Growth* in 1960, which presented five steps through which all countries must pass to become developed: 1) traditional society, 2) preconditions to take-off, 3) take-off, 4) drive to maturity, and 5) age of high mass consumption. The model asserted that all countries exist somewhere on this linear spectrum, and climb upward through each stage in the development process:

- **Traditional Society:** This stage is characterized by a subsistent, agricultural based economy, with intensive labor and low levels of trading, and a population that does not have a scientific perspective on the world and technology.
- **Preconditions to Take-off:** Here, a society begins to develop manufacturing, and a more national/international, as opposed to regional, outlook.

- **Take-off:**Rostow describes this stage as a short period of intensive growth, in which industrialization begins to occur, and workers and institutions become concentrated around a new industry.
- **Drive to Maturity:** This stage takes place over a long period of time, as standards of living rise, use of technology increases, and the national economy grows and diversifies.
- **Age of High Mass Consumption:** At the time of writing, Rostow believed that Western countries, most notably the United States, occupied this last "developed" stage. Here, a country's economy flourishes in a capitalist system, characterized by mass production and consumerism.

Rostow's Stages of Growth model is one of the most influential development theories of the twentieth century. It was, however, also grounded in the historical and political context in which he wrote. *Stages of Economic Growth* was published in 1960, at the height of the Cold War, and with the subtitle "A Non-Communist Manifesto," it was overtly political. Rostow was fiercely anti-communist and right-wing; he modeled his theory after western capitalist countries, which had industrialized and urbanized. As a staff member in President John F. Kennedy's administration, Rostow promoted his development model as part of U.S. foreign policy. Rostow's model illustrates a desire not only to assist lower income countries in the development process, but also to assert the United States' influence over that of communist Russia. Rostow (1960)

Having now established a theoretical framework or conceptual scaffolding for our discussion, it is time to move from the abstract to the concrete.

### **III. Democratic Consolidation**

In its original conception, the term democratic consolidation was meant to describe the challenges of making new democracy secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian repression, and of building a dam against eventual reversal waves" Schedler (1998). To the positivists, it deals with conditions reaching the goal of democratic continuity, maintenance, entrenchment, survival, permanence, endurance, persistence, resilience, viability, sustainability or irreversibility. Put differently, it entails moving beyond democratic fragility, instability, uncertainty, vulnerability or the threat of break down. Attempting to summarize a discussion on consolidation of democracy, David Collier suggested that approaches to defining consolidation fall into three categories: actor-centered, event-centered, and institutional (external or internal). The actor-centered approach focuses on the willingness of significant actors to work within democratic rules. The event-centered approach looks at elections or constitutional ratification as markers. An internal institutional approach focuses on the degree of institutionalization, while an external approach concentrates on the duration of new political institutions and the extent of meaningful changes therein. Clearly, no single approach is adequate, for there are causal relationships among the actors, institutions, and events, but Collier's scheme outlines the various points of departure and points of emphasis employed in studying consolidation. Perspectives on the meaning of democratic consolidation tend to be influenced by the countries under study. In unstable, new democracies where the threat of a coup persists, consolidation may be seen as the process of eliminating opposition to democracy on the part of powerful actors. In more stable cases, consolidation may be understood as establishing permanent institutions and arrangements for the functioning of democracy or, alternatively, as eliminating undemocratic features of a post-authoritarian system. The establishment of democratic procedures and institutions does not, by itself, ensure the elimination of undemocratic features, such as privileged roles for the military. This issue was raised by Terry Karl in her work on frozen democracies. Similarly, the endpoint of consolidation—that is, the condition of being consolidated—may not be defined universally and is very difficult to identify prospectively. The disparate approaches at the meeting highlighted the problem of using markers, such as elections, as evidence of consolidation across cases. For example, in the Portuguese case, Maria Carrilho suggested that it would be possible to identify the end of the first (revolutionary) phase of the transition and the beginning of democratic consolidation as the moment when the fundamental political structure was established. This moment occurred when the new constitution was ratified and elections for the parliament and presidency were held. Others, such as Juan Linz, used that same point to define the end of consolidation. Linz does not distinguish transition and consolidation phases; rather, he considers consolidation of democracy to be the completion of procedural democratization, at which point the constitution produces a sovereign elected government and no actor holds veto power over the system. Karl cautioned that although elections are often a useful indicator of consolidation some, such as the 1984 election in El Salvador, do not function as "founding elections" and do not further consolidation. Philippe Schmitter opposed "essentialist" definitions which suggest that particular institutions or procedures are necessary and sufficient to consolidate democracy. He described consolidation as a condition (not a moment in time) in which elite actors have reliable expectations about politics, such that the parties and rules of the political game are known and can be anticipated. Regardless of whether or not participants could agree on which regimes were "consolidated democracies," the primary concern was to identify the institutional bases for democracies and the factors which help or hinder democratization after the transition has

been made. Participants seemed to agree that consolidation involves an agreement on the part of significant actors to respect the democratic system, but participants disagreed on the particular institutions, events, or actors which promote that elite agreement. If we can compare similar issues—coup avoidance, institutionalization, representation, party development, or elite expectations—despite definitional disputes, it becomes a semantic question whether or not those issues exist within a regime that we are willing to identify as unambiguously democratic. This may explain why Guillermo O'Donnell recommended that we avoid the term “consolidation” altogether and concentrate on types of democracy, without assuming whether or not these types represent “consolidation.” There was some discussion of the limitations of rational choice approaches for understanding the politics of consolidation. O'Donnell cautioned that choice models are heuristic tools, not substitutes for field work. Moreover, specifying the context in which rationality or irrationality applies is crucial. Schmitter contended that the problem with rational choice models is that during democratic consolidation, actors are still in the process of constructing identities. Choice models err in assuming that these identities already exist. Karl expressed concern that game theory can be used to understand repeated strategic interactions, but cannot account for political learning. Collier disagreed, noting that habits or learning, just like other factors affecting choices, can be worked into the game analysis. Collier distinguished circumstances of high uncertainty and high discretion, in which choice models (such as the Schelling thresholds, employed by Adam Przeworski) are useful, from circumstances in which choice is constrained by institutional roles, such that institutional analysis is more fruitful. It is difficult to judge the relative level of uncertainty and discretion in a precarious democracy (one which lies in an intermediate state from which it might move toward either stability or authoritarianism). He concluded by advocating a mixed approach: “political events surrounding a potential move back toward authoritarianism could involve ... higher levels of uncertainty and discretion ... whereas political events surrounding a potential move toward the status of a more stable democracy might involve a somewhat more predictable interplay of institutional factors and organizational actors.”

Democracy is a very wide concept on which scholars have tried, albeit in vain, to reach consensus. However, some selected definitions bear semblance to the subject of one's discussion here. Democracy connotes a system of government that meets three essential conditions viz: meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair election, such that no major group is excluded; and a level of civil and political liberties like freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure integrity of political competition and participation Diamond et al., (1988). Furthermore, there are five basic elements without which no community can call itself democratic. These elements are equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law and liberty of the individual Enemu, (1999). However, all the aforementioned represent the ideals of democracy, which can be imbibed and solidified by a resolute people within a relatively long period of time. In this connection, the view expressed by Ake cited in Ayodele, (2004) that the desirability of democracy lays not in the concept itself, but that at least none of the major problems of Africa (Nigeria) can be solved without it becomes apt. Democracy must not only be nurtured in such a way that it will act as bulwark of security to the people by promoting economic growth and ushering in the desired development, which can in turn guarantee peace and security, it must also recognize people as the real indices and whose political, social and economic prosperity should be guaranteed. This can only be with the effort and sense of mission by the bureaucrats saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the formulation and implementation of policies.

The roles of the bureaucrats include challenging anti-democratic forces through policies. They should also place qualitative policies before satisfying political office holders while dedication and expertise should be exhibited in their approach towards implementation of governmental business. Though reports of ineptitude, bureaucratic bottleneck, high levels of corruption and personalization of governmental affairs are exhibited hitherto by the public service, democracy is expected to bear on the attitude and change these negative democratic attitudes to service. Democracy has rekindled the expectation and optimism of the people in the ability of the public service to be relevant to the challenges of growth and development. The questions that logically followed are two folds, what is the antecedent of the public service in the democratization process? And how can the public service contribute to the service of democracy to point of consolidation? In providing answers to these questions, it is imperative to critically examine the historical background of public service.

#### **IV. Economic Development**

With the inception of the Fourth Republic in May 29, 1999 after marathon years of failed dictatorial military regimes, it was widely expected by Nigerians that democracy will usher in better deal for them in terms of improving their pitiable standard of living. A lot of Nigerians looked with great expectation of better things to come in the process of governance; they looked forward to the freeing of national resources from the stranglehold of greedy officials and to more effective and efficient programmes of social provisioning in health

and education, rehabilitation of infrastructure and facilities, poverty alleviation and general socio-economic development Jega (2006). And to reassure Nigerians that they are in for better times, President Olusegun Obasanjo in his acceptance speech in 1999 titled "Restoration of confidence in government" listed his priority areas. These include:...

*the issue of Food, Security and Agriculture, Restoration of Law and Order with particular reference to armed robbery, and to cultism in our Educational Institutions, Exploration and Production of Petroleum, Education, Macro-economic policies..., supply and distribution of petroleum products, the debt issue, corruption, drugs, organised fraud called 419 activities and crimes leading to loss of lives, properties and investment, poverty alleviation among others Adeyemo (2009).*

However, after a decade of what some analysts refer to as formalistic democracy devoid of substance, Nigerians seem to have experienced more of pains than gains. Ten years of uninterrupted civilian administration has woefully or visibly failed to approximate the expectation, dreams and yearnings of Nigerians. A decade of ailing democracy has failed to address the problems of inadequate basic needs of life such as good roads, functioning health amenities, quality education, improved wages for workers, restructuring of petroleum sector, uninterrupted power supply, genuine electoral reform, freedom of information, equitable distribution of wealth, justice and fairness and even the resolution of the restiveness in the Niger Delta region without recourse to military offensive. As such, despite its enormous human and material wealth, Nigeria during the last ten years has fallen into the list of the world's poorest nations. The United Nations Human Development Report confirms that a greater fraction of the Nigerian population live in abject poverty. The report discloses that 92.4 percent of Nigerians live on \$2 per day. Similarly, the Human Development Index, HDI, which measures a country's life expectancy, literacy, education, general standard of living and impact of economic policies on quality of life, Nigeria is ranked 158th of the 177 countries surveyed by the UNHCR Odeinlami (2008). The tragedy of the Nigerian situation is that "social capital" is almost extinct, while the performance of government at all levels may be measured through the high levels of incompetence and corruption. Ten years of the Fourth Republic has elevated corruption, impunity and meddlesomeness to political creeds that have robbed governance the much needed responsive and caring human face. This is double jeopardy: bad politics and poor economic management characterized by collapsing institutions, disoriented political elites and an abused, violated, disillusioned and disenfranchised populace, has led to governance that has failed to deliver the much promised and political dividends of democracy. The Nation (2009)

## **V. Nexus between Democratic Consolidation and Economic Development**

It has been predicated and rightly so, that the politics cannot be separated from the economy, it therefore suffices it to say that the democratic experience of Nigeria can be understood by utilizing the economic, social and political factors. The economic factor i.e. the issue of development, here one finds instance in the first Republic, when the nation experienced an increase in Gross Domestic Product by 5.3% Oyedran and Asbaji, (1999) but the benefits of this increase did not percolate down to the masses and a focus on the masses is very essential mainly because when we understand development along with economic connotation, it has a social dimension too. The development should enable the masses to fulfill their basic needs. So if one is viewing development by focusing on the social dimensions then one finds that the development has not taken place in Nigeria. This idea becomes clear if one focuses on sectors like agriculture, which occupies a very important position mainly because nearly 70% of the population depends on this sector for its source of livelihood. Their economic activities are basically limited to production of food crops. To improve their economic conditions, certain steps were undertaken like the setting up of the marketing boards. But the study of their operation shows that they underpaid the peasants and sold at high prices at the world market before passing on the surplus to capital and other classes that controlled state power. Other measures that were undertaken were modernizing agriculture to increase productivity. But it was the rich farmers, which were in a position to go for modern techniques of production owing to the access they had to the resources. The small farmer did not experience similar improvements in their economic position. Another development that was seen was that land acquired unprecedented commercial importance, which resulted in the passing of the land use Decree of 1978. This had a negative impact on the small farmers for they were deprived of land, which was put in the hand of wealthy farmer, and companies that had wealth and connection to influence the Land Allocation Committees established under the decree Nnoli, (2000). The condition of the peasantry further worsened with Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The devaluation of the Naira in the 1970's and harsh economic policies of president Obasanjo in his second term in office (2003) preached about deregulation of the downstream sector, privatizations, monetization e .t c, and caused hardship to Nigerian workers and the masses in general. Tell News Magazine, (2004)

The Structural Adjustment Programme was perceived as an attack on the workers basic interests and aspirations, relating to wages, health education of their children and general struggle for survival. Besides, the agricultural sector, the problem of economic disparities prevailed even in the industrial sector. Economic difference existed at two levels: First between the capitalist class and the working class: Secondly, between comprador bourgeoisie and the indigenous bourgeoisies. So, as a result of Neo- colonialism it was mainly the comprador bourgeoisie, which aligned itself with foreign capital that was in a position to benefit the maximum. The worst affected was the working class where the masses of Nigeria belongs.

The devaluation and removal of subsidies resulted in spiraling inflation and reduce purchasing power in Nigeria, Diamond, Green and Oyediran, (1996). Therefore, it can be said that the attainment of Liberation did not provide any solution to the economic problems of the masses. The economic deprivation on the post Liberation period worsened with the operation of neo-colonialism. This has generated a sense of discontentment amongst the masses, which has found its outlet not just in the form of challenges to the political system, which created a negative condition for democracy but has also played an important role in giving form to ideas like ethnicity; which has created a sense of hostility amongst the various groups prevailing in the society.

From the above explanation, it can be said that the political economy did create negative condition for democracy to sustain itself. The main reason for given importance to the political factors in terms of political institution is primary because if these institutions were strong then the challenges posed by the economic and social factors would have been easily tackled in a systematic way without leading to the breakdown of the political system. This is well seen in the case of countries like India, which in spite of numerous problems like poverty and social diversity has not collapsed primary because of the strong institutions it had in terms of political party, civil service, civil society, and the judiciary.

## **VI. Challenges and Prospects of Democratic Consolidation and Economic Development in Nigeria**

Though Nigeria counts on the international community, democratic consolidation ultimately rests with Nigerians. Citizens whose lives and fortunes depend on democracy must accept and bear the responsibility for its survival. Democratic reform ultimately depends on citizens to make choices, frame options and initiate changes. Only Nigerian citizens who live with the painful realities of failing democracy “can break the cycle of terror, poverty and mediocrity that keeps them subdued. Nigerians must undertake a genuine, good faith and objective assessment of the problems that thwart their democratic aspirations. The 2003 African Development Report provides useful insights into Nigeria’s problems and Africa’s at large: Nigeria needs to look at itself — especially the nature of political power and governance institutions. In Nigeria, the economy is still dominated by the state — with the state as major provider of formal employment, contracts, and patronage while parties are regionally and ethnically based. And politics in most is such that victor assumes a “winner-takes-all” form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage and the prestige and prerogatives of office. If there is lack of transparency and accountability in governance, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of credible and peaceful means to change or replace leadership, or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively important and the stakes dangerously high. To address the concerns raised by the AD report, Nigerians must confront four major challenges: organizing fair and credible elections, improving the condition of government, revamping public institutions and improving security.

Democracy may be a process not an event, but it is a myth to assume any country can develop without democracy. Democracy therefore is a desirable ideal to which each country should aspire. But there are objective criteria to gauge where a country stands on the democracy continuum. Rotarians talk of a four way test, but for democracy scholars however it is a six way test. It is from this six way test therefore that we will discuss how Nigeria has fared on the democracy continuum. These six point test is as follows:

1. Holding periodic elections which are adjudged free and fair and representative of the people.
2. Respect for freedom of association.
3. Freedom of press and the right to disseminate information.
4. Effective separation of duties and functions of the executive, legislature and judiciary.
5. Respect for the rule of law.
6. Accountability and transparency in governance

### **A. Organizing Credible Elections**

The first challenge for Nigeria in its struggles to consolidate democracy is to conduct credible elections. Conducting credible election in Nigeria has always been a big challenge, given the unsatisfactory state of public institutions. Ensuring that the elections are free, fair and credible represents an even bigger challenge. Nephrologists and scholars are unanimous in their condemnation of elections in Africa. Available evidence indicates that African leaders often allow elections not with any sincerity or hope to deepen democracy. Rather,

they conduct elections to placate international concerns by creating the impression of democracy while they manipulate and rig such elections to maintain power. No one has been fooled. Citizens, international observers and scholars see through the scheme and have written a blizzard of papers and reports disapproving of the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Nigeria's bold democratic aspirations are often marred by electoral fraud and other irregularities that deny citizens the right to choose and control their leaders. Electoral fraud erodes public trust and support for the government and leads to citizens' disinterest in the democratic process. To sustain the hopes of consolidating democracy, Nigeria must conduct credible and fair elections in which citizens' choices of leaders are not disturbed by electoral fraud or manipulation. Fair and free elections provide opportunities for citizens to reject and eject corrupt governments and send a clear message to prospective leaders that corruption, incompetence and hubris should find no sanctuary in a democratic society. The power to reject an underperforming government remains one of the most potent accountability mechanisms in a democracy. Fear of losing elections will keep governments honest, responsive and more attentive to the needs and opinions of the citizens. Prospects of rejection at the polls will force leaders to expurgate themselves of despotic tendencies, hubris and arrogance that all too often constitute the defining traits of leadership in Nigeria. Ultimately, the powers of the electorate to reject candidates for elective offices compellingly reinforce the notion that powers in a democracy lie, not with the government, but with the people. Credible, fair and free elections will enable the citizens to reassert their power and influence over the government. Political elites fearful of rejection at the next poll will operate with a heightened sense of their limitations and vulnerabilities, and hopefully, display greater sensitivity to the needs and welfare of the citizens. The main impetus for electoral fraud is that the electoral process has turned into a consequence free zone where perpetrators of electoral fraud are rarely investigated and punished. Citizens waiting for comeuppance for electoral fraud have been dismally disappointed. When electoral fraud is ineffectively investigated and sufficiently punished, electoral fraud proliferates as emboldened candidates and their cohorts at the Independent electoral commission and the Nigerian Police ply their fraud without fear of reprisals. Any attempt to deepen democracy will be marginally effective, if at all, unless electoral irregularities are addressed. The effort to ensure free and fair elections must be complimented by adequate mechanisms to sleuth out and punish fraudsters and criminals who distort and manipulate the electoral process. Efforts must be made to investigate electoral irregularities at all levels – local governments, state and federal, and to prosecute all those involved in electoral fraud. The incentive to engage in electoral fraud will shrink once citizens know that electoral fraud will draw swift and condign punishment. Punishing fraudsters will also reassure the public about the government's commitment to deepen democracy. Another way to improve the credibility and transparency of elections is to change the mode of appointing members of the electoral commission. In Nigeria, for example, the President appoints the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, and national commissioners subject to confirmation by the Senate. The appointment of 36 resident commissioners, one for each state and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, rests solely with the President. The appointing powers vested in the President are predicated on the implicit and gravely flawed assumption that the President will exercise his powers guided solely by the best interests of the nation. Recent experience reveals that commission members appointed by the President often do not disguise their fealty to the appointing authority. Instead of acting as a neutral umpire, the Independent Electoral Commission was vibrant with partisanship as electoral commissioners and other INEC officials unabashedly displayed bias for the ruling party. Some turned into cat's paw for the ruling party, helping it to rig and manipulate election results. Members of the electoral commission are not invulnerable to the prevailing societal ethos and it would be dangerously naive to expect that members appointed by the government will feel no loyalty toward the ruling party. Given the level of corruption in Nigeria, it appears likely, even inevitable that commission members will display loyalty to the government and the ruling party in an attempt to reap the rewards extended to obstreperous allies of government. The conduct of INEC officials during the 2007 general elections compellingly demonstrates the commission's vulnerability to manipulation and cooption by the executive. Discussing the obvious partiality of the Independent Electoral Commission, Professor Suberu stated that: Such partisan abuse of a nominally independent body was possible because of its parallel existence as a subordinate presidential or federal executive body. The naming of the chairman and twelve national commissioners is effectively in the hands of the president (subject to senate confirmation) INEC's resident electoral commissioners . . . are direct presidential appointees. Despite efforts in the National Assembly to guarantee INEC's budgetary autonomy, INEC still depends directly on funds from the federal executive. Under Maurice Iwu, a professor of pharmacy whom Obasanjo had nominated for the chairman's post in 2005, INEC not only helped the president and hampered his foes, but also turned a hostile eye on foreign election observers and domestic monitors alike. The Independent Electoral Commission officials stand a better chance of asserting their independence if they are appointed by an ad hoc committee instead of the president. The appointment of commission members should be handled by an ad hoc committee comprising of the Chief Justice of the Federation, the President of the Court of Appeal, the Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association and four randomly selected members chosen from the pool of candidates nominated by local non-governmental organizations, professional bodies and religious

organizations. To preserve the integrity of the committee and ensure its independence, members should serve for only one election circle, i.e. every four years. Commission members appointed by the ad hoc committee, with operational funds approved by the Senate will be in a better position to conduct elections without undue pressures to favor the ruling party.

Holding free, fair and credible elections is one of the greatest challenges or perhaps threat to Nigerian democracy and that is why the paper dwells more on elections, the other test are perhaps constitutionally provided for therefore aggrieved parties can go to the courts. To correct rigged polls the courts have tried but sweeping electoral reforms are absolutely necessary. Since 1999 Nigeria has held four general elections and polls apart from the re-run elections and a disturbing trend is that each general election was worse than the preceding ones and its umpire. On the fidelity of vote, the core foundation of democracy therefore, Nigeria is fairing badly at each passing election. This is a disturbing trend as in this case it becomes difficult to talk of consolidating democracy. Hence the need for electoral reforms are not just imperative but inevitable. It is on this note that the Justice Mohammed Uwais led Electoral Reforms Committee (ERC) recommendations must be implemented. They include; 1) Appointment of INEC chairman. 2) Independent funding. 3) Security of tenure. 4) Time limit in electoral adjudication. 5) Electoral offences commission. 6) Independent candidature. 7) Internal democracy in parties. 8) National data base.

### **B. Improving the Condition of Government**

Democracy is out of kilter in Nigeria because “we have poor governance, which generates poor policy performance and disillusioned citizens.” The chief impediment to democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the attitude of leaders, especially their conflicting attitudes toward democracy. They laud, and indeed, relish the powers and authority of democracy and revel in its glory but loathe its restraints, especially fidelity to the rule of law, accountability and respect for citizen’s rights. As Nigeria moves from dictatorship to democracy, one thing has remained constant: the failure of leadership. The most fundamental problem in post independent Nigeria has been hubristic leaders who distort governance and turn it into an instrument for self-aggrandizement. A cursory survey reveals that, in a disproportionate number of African countries, the democratic process is in tatters, disfigured and lobotomized by the imposture of political elites. The much vaunted democracy in Nigeria has ushered in leaders who display and espouse the same weaknesses and predilections of dictators that ruled Nigeria for the better part of the 1980s. They often lack the capacity or willingness to address Nigeria’s pressing and important problems, are terminally corrupt, increasingly autocratic, and unaccountable and often use the instrumentalities of power for self-aggrandizement. The enormous concentration of powers in the president has produced what Larry Diamond aptly described as “highly centralized and overpowering presidencies” that use the machinery of government to overwhelm accountability mechanisms and exercise virtually unchecked powers. Good governance demands that leaders open government to review and scrutiny by citizens, opposition parties and international organizations. The ultimate goal is to provide the public access to data and information that will help citizens to objectively evaluate their government, raise questions and concerns and to demand answers without artificial obstacles, or fear of intimidation. There will always be dissents, complaints and protests against the government; that is an inevitable aspect of constitutional democracy. Political elites must learn to allow people with different points of view to express them, vociferously, if they so choose. As Professor Hazard stated, albeit in a different context, “in a free country, the voices of protest will continue. Those who cannot stand the complaints should get out of the kitchen.” An open government is not only essential; it is and should be required of all democratic governments. Opening government to review will compel corrupt governments with a skewed sense of priorities to chart a new course and exercise its powers for the greater good of citizens.

### **C. Revamping Public Institutions**

The third challenge is to revamp public institutions that anneal constitutional democracy. As Professor Makinda rightly observed, “democracy is only possible if the structures, processes and institutions through which the people will is expected to be addressed accommodate their interests, values and aspirations.” Constitutional democracy continues to falter not only because of the conduct of leaders but also because of inefficient, ineffective and deteriorating public institutions. At present, public institutions are ineffective, inefficient, crippled by corruption and mismanagement, and the legacy of military rule. Problems of public institutions are systemic as well as personal. Public institutions are poorly funded, inadequately equipped and function in circumstances that make efficiency difficult if not impossible. Politicians treat public institutions as appendages of their office and often treat them in ways that are inimical to the objectives and integrity of the institutions. They seek to influence, manipulate and control them and retaliate against public officers who refuse to hew to their every demand. Corruption and desire for self-advantage have overwhelmed the ideal of public service and turned public institutions into crucibles of sloth, avarice and mediocrity. Poor leadership, shaggy government policies and poverty continue to expose public servants to control, manipulation and corrupt

practices. Citizens with money or influence —politicians from the ruling party, senior government officials, and wealthy private citizens can manipulate and control public institutions to achieve their selfish desires. Public servants who live in a culture dominated by greed succumb to the prevailing orthodoxy and use their public offices to make money. Without a strong and upright leadership to set the right examples and demand accountability from public institutions, civil servants engage in arbitrary, unprincipled and ultimately corrupt and improper exercise of power to advantage themselves. They orchestrate inexplicably circuitous and long drawn out schemes to frustrate their patrons with the ultimate aim of extorting money from them. Justice Emmanuel Ayoola, the former Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, stated that: Corruption in civil service is so widespread and involves common occurrences of delayed files, making wrong claims, favoritism, truancy, outright demand for bribes and abuse of office. Vouchers of contractors and pensioners are delayed by officers who claim to be very busy, but in actual fact, they are mere well-rehearsed and orchestrated ploys to collect bribes or make contractors or pensioners play ball before processing their documents. Another subtle, but ultimately more dangerous component of corruption in public institutions is that it puts undue and unnecessary pressures on honest public servants who want to diligently discharge their duties. Public servants often operate in environments and circumstances where they cannot easily assert their independence and resist the demands of overbearing and all too powerful politicians, especially members of the ruling party. They are also exposed to pressures that can overpower even the strongest human beings and disable their moral compasses. As they watch their bosses and colleagues luxuriate in ill-gotten wealth while facing straitened and harsh economic circumstances themselves, some public servants succumb to the morals of the marketplace and become participants in schemes to enrich themselves.

Public institutions should no longer be allowed to function in an atmosphere of corruption, executive interference and indifference to public good. Competence, efficiency, autonomy and transparency should be the defining characteristics of public institutions. For public institutions to function optimally there should be no alternatives to recruiting competent and honest employees who have the autonomy and independence to act in the best interest of the public. The biggest challenge, however, is to unhook public institutions from the grip of inept and dictatorial leaders so that they can better serve the public without pandering to the wishes of the government. Efforts must be made to encourage and help citizens and government officials to approach and treat public institutions with a different mindset, one that emphasizes honesty, transparency and accountability over the pursuit of selfish interests. Efforts by politicians to control or manipulate public institutions should be discouraged and prohibited. Public servants should have the independence and autonomy to neutrally, fairly and objectively apply the institutions' rules and regulations to all patrons regardless of social status or political affiliations.

#### **D. Improving Security**

The next challenge is to reclaim order from the hoodlums who have held the society hostage. Since the return of constitutional democracy in 1999, anti-government sentiments have increased exponentially. Nigeria is becoming an extremely disorderly, volatile and dangerous state in which ethnic militias violently battle for supremacy with the central government, and criminal gangs operate with impunity, terrorizing and brutalizing innocent citizens. Citizens unable to rely on the state for protection resort to vigilantism with adverse consequences for both the country's democratic aspirations and the rights and lives of citizens. As professor Robert Rotberg correctly observed: Thus far (since Obasanjo became Nigeria's civilian President in 1999) Nigeria is remarkably less secure than when he took office. Its external borders are unchallenged but non state actors and a variety of indigenous insurgents groups continue to attack (rather brazenly) either the nation-state or the government of individual states. . . . Additionally, crime against persons, including murder, rape, and robbery, has grown in scale and viciousness.

The activities of these networks of hoodlums and the seeming inability of the state to stem the tide of violence continue to inflame the fears of an increasingly nervous society. Citizens whose lives have been blighted by fear of violence have little or no time to devote to other meaningful activities. Inequitable distribution of the nation's resources, corruption and human rights abuses continue to deepen and multiply negative sentiments against the government. The grudges against the government continue to expand and ultimately explode in violence by those ethnic minority groups who charge the government with neglect, injustice and abuse. The violent and often brazen and vicious operations of ethnic militias and the network of criminal elements in the society have diminished the quality of life and undermined economic and social activities in the country. Citizens live in fear of violence as the state's security apparatus has repeatedly shown itself to be incapable of containing the activities of this scofflaw who have no regard for the sanctity and dignity of human life. These hoodlums murder, maim rape and kidnap innocent citizens at will and often in broad day light without qualm or fear. Democratic societies crave and adore security. It represents the hallmark of good governance: the platform that enables both the government and the governed to pursue their legitimate goals. Violence in Nigeria is driven

essentially by poverty and misguided government policies, especially inequitable distribution of the nation's resources. The nihilism that drives violence makes it difficult to solve by either violence or the legal process. Moreover the sources of and motivations for violence are so intricately enmeshed in other societal problems that violent response by the government cannot solve the problem. Alleviating the underlying social problems that engender violence will induce behavioral changes and ultimately reduce the level of violence. The impetus for violence is best salved through providing a better life for citizens. Providing a better life demands a fair and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, initiating programs that alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment, and providing opportunities for citizens to make a decent living through finding meaningful employment, access to social amenities, and a good health care system. A competent and good government that can process ethnic grievances and agitations through the political or legal process and not resort to brutality remains the right course of action for a democratic nation. More fundamentally, resorting to violence to deal with ethnic agitations bespeaks a failure of democracy. One of the central values of constitutional democracy is the establishment of institutions and processes for peaceful resolution of conflicts without use of force or violence. Brutality and denial of due process rights are trademarks of despotic and dictatorial regimes: they do not and should not occur in a democracy. Resorting to violence symbolizes both the ineffectiveness of the legal process and the government's lack of confidence in the conflict resolution processes established by the constitution. Such a display of disregard for the constitutional process by the government will encourage citizens to resolve their disputes violently. Ill-conceived violent response to agitations only engenders more violence. It reinforces animosities, hardens negative attitudes toward the government and ultimately strengthens their resistance against the government. Moreover, the true test of a democratic government's commitment to democracy is not only its capacity to provide security, but also how it deals with scofflaws in the society. A democratic government must extend to all defendants, all the due process rights mandated by the constitution, including even those accused of the most heinous crimes. The challenge for a democratic government is to create and sustain an atmosphere where disputes and controversies are processed through the legal process. A democratic society should never address violence by trampling on democratic ideals or established principles of law. In dealing with violence, the government should be mindful of its obligations to all the parties concerned: the victims, the perpetrators and also the larger society whose interest in social equilibrium remains paramount. Any measure that does not meaningfully balance the obligations must be adjudged a failure and ultimately counter-productive.

#### **E. Citizens**

One of democracy's ever present challenges is to nurture and sustain democratic values among the citizens. In the case of Nigeria, the challenge is even greater because of democracy's checkered history and years of military rule. Two problems continue to dampen citizens' response to constitutional democracy. The first is ethnic irredentism. Members of the various ethnic groups that comprise a nation identify more with their ethnic groups and often feel no loyalty toward the nation. Some citizens, especially those from minority groups, accuse the central government of unfairness and feel less inclined to support the democratic process dominated by the major ethnic groups. Accusations of unfairness, real and invented, resonate with ethnic minorities and lead them to engage in activities inimical to the democratic process. They are scarcely interested in identifying with national programs and policies including the democratic process. Neither the political elites who seek power nor the masses are willing to subordinate ethnic loyalties to the overriding interest of the nation. Nigeria consists of three dominant ethnic groups and a clutter of other smaller ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities are instinctively distrustful of the dominant ethnic groups and are often unwilling to embrace efforts by the central government to promote national unity. They also believe that the democratic process has not provided an adequate mechanism for addressing their fears and concerns and therefore generally remain unenthusiastic about constitutional democracy. Ethnic minorities believe that the dominant ethnic groups engage in schemes and practices to privilege their kith and kin while denying them their fair and equitable share of the nation's resources. Because of the predominance of ethnicity, everything is processed through the lenses of ethnicity thus making it difficult to promote unity and advance the interest of the nation. Ethnicity has become a source of fear and disillusionment, neither of which augurs well for democratic consolidation. Citizens fearful of other citizens from different ethnic groups are hardly candidates for good faith concession and compromises necessary to make democracy work. Disillusioned citizens tend to approach their roles in a democracy and the government with distorted views and perceptions that make it difficult, if not impossible to build a consensus on important national issues, including constitutional democracy.

#### **F. Leaders**

Political elites in Africa are beset by self-inflicted crippling weaknesses that render them incapable of living by the dictates and precepts of constitutional democracy. Most of them are ruled by insidious political opportunism and are willing to go to any lengths to attain and retain political power. Their perspectives are

circumscribed by immediate concerns of self-projection and wealth acquisition. Mired in this mind set it becomes difficult, if not impossible for them to serve the public and observe the restraints of constitutional democracy. Their obsessive focus on self-interest has deadened their sensibilities to the problems and suffering of their citizens. They deal with disaffected and frustrated citizens not by persuasion, dialogue or accommodation, but by force and intimidation. Nigerian political elites have done little or nothing to dent Professor Ewelukwa's assessment of politicians more than four decades ago. He stated disapprovingly and with understandable scorn that: Most of the politicians were ignorant, small minded and parochial in their outlook and sought to make the Nigerian political arena congenial to their acquisitive and undemocratic tendencies in life. By their methods, they made politics a rough, uncomfortable and hazardous pursuit for anyone, and in their frantic bid to enrich themselves illicitly out of public funds, they combined with certain professionals, independent contractors and even public servants to trample upon the rights and liberties of individuals and to make life difficult for the common man, thereby alienating his sympathy. It would be unacceptable, indeed irresponsible to continue to ignore the leadership deficits displayed by Nigeria's political elites. Citizens, scholars and international organizations who are constantly and understandably concerned about the state of democracy in Nigeria often single out leaders for special obloquy. Some political elites are yet to establish their bona fides as democrats. They mask, for the most part unsuccessfully, their dictatorial tendencies in disingenuous democratic rhetoric. In fact, most of them come to the democratic process as relative *tabularasa*. Their only impression of governance was shaped during years of military interregnum. They therefore have no democratic framework to model their conduct. Some of their excesses are motivated more by ignorance than arrogance. Some of them are amenable to resocialization and will tuck upon gaining an enhanced understanding of the dynamics of the democratic process.

Democracy will not be consolidated unless political elites understand the intricacies and nuances of the relationship between leaders and the citizens in a constitutional democracy. At present the relationship is characterized by arrogance, condescension and intimidation that leave citizens frustrated, angry and resentful of their leaders. Leaders view citizens, not as the ultimate source of power in a democracy but as robots who must accept without questions, whatever their leaders decide to do. Leadership deficits continue to enfeeble democracy and account for most of the problems in Nigeria and the continent of Africa. As leaders grapple with the difficult choices involved in leadership, they will need broad and systematic education to help them overcome the negative circumstances of their environment and enable them to repair and overcome the errors of their predecessors. Training must help leaders to nurture and sustain the perspective which citizens expect of them— to always act on the explicit understanding that they are representative, not masters, of the people and that their ultimate loyalty and responsibility lie with the people and not to the deity of self-aggrandizement. It will also help them to expurgate anti-democratic attitudes that have held them hostage since the inception of constitutional democracy.

And on the economic development in Nigeria the policy of this country on building an independent national economy should include the establishment of many-sided economic structure, the buildup of its own independent and solid bases for raw materials, the modernization of all the sectors of the national economy and the training of its own technical carders. In the past the government has maintained the principle of producing and exporting products abundant in the country, demanded and competitive in the international market relying on the development of production industry with the oil-exploration industry as the core, light industry and agriculture in conformity with the actual conditions of the country. At present the foundation of the independent national economy has been strengthened here in Nigeria. The Labour union set forth the economic policy in the post-colonial era on giving precedence to the development of the defense industry while developing the light industry and agriculture simultaneously so as to develop the national economy on its own firm track. The foundation of the oil industry has been consolidated. The production bases of coal, oil and petrochemical materials industries, are turning out fireproof materials like magnesia clinker and light-burned magnesia, nonferrous metals including lead, zinc and cadmium and various second-stage metal products such as rolled steel, steel plate and wire, which are in great demand on the international market. The foundation of machine-building and electronic industries requires modernization and the production potential largely increased on the basis of ultramodern scientific and technological achievements. The Ajaokuta Steel Complex, the Nigerian Metal Complex, the Nigerian Machine Tool Factory, the Defense Industry Corporation Factory, the Nigerdock ship-Making Complex and other big-name factories have laid the solid production foundations and renovated the production processes to manufacture and export hydraulic and thermal power turbines and generators with a great capacity and high performance, compressors, CNC universal lathes, hydraulic excavators, motors and transformers. Nearly forty-eight years of our nationhood; a day we may all cherish as a nation. Now is the time to look calmly at ourselves and identify the mistakes that we have made as nation. Of course we have in one way or the other made mistakes. Like what Confucius once said, it does not matter the number of times we fall but the number of times we rise when we fall. We cannot continue to fail the next generation.

## VII. Conclusion

Conclusively therefore; democracy in Nigeria is flawed and problematic but Nigeria's overwhelmingly and unquestionably prefers democracy to dictatorship. Consolidating democracy in Nigeria is tough and challenging but not entirely hopeless. Nigeria is a country with thriving democratic spirit but is ruled by tyrants and despots who have both the inclination and resources to scupper agitations for democratic reforms. Nigeria's, like citizens in established democracies, want constitutional democracy and all the rights, privileges and benefits associated with democracy. Their ultimate goal is to forge a society in which citizens live in peace, enjoy the rights and liberties and generally pursue and advance their interests and goals without unnecessary restraints. They understand that creating such a society takes time and a great deal of commitment but they are prepared and eager to meet the challenging but ultimately rewarding task of deepening democracy. What seems to be lacking is effective leadership to galvanize and channel the desires and energies toward productive ends. Fareed Zakeri was resoundingly correct in his explicit remarks that "what Africa needs more urgently than democracy is good governance." Other problems will easily be addressed once "leaders rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true leadership." Effective leadership will salve citizens' fears, and inspire them to display a greater commitment to democracy. Good leadership in Nigeria will be necessary to orchestrate fundamental and paradigm shifting changes in the culture and ethos that impede democratic consolidation. Good governance will immeasurably enrich the condition and quality of lives in Nigeria, transform the nation and ultimately smoothen the path to the creation of a country so eloquently predicted by many: Genuine excitement would be generated worldwide by a Nigerian in which governments demonstrate respect for the constitution and laws, state officials at all levels responsibly execute the duties of their offices, public institutions make efficient use of funds provided, political violence and corruption are sharply reduced, the people's needs are dutifully addressed by public and private services, elections are fairly conducted, and the state once again becomes the collective property of its citizens. While none of these virtues are new in contemporary Nigerian context, they would be revolutionary and promote popular democracy. After a decade of civil rule is Nigeria a democracy? This is doubtful, but if all sides of the argument will be true to themselves, if it is not yet a democracy, it is democratizing fast enough! And until the unfortunate reality confronting the economy is addressed, the coordinating Minister of the Economy and Minister of Finance should wake up from her illusion of Nigeria joining the rank of fastest growing economies and largest markets of the world (BRICS) in 2015.

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