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## **Democratic Governance and Development: Nigeria's Experience**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Governance is about the people. Studies have shown that democracy enhances governance in a society. And shared democratic values such as popular participation of citizens in the electoral process, equality of voters and their votes, and decision making lead to political stability in a multi-ethnic society. The paper argues that democratic political culture based on shared national, rather than sectional or ethnic sentiments engender good governance in terms of formulation and implementation of improved policies for development and the enhancement of the living standard of the people. The paper recommends that for Nigerians to live together as a united people there is the need for the citizens to avoid all forms of undemocratic norms such as sectional or ethnic politics, and embrace democratic values based on citizens' participation in governance as panacea for political stability and development in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. This is more likely to be realized when proper training on democratic norms is given to public officeholders and indeed the entire citizenry to enable them imbibe proper democratic culture required for good governance and development to take place.

**Keywords:** Democratic Governance, Stability, Policies, Participation, Development, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria became an independent nation on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. At independence, the country inherited from the British; a parliamentary democracy, three unequal regional political structures of the North, West and East (carved out of the old Northern and Southern protectorates), and the legacy of traditional administrative system at different levels of political development (Gberevbie 2009:165-191). For instance, between the period of pre-colonial, colonial era

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and Nigeria's independence in 1960; while the North practiced absolute monarchical traditional system with full executive powers conferred on the monarch, the West practiced a monarchical traditional system that did not confer full executive powers on the monarch. The East on the other hand practiced republican system, which did not recognize the authority of the monarchy in any form (Ikelegbe 1988:316-8). King (1988:22) posits that "in pre-colonial Nigeria, the numerous autonomous political units featured different political culture. These cultures often clashed and discouraged political cooperation and the formation of larger political communities."

The Southern protectorate of Nigeria was divided into two regions of the West mainly occupied by the Yorubas and the East, mainly occupied by the Igbos who belong to Christian and traditional religions. The Northern protectorate on the other hand remained one indivisible region. The unequal creation of the three regions in Nigeria by the British was done in favour of the North mainly occupied by the Hausas/Fulanis who belong to Islamic religion. In terms of representation at Nigeria's National Assembly before and after independence, and all through the first republic between 1960 and 1966; of the 312 members, 55 percent of the seats were allocated to the North more than the number of seats allocated to the two Southern regions of the West and East combined together (Ikelegbe 1988). The negative implication of the above development on the country's political landscape was that, a political party based in the North could concentrate its resources to canvas for votes there without campaigning for votes in other parts of the country and still occupy the exalted position of the prime-minister-ship with full executive powers to the detriment of the other two regions.

These developments coupled with the existence of three major political parties domiciled in the three regions (Northern People's Congress (NPC) – North; Action Group (AG) – West; and National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) – East) made political contest in the country to lack national outlook. And this led to the elevation of undemocratic political culture expressed in violence, ethnic and religious politics in the country's political development above shared national political culture capable of engendering positive political contest for stability and development in a multi-ethnic state like Nigeria. The undemocratic political culture in the country's political history in the past has manifested in areas such as sectional rather than national politics, political intimidation, election rigging, political thuggery and assassinations, intolerance of opposition, politics of do-or-die affair and winner-takes-all syndrome as the means of enthroning political leaders (Asia 2000:25-58; Gberevbie and Olawuyi 2006:29-43; Ibodje and Dode 2007:131-141; Igbafe and Offiong 2007:09-019).

Studies have shown that a nation with shared national political culture based on democratic values such as individual liberty, political equality and equity in terms of popular participation of citizens in the electoral process, decision making and the rule of law is more likely to enjoy the benefits of democratic governance of national integration and development than a nation without shared national democratic political culture (Berman and Murphy



1996:33; Badru 2005:77-101). According to King (1988:22), a national or commonality of political culture is very important in holding a political system together particularly in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria with over 250 ethnic groups.

The main arguments of the paper are that the traditional systems – norms, culture of a people influence their political culture, and the political culture prevalent in a nation influences the electoral process. Also, a nation's political culture determines the voting behaviour of its citizens. Furthermore, development in any society is a function of competent leadership in a democracy. Therefore, democratic governance is more likely to deliver the dividend of democracy and bring about political stability required for development in Nigeria with the election or appointment of competent leaders into public offices.

Data for the paper were obtained from secondary sources, which include relevant books, journals, newspapers and the internet. The paper is divided into four parts. Part one is the introduction. Part two examines the theoretical linkage between political culture, voting behaviour of citizens and democracy. Part three discusses democracy, governance, voting behaviour and development in Nigeria. Part four concludes the paper.

### **Theoretical Linkage between Political Culture, Voting Behaviour and Democracy**

The concept of political culture can be understood from the general concept of culture. According to Kluckhohn (1963), culture refers to "the total way of life of a people, the social legacy that the individual acquires from his group" (cited in Babawale 1999:211). Also Pye (1962) refers to a nation's political culture as the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provides the underlining assumption and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. It encompasses both political ideals and the operating norms of a polity (cited in Babawale 1999:211). From the definitions above, political culture therefore could be seen as a political subset of the general culture of a people or nation.

According to Ikelegbe (1995:76), political culture determines the political behaviour that is prevalent in a nation. If political culture of a nation therefore determines the political behaviour of its citizens, gives order and meaning to the political process, then the voting behaviour of citizens would be influenced by the political culture prevalent in that nation. Evans (2004:3) sees voting as an electoral choice made by individuals in the election of candidates into public offices on the basis of the benefits they think or are told they will derive. These electoral choices could be on the basis of perceived economic or social benefits. Voting behaviour therefore could be seen as a voting attitudes, patterns, values and perceptions of the individuals in the process of electing their political leaders in a democracy. And democracy is a system of government that encourages popular participation

of citizens in the political process and hence brings about development in society (Mimoko, 2007:303).

Also, Schumpeter (1950:269) sees democracy as "a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decision...a method by which the individual acquires the power to participate in decisions by means of a competitive struggle for all the people's vote." To Cohen (1971:7), "democracy is a system of community government in which by and large the members of the community participate or may participate directly in the making of decisions which affect them all." Mimiko (2007:304) argues that democracy is desirable because it promotes development, facilitates governance, especially of plural societies, and is consistent with human rights and fundamental freedom. Democracy therefore implies a system of government that imbibes the culture of popular participation of the citizens in governmental decisions either directly or through their elected representatives. Popular participation of citizens in the electoral process and governmental affairs is therefore at the very heart of democratic governance. Agbaje (1999:192) posits that political participation is the extent to which individual members of society share, take part or get involved in the political life of that society.

Studies have also shown that democratic political culture promotes political stability and development. Almond and Verba (1963:476) refer to "democratic political culture as a pattern of political attitudes that foster democratic stability, which in some way 'fits' the democratic political system." Therefore any society without shared national democratic political culture is more likely to experience negative voting behaviour amongst its citizens. A society with shared national democratic political culture on the other hand enthrones and empowers its political leaders through periodic elections in a democracy. Where the electoral process is flawed with irregularities arising from negative voting behaviour that reflect ethnic and sectional politics particularly in a multi-ethnic society, and resulting into arson, 'ballot box snatching,' election rigging, political thuggery and assassinations as means of enthroning political leaders; that political system is bound to degenerate into a state instability and underdevelopment.

Momoh and Adejumbi (1999:142) identifies the unique place of elections in a democratic society to include its ability to provide representative government, as an instrument of legitimization for the state and those who manage the reins of state power and ensuring political accountability to the people. It was in this regard, Okpaga (2005:42-65) posits that "the electoral process is a more comprehensive form of a democratic system that entails the selection or election of people into position of leadership." The foregoing implies that where the political culture, electoral process and voting behaviour of a nation are based on proper democratic principles, the result is that of political development. And political development refers to a state of political stability, effective government, democracy and social equity (Marcus and Howard (2008:433).

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The analysis so far points to the fact that shared democratic political culture that emphasize values such as principle of public accountability, mass participation, fundamental human rights, majority rule, press freedom, and minority rights, rather than political culture based on sectional or ethnic sentiments leads to good governance and development in a society.

#### **Democracy, Governance, Voting Behaviour and Development in Nigeria**

According to Izibili, Osezua and Eribo (2009:41-51), the problem of governance and functional democracy in Nigeria presents peculiar difficulties. This is particularly so because in pre-independence and even into Nigeria's independence society, formation and configuration of political alignment and parties dictated the kind of voting behaviour imbibed by the people, which reflected deep division along regional and ethnic lines. Political rivalry amongst the different regional governments was the order of the day. For instance, between 1951 when the country became three regions of the North, West, and East to 1964 when the Mid-Western region was created, and to 1966 when the military took over political power; political parties did not differentiate from ethnic groups, they were used by the various groups as platform to continue the social, economic and political battle with each other (Nwankwo 2005:205-228).

While commenting on the political instability that resulted from the entrenched ethnic and undemocratic political culture of sectional politics, violence and election rigging of the first republic in Nigeria (1960-66), a former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo observed that: Law and order broke down completely leading to an almost complete state of anarchy. Arson and indiscriminate killings were committed by a private army of thugs. Law abiding citizens lived in constant fear of their lives and properties. This was the state of affairs when the coup of 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966 took place (cited in King 1988:55).

Ushie (2005:177-189) observes that the absence of a viable civic political culture has made Nigerians imbibe negative voting behaviour predicated on electoral malpractices and violence. This development has further brought about the political underdevelopment of the country. He further argues that the political culture in the country which is ethnically based and reflected undemocratic vices manifested in party formation, party representatives and elected political leaders who lacked the foresight to emphasize the tenets of good democratic governance. In this regard, Omotola (2004:127-138) posits that for democratic governance to succeed in Nigeria, consolidated culture of ethno-religious politics must be addressed and corrected.

In a bid to overcome the problem created by the of lack of shared national democratic political culture in party formation, and the existence of negative voting behaviour based on sectional or ethnic sentiments, the Federal Military Government in 1978 under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo introduced into Nigeria's political history, the registration of political parties for elections. According to Nwankwo



(2005:205-228), the entire legal requirements for registration of political parties were aimed at ensuring that only nationally oriented parties have the opportunity to operate. This development was to avoid the formation of sectional or ethnically based political parties in Nigeria.

Further studies have shown that one of the greatest problems militating against proper voting behaviour amongst Nigerians is the negative mindset towards acquisition of political power in one's region or ethnic domain as basis for acceptance of government and its policies (Iyayi, 2007:1-25). Diligio (2006) refers to mindset as enduring models within people's minds that allow them to interpret the world in a way that is acceptable to them (cited in Iyayi, 2007:1-25). According to Iyayi (2007), the mindset of Nigerian voters that elections are unfair, politicians are not honest, the state rigs elections, voters' votes do not count, money decides who wins election, the electoral body is not independent and political succession depends on where you come from; makes it impossible for the average Nigerian voter to elect people on the basis of competence.

One other reason that has contributed to the negative voting behaviour is the volatile nature of politics in the country, which manifest in thuggery and arson. As a result, the will on the part of the citizens to vote objectively and defend their votes becomes an uphill task. The outcome is the declaration of candidates as winners who either did not plan from the outset to contest elections and hence have nothing positive to offer the people or contested but failed to garner the required votes to be declared winners. Adeyeye (2007:27-40) argues that wherever any election is approaching, there is always an apprehension in the land, which is not unconnected with the spate of violence and political assassinations that pervade the country.

Another reason that has brought about negative voting behaviour is the belief that politics brings division amongst citizens, a warfare, dirty game, and that power can only be acquired through violence (Iyayi 2007:1-25). It has however been proven in many countries that politics is the way in which people who are passionate about a cause can best work to bring about the kind of society they hope for (Edwards 2003:349-354).

Also, the inabilities of politicians to fulfill their promises to the electorates have influenced the negative voting behaviour of Nigerians. Most times politicians promise to deliver the "dividends of democracy." The dividend of democracy in this context implies the provision of basic social amenities such as roads, health, food, water, education and shelter (Izah 1995:116-121). The question that comes to mind is: if "dividends of democracy" means the provision of these basic amenities, what then was the contribution of past political leaders in Europe and America where such basic amenities are almost taken for granted? "Dividends of democracy" in this paper therefore refers to the opportunity of the people to experience a continuous culture of democratic governance. This opportunity enables citizens to participate either directly or indirectly through their elected representatives in the decision making of government facilitated by periodic elections without fear of intimidation.

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The opportunity to participate in governmental affairs by the people is a catalyst for development, which is better achieved through positive voting behaviour of citizens in a free, fair and periodic elections based on shared national democratic political culture. According to Mimiko (2007:303), democracy is good because it promotes development in the society. It does this by giving people the opportunity to decide who should govern them and provides a platform for good governance. It has been argued that good governance arising from democratic values, efficient and effective public administration, are necessary conditions to achieve sustainable development (Kim, Halligan, Cho, Oh, and Eiknberry, 2005:646-654). Development on the other hand is a multidimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic, political and social system, which involves the improvement of income and output; radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs (Todaro, 1985:108). Therefore, where people are not given the opportunity to freely elect their leaders based on a shared national democratic political culture; underdevelopment is more likely to be the outcome.

#### **Democratic Governance in Nigeria's First Republic (1960-66)**

Democratic governance in Nigeria's first republic (1960-66) witnessed a country of a divided people along ethnic and regional lines because of the lack of shared national democratic political culture. As earlier mentioned, at independence in 1960, the three regions had three major political parties domiciled in them: NPC – North, AG – West and NCNC – East. The results of the election that ushered Nigeria into independence attested to the fact that the people were not united as an entity. NPC won 134 or 42.95 percent of the 312 seats at the National Assembly without winning a seat in other regions. AG/UMBC won 25 or 8.01 percent of the 312 seats in the North, 14 or 4.49 percent of seats in the East, 1 or 0.32 percent of seat in the federal territory (Lagos) and 33 or 10.58 percent of seats in its own region – the West. NCNC on the other hand won 8 or 2.56 percent of the 312 seats in the North, 21 or 6.73 percent of seats in the West, 2 or 0.64 percent seats in the federal territory (Lagos) and 58 or 18.59 percent of seats in its own region – East (Asia, 2000; Ikelegbe, 2004).

The adoption of the British style parliamentary democracy at independence made it possible for the NPC, which was not a national party in the true sense to produce the country's prime-minister. This development created a sectional politics in the nation's political history, which affected the voting behaviour of the people negatively, prevented national integration and cohesion required for political development to take place in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society (Ikelegbe, 2004). While emphasizing the deep division amongst the peoples of Nigeria orchestrated by sectional politics, McCormick (2004:407) posits that "ethnic divisions are more important to understanding Nigerian society than social or labour divisions because

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Nigerians differentiate themselves less by class or occupation than by ethnic group." This is particularly so because:

Ethnicity was not a problem in the pre-colonial era because different groups had worked out a balance among themselves. It became a problem only when the imposition of colonial frontiers forced different ethnic groups to live together and to develop a mutually agreeable system of government. So far, a tradition of Nigerian nationalism has not taken root, and politics routinely break down in ethnic rivalry (McCormick, 2004:407).

### **Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-83)**

In 1979, Nigeria adopted a presidential system of government different from the parliamentary democracy of the first republic (1960-66). The pattern of democratic governance in terms of sectional politics, party formation and ethnic rivalry of the second republic (1979-83) was the same with what was obtainable in the first republic in terms of sectional politics and violence. The 1979 general election was contested by five political parties. These five parties were the offshoots of the parties that existed in the first republic (1960-66). The presidential candidates of these parties also reflected the four regional structure of the country up to 1966.

For instance, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) that was an offshoot of NPC had Alhaji Shehu Shagari from the North as its presidential candidate. The Unity Party of Nigeria that was an offshoot of the AG had Chief Obafemi Awolowo from the West as its presidential candidate. The Nigerian Peoples Party that was an offshoot of NCNC had Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe from the East as its presidential candidate. The People's Redemption Party that was an offshoot of Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) had Malam Aminu Kano from the North as its presidential candidate. The Great Nigerian People's Party that was an offshoot of the Borno Youth Movement had Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri from the North as its presidential candidate (Asia, 2000; Ikelegbe, 2004; Gbrevbie 2009).

The voting pattern in the 1979 election was not different from what took place in the first republic. For instance, NPN won majority of its votes in the Northern States of Bauchi – 62.48 percent, Gongola – 35.52 percent, Kaduna – 43.12 percent, Kwara – 53.62 percent, Niger – 74.88 percent and Sokoto – 66.58 percent. UPN won majority of its votes in former Western /Mid-Western States of Bendel – 53.23 percent, Lagos – 82.30 percent, Ogun – 92.11 percent, Ondo – 94.51 percent and Oyo – 85.78 percent. PRP won majority of votes in its home state of Kano – North, with 76.41 percent. GNPP won majority of votes in its home state, Borno – North, with 54.04 percent. NPP won majority of votes in the former Eastern States of Anambra – 82.58 percent, and Imo – 86.67 percent (Joseph, 1991:127). The 1979 election was characterized by violence and election rigging. Furthermore, the election results showed clearly how entrenched undemocratic political culture of ethnicity and negative voting behaviour based on sectional politics in a multi-ethnic society has eaten deep into Nigeria's political system.



### **Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2010)**

In 1998, the military government under the leadership of General Abdulsalami Abubakar a Northern officer instituted a transition to civil rule, which culminated into democratic governance on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999. The presidential election that took place was contested by two political parties. These parties were: People Democratic Party (PDP) with strong support from the North, and had Chief Olusegun Obasanjo from the West as its presidential candidate and Alliance for Democracy (AD) with strong support from the West, that entered into a political alliance with All People's Party (APP), and had Chief Olu Falae from the West as its presidential candidate.

The arrangement that made the two presidential candidates who contested the 1999 election to come from the Western part of Nigeria was a sought of political compromise by the North. This was done to assuage the West of the denial of late Chief M. K. O. Abiola – West in 1993; from assuming leadership of the country in his presumed electoral victory of the presidential elections that took place on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1993, and which was annulled by the then military government of General Ibrahim Babangida; a Northern military officer to abort the third republic in Nigeria's political history (Asia, 2000; Akinsanya, 2005).

The 1999 presidential election saw Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state who is from the West winning the election. The victory however became possible only through the strong support of the Northern politicians and Northern dominated military government. The support for Chief Obasanjo's candidacy for the presidency was so strong amongst Northern serving and retired military officers to the extent that a former Chief of Army Staff and a billionaire business-politician, retired General Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma from the North who later became the Minister of Defence in President Obasanjo's cabinet said before the elections that he would proceed on self-exile in the event of General Obasanjo losing the elections (Adedokun 2005:460). In spite of the little support Chief Obasanjo got from the Western part of the country, he still won the election by a wide margin of 18.7 million votes or 62.8 percent. However, the 1999 elections were characterized by massive electoral fraud of ballot box snatching, intimidation of the opposition and violence (Ibodje and Dode, 2007:139).

The non-support of Obasanjo's candidacy by the West was clearly reflected in the results released by the electoral body. For instance in the Western part of the country, Chief Obasanjo scored only 11.9 percent of votes in Lagos State, 15 percent of votes in Ondo State, 23.5 percent in Osun State, 26.8 percent in Ekiti State and 30.3 percent in his home state of Ogun. Chief Falae of the AD/APP got 11.1 million votes or 37.2 percent of the total votes cast, with majority of the votes from the West, his home region (Ibodje and Dode, 2007; Ploch, 2007: CRS-3).



### **Presidential Election of 2003**

The presidential election that took place in 2003 was contested by three major political parties out of the thirty officially recognized political parties by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC). These parties were: The PDP with strong support from the North presented the incumbent president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo – West, All Nigeria People's Party with support from the North and East presented General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) – North and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) with strong support from the East presented Chief Odumegu Ojukwu – East. Chief Obasanjo of PDP with strong Northern backing won the presidential election with 61.9 percent of votes. General Muhammadu Buhari of the ANPP came second with 32.1 percent of the votes. In the Senate, the PDP won 72 seats out of the 109 seats, ANPP won 28 seats and AD won five seats and others won four seats. At the House of Representatives, PDP won 198 out of the 360 seats in the house, ANPP won 83 seats, AD won 30 seats and others won 49 seats (Ploch, 2007:CRS-3).

Even though the election of Obasanjo could be seen as reflecting national spread to the extent that he is from the West and defeated a northern candidate; the fact remains that he won because of the pattern of bulk voting of electorates from the Northern part of the country who fully dominated the PDP. In addition to the sectional bulk votes, the elections were characterized with undemocratic political culture of violence, political assassinations and intimidation like other elections before it in Nigeria (Oddih 2007:179-80). For instance, between January 1999 and August 2006, a total of 34 prominent Nigerians - aspirants to various political offices, ranging from local government chairmanship to gubernatorial candidates died through unresolved political assassinations (Igbafe & Offiong 2007:9-17; Gbervbie 2009:165-191).

### **Presidential Election of 2007**

The 2007 presidential election was contested by five political parties out of the then 50 political parties officially recognized in the country by INEC. PDP with support from the immediate past president (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo) and strong backing from the North presented Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua – North, as its presidential candidate, Action Congress (AC) with strong support from the West presented Alhaji Atiku Abubakar – North, as its presidential candidate, ANPP, with support from the East and the North presented General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) – North, as its presidential candidate, People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) with strong support from the East presented Chief Uzo Kalu – East, as its presidential candidate and APGA with strong support from the East presented Chief Odumegun Ojukwu – East, as its presidential candidate. At the end of the elections, the

presidential candidate of the PDP - Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua from the North won the presidential election with 24.6 million votes, while his close rival General M. Buhari of the ANPP also from the North got six million votes, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the AC from the North got 2.6 million votes to place third position, while the presidential candidates of PPA and APGA, Chief Uzo Kalu and Chief Odumegun Ojukwu both from the East came fourth and fifth respectively with a total of less than 700,000 votes (Ploch, 2008:CRS-4).

The election of 2007 was widely condemned by both local and international observers as the worse election ever organized in the political history of Nigeria. The undemocratic political process of the 2007 election manifested high level negative political culture and undemocratic voting behaviour of intimidation of the opposition by security agencies, violence, political assassinations, and ballot box theft by top government officials (Ploch, 2008). The conduct of the 2007 election was adjudged to be very poor by international observers including the team led by the former U.S. Secretary of State; Madeline Albright who concluded that "in many places, and in a number of ways, the electoral process failed the Nigerian People. The cumulative effect...substantially compromised the integrity of the electoral process" (Ploch, 2008: CRS-7). On their part, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) delegation also observed that "...irregularities and sporadic violence characterized and challenged the validity of the elections" (Ploch, 2008: CRS-7).

In November 2009, the elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua of the PDP, from the North was admitted into hospital in Saudi-Arabia for treatment on an undisclosed health related challenge. He was brought back into the country in February 2010 in an air ambulance when the health situation was not improving. Unfortunately, he died on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2010 in Abuja as a result of the health challenge (Muogbo, Adisa, Samuel, Adewole, Usigbe and Oyesina, 2010:1-4).

The president's health challenge was highly politicized by the North to the extent that the vice-president, who is now the current president of the federation; Dr. Jonathan Goodluck from Bayelsa State (South-South part of Nigeria) was not even allowed to act for the late president when he was still in the hospital. It took the intervention of some prominent Nigerian leaders – former heads of state, presidents, retired Chief Justices of the federation and members of the Nigerian National Assemblies (Senate and House of Representatives) to invoke the doctrine of "Necessity" to confer the powers of the president on Dr. Jonathan Goodluck on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2010 to act as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Ojeifo and Olaleye, 2010:1-4). After the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2010; the acting president was sworn-in as the substantive president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Dr Jonathan Goodluck appointed Namadi Sambo from Kaduna State; the official headquarters of Northern

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region as his vice (Adisa, Usigbe, Adesanmi & Adeniyi, 2010:1-4; Dickson, 2010:1-4).

Since the Nigerian constitution provides for four year tenure for the president and his vice in office, the country became due for another presidential election in April 2011. Some prominent Northern leaders made-up of former heads of state, Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, top politicians and businessmen advocated that the country must adopt the principle of zoning the presidency to a particular region and in this case – the North, (since the late president from the North did not complete his four year tenure in office) rather than allowing people from any part of the country to occupy the office of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Adisa, 2010:1-4).

The debates, arguments and counter-arguments as to whether President Jonathan Goodluck should be allowed to contest the April 2011 presidential election nearly plunge the country into a civil war. It took the intervention of the Judiciary to settle the matter in favour of the president on the ground that zoning is against the principle of the nation's constitution. In spite of the court verdict that favours the president to contest the elections, the Northern leaders under the aegis of Northern Political Leader's Forum (NPLF) chaired by Alhaji Adamu Ciroma; a one time Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria met in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to decide whether the North should support President Jonathan Goodluck for the April 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 presidential election or not (Alli, 2011:2; Abdulai, 2010:1-8).

The NPLF put forward three options to consider about their resolve to support or not to support President Jonathan for the election to include: (a) to back Jonathan; (b) mobilize the North to vote en masse against Jonathan; and (c) to remain adamant on zoning and leave Northerners to vote for any presidential candidate of their choice. It was observed in the meeting that some Northern leaders are still angry over zoning and they are mounting pressure on the NPLF leaders not to back Jonathan for the presidency. Some of the NPLF leaders also insist that "it would be proper to die for a cause than shifting their position on zoning midway into their agitation" (Alli, 2011:2; Samuel, Okocha, 2010:1-4; Usigbe and Adekanmbi, 2010:1-4).

Reacting against sectional politics in Nigeria, Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, a Northerner and current Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in a paper presented at the Northern Economic Summit held in Kaduna on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 posits thus "it is regrettable that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Nigerians are still talking about where the president should come from rather than the capacity of the occupant of the office to deliver the dividends of democracy. Are we saying that what we want are incompetent leaders so long as the elections are free and fair?" (Akowe, 2011:2).

The picture painted above shows that Nigeria is a nation of a divided people arising from the political setting before, during and after colonial rule. The average Nigerian considers his/her sub-community first before the larger community called Nigeria. There is serious distrust on the part of Nigerians

about those in government particularly those that are not from their ethnic group or regions. According to McCormick (2004:407):

...giving the widespread distrust among Nigerians toward officialdom, individuals look to their communities for stability, and they believe that loyalty to the community is the paramount virtue. One of the more dangerous consequences of this attitude is the persistence of nepotism and corruption, which are distinctive in Nigeria because it is expected that public officials will enrich their constituents and that they are failures if they do not.

The result of this development in the nation's political landscape is that people are elected or appointed into public offices not on the basis of competence but on the basis of primordial sentiments, and the outcome is non-performance in terms of the inability of those in government to put in place quality policies capable of bringing about better living condition for the people. While it is true that democracy enhances governance and leads to development in the society, it is not far from the truth to conclude that where people are not elected or appointed into public offices on the basis of competence; the development advantages derivable from democratic governance faces serious challenge.

Nigeria is considered today as one of the poorest nations on earth because of incompetence and corruption on the part of public officeholders. It is on record that in a space of 20 years of Nigeria's 50 years of political independence; the nation realized a total sum of \$300 billion from the sale of crude oil in the international market (Gberevbie and Arowosegbe, 2006:10-23). As one of the leading oil producing nation in OPEC; the country found itself in a situation of importing refined petroleum products from abroad even though the nation produces a little above two million barrel of crude oil per day. For instance, because of corruption and incompetence on the part of those in government; between the months of January and March 2011, Nigeria imported refined petroleum products to the tune of \$1.34 billion or NGN 201 billion (Omoh, 2011). According to the CBN Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi:

Nigeria does not support the growth of her local industries, but subject them to stiff competition. We export crude oil and we import refined petroleum products. We are the world's number one producer of cassava but we import refined starch. We have a large cotton belt ... and we import textile fabrics from China. We have hides and skin and we do not have a leather goods industry. Nigeria spent \$1 billion in 2010 on the importation of rice, why should Nigeria import rice? That we do not have the land or the intelligence to farm? Or rice processing plants are high technology that is beyond the understanding of Nigerians? (Akowe, 2011:2).

The foregoing shows that leadership is a challenge in Nigeria. Studies have shown that democratic principles such as accountability, mass participation in decision making, majority rule, minority right and fundamental human right enhances governance (Mimiko, 2007; Gberevbie, 2009). However, for people to enjoy the advantages of democratic governance there is need to elect or appoint people into public offices on the



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basis of competence rather than on sectional or ethnic sentiments for political stability and development to take in a multi-ethnic, religious and cultural society like Nigeria. This goes to support the argument of Omoruyi (2007: 341), when he posits that looking at the political situation in Nigeria, "it has become evident that the personality of whoever may be the country's president is a determining factor in the character of politics that emerges."

### CONCLUSION

The paper examines the relationship between democratic governance and development in Nigeria. The analysis points to the fact that Nigeria is yet to experience political stability needed for development to take place after 50 years of her independence. This is due to the challenge of leadership and lack of adherence to proper democratic norms devoid of sectional or ethnic politics. Studies have shown that a nation's democratic practice is a function of the political culture prevalent in that nation. Also, a nation's political culture determines the voting behaviour of its citizens. Furthermore, development in any society is a function of competent leadership in a democracy. Therefore, democratic governance is more likely to deliver the dividend of democracy and bring about political stability required for development to take place when competent people are elected or appointed into public offices on the basis of shared national democratic culture devoid of sectional or ethnic politics. This is more likely to be achieved when proper training on democratic norms is given to public officeholders and indeed the entire citizenry to enable them imbibe proper democratic culture needed for good governance and development to materialize in Nigeria. For according to Omoruyi (2007:339), "no one is born a democrat; only learning makes one a democrat."

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