

## **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. Using extant literature as major of source of intellectual strength, 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. Nigerians like other 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 several years of military and authoritarian rule (chronologically constituting 51% of Nigeria's entire history as a nation), great expectations accompanied the resumption of civilian rule in Nigeria in May 1999 (Momoh & Adejumobi, 1999; Jega, 2006). For a country that has suffered severe deterioration in its economy and politics over the fifty five years of nationhood 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 Nigerian 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 ethnicity fuelled clashes (exemplified by militancy/rampant kidnapping in the south) and 'religiously' triggered conflicts (typical of insurgency in the north) 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 guarantee the safety of life and property underscores primarily the depth of disenchantment with the state of things. 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, Osaghae, 1994)

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 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: Implications for Economic Development**

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. To the Benthamian, democracy is a process through which the greatest happiness of the greatest number is achieved. This he calls the utilitarian thesis. In each of the cases paraded

here, politics plays a pivotal role in ensuing positive changes (affecting, production, distribution and consumption) and of course watering the platform through which surplus could be exchanged to benefit from the efforts of others. It involves struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces with certain ethical values albeit application of such values differs from one to another society. While some rely on legitimate means, others resort to the illegitimate. The latter nurtures the tendencies that combine to frustrate the consolidation of democracy in most if not all cases. Noting the place of decision making in a system complex enough to represent a nation, all articulated and aggregated inputs are at the mercy of the decision making machinery hence, the more sincere the players, the formidable the (institution) system and the more productive.

In the light of the foregoing, the Plutonian recipe which amplifies centrality of political power as well as the worth of division and labor (predicated on stratification of the social system), has within all possible eventualities, given birth to philosopher king on whom wisdom democracy consolidation rested. The Machiavellian thesis reduced the sustainability of a regime to a matter of resolve of the players. This thesis rates these levels to a) perception of power- as a means to an end or as an end in itself; b) acquisition of power; c) maintenance of power and; d) sustenance of power. The resolve of the political actors, extrapolated to current standing plays a significant role in consolidating democracy or otherwise (Timothy and Nancy 1988).

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 that, "Those who wish to defend a regime, whatever its nature may be, will call it democracy". 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 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 believes 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 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)

### **III. Conceptual Clarification**

The need for understanding reality irrespective of frame of reference calls for the mobilization of multiplicity of approaches and conceptual standpoints. In light of this, the following concepts are explored in a bid to put the reader in proper perspective thus:

### **IV. 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 for 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 breakdown. 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 (Agbabje, et al. 2004; Nwafor-Orizu, 2010). 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.

Democracy is a very wide concept on which scholars have tried, albeit in vain, to reach consensus. However, some selected definitions bear resemblance 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. 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 lies 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.

## **V. 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, organized 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 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 measured 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 UNHDR (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.

## **VI. 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 Agbaje, (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 find 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 (Hyden, 1992). 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.

### **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.

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. 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 (Potter, 2003, Lijphard and Arendt 1977). Available evidence indicates that African leaders often allow elections not with any sincerity or hope to deepen democracy. Rather, they conduct elections to poutice international concerns by creating the impression of democracy while they manipulate and rig such elections to maintain power (Lindberg, 2000). 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

The effort to ensure free and fair elections must be complimented by adequate mechanisms to sift 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.

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 five (5) general elections apart from the re-run elections and a disturbing trend is that with an exception of the 2015 election where opposition emerged predominantly victorious, each general election was worse than the preceding ones. 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 Electoral Reforms Committee (ERC) recommendations must not only be implemented but be reviewed regularly to accommodate changing circumstances. 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**

As Nigeria moves from dictatorship to democracy, one thing has remained constant: the failure of leadership. The most fundamental problem in post independence Nigeria has been that of 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 promote 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 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.

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 facilitate constitutional democracy. As Makinda rightly observed, “democracy is only possible if the structures, processes and institutions through which the people will be 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 (Egwu, 2003). “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. 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 discharge their duties diligently. 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 (Ibrahim and Haruna, 2000).

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. Security**

The next challenge is to reclaim order from the hoodlums (expressed in militia and related terrorist formations) who have held the society to ransom. Since the return of constitutional democracy in 1999, anti-government sentiments have increased dramatically. 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.

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 (Ake, 1994).

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. To Levine et.al (2008), 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 (Nwanuforo, 2009).

#### **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 plaid history and years of military rule. Various problems continue to dampen citizens' response to constitutional democracy with ethnic inclination featuring very prominently. 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. 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 (Okechukwu, 2008).

#### **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. 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. 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.

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.

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 workforce/human resource



## VII. Conclusion

Conclusively therefore; democracy in Nigeria is flawed and problematic but Nigeria 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 as a continental personification in the international system, deserve a constitutional democracy where all the rights, privileges and benefits associated with democracy should obtain in the interest of complying with global standards and best practices. Nigerian citizens' 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. It is pertinent that "what Africa needs more urgently than democracy is good governance. Effective leadership will pacify citizens' fears, and inspire them to display a greater commitment to democracy. Good leadership in Nigeria will be necessary to orchestrate fundamental 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 greatness (Richard, 2011).

The paper recommends, 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, this paper deems it pertinent to first interrogate the notion of democratic consolidation in its variegated forms – especially in the context of transition societies (Obi and Abutudu, 1999).

Secondly, alleviating the 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 social security packages typical of a good health care system predicated on non-discriminatory health insurance and related practices

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