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Political Culture and Good Governance in Nigeria

Daniel E.I. Gberevbie and Stephen A. Lafenwa

Abstract

Good governance is undoubtedly the most fundamental condition for political, social and economic development in any society. This is because it creates an environment in which every one could unfold his/her productive, political and cultural potentials. The major problems that have consistently hindered good governance in Nigeria since independence are ethnic, religious and tribal sectionalism. It became a fundamental problem with the absence of a common belief system in the country's body politic. The paper examines the content and role of consensual, democratic political culture and its significance on good governance in Nigeria. The paper shows that the absence of this culture has brought about poor governance in the country. Since present political values are at odds with democracy and good governance, political reform and the empowerment of civil society alone may not engender lasting democratic governance in a heterogeneous Nigerian State. It is therefore imperative to put in place various constitutional provisions and mechanisms capable of evolving a new political culture that fosters order, stability, accountability, tolerance, transparency, social justice and equality.

Introduction

Although governance is not a new concept, since "it has been a part of the lexicography of political science and philosophy as far back as Plato and Aristotle," (Ogunjobi, 2004:9) the emphasis on good governance as a categorical imperative for sustainable development in Africa is relatively new. This is because the reality of the world we live in is replete with distortions of what "government" and "governance" entail. Most of the States in Africa seem not to have justified the compelling reason for their existence, which are primarily to establish order, ensure security of lives and properties, and promote social welfare of their citizens. The failure of governance has led to rising expectations and frustrations on the part of the people. In addition, arising from this governance at all levels and losing legitimacy and credibility as people begin to lose confidence in them.

There have been several attempts to promote good governance in Africa via reconfiguration of political super-structures and empowerment of the civil society.

Although there is no consensus on the methods of state reconstruction to enable good governance to thrive, those efforts have failed to restore the legitimacy and credibility lost by most African governments. Nigeria is not an exception, because while trying to rebuild the State and civil society, the political culture (values, attitudes, expectations and perceptions) that underlines and moulds the institutions and actions of both political and the civil society is neglected. Yoder (2005) argues that "if a nation's most fundamental political values are at odds with good governance and democracy, reconfiguring the political structures or reinvigorating civil society... will not lead to better future."

In essence, consensual democratic culture, which is necessary for good governance to thrive, has not yet evolved in most of African States. Babawale (1999:214) refers to this as the absence of a "predominant political culture." The result of the unequal creation of regions by the colonial masters before independence in 1960 has led to ethnic and religious sectionalism as a basis for the acquisition of political power. Today, many Nigerians consider themselves first as belonging to their ethnic and religious groups before considering themselves as Nigerians. There seems to be absence of core or common values that ought to connect the generality of the people together as one in the Nigerian political system. This has created serious problems for the corporate existence of Nigeria.

The United States, for instance, with a population of over 250 million people, is said to be homogenous. This is not so much in terms of ethnic and religious affiliation, but in terms of core or common value, which has helped to stabilize its political system over the years. Berman and Murphy (1996:33) point out that in the American society "survey reveals a broad consensus on the core issues, values and ideals of government like: individual liberty, political equality and the rule of law." These democratic values in addition to the principles of accountability and transparency ensure the stability of the political system. As Kofi Anan also observed: "good governance is vital for the protection of rights of citizens and the advancement of economic and social development" (Kim, et al 2005: 647). In view of this, the paper is designed therefore to explore the significance of consensual democratic culture and good governance in Nigeria. The paper is divided into seven sections. Section I contains the Introduction. Section II attempts the conceptual clarification of the term "political culture," and with emphasis on the meaning of consensual democratic culture, it also explains the theoretical framework of the study. Section III focuses on the understanding of good governance and how it promotes development. Section IV establishes a linkage between good governance and political culture. Section V focuses on the effects of political culture on good

governance with emphasis on Nigeria, and examines the place of consensual democratic culture not only to good governance, but also political stability and national development. Section VI discusses the recipe for evolving a consensual democratic culture in Nigeria. And the Conclusion follows

On Political Culture

The idea of political culture as the character or ethos of the people, which is integrally related to the type of regime ruling a polity, dates back to the writings of early political philosophers like Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece and later discussed by Machiavelli and Montesquieu (Shiping Hua, 2004:491). According to the **Encyclopedia of Government and Politics** (2004:493), Rousseau conceives political culture in terms of the morality, customs and public opinion of a particular people. And Tocqueville refers to political culture as the “habits of heart,” the whole moral and intellectual condition of a people.

It has to be noted that after these philosophers, definitional problem became increasingly significant, as there are varied conceptualizations of political culture. It is defined by the **Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences** (1968:218) as ‘the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments, which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumption and rules that govern behaviour in the political system.’ On the other hand, political culture could be seen as encompassing both the political ideal and the operating norms of a polity (Ikelegbe, 1995:76).

Pye (1962:122) sees 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 assumptions and rules that govern the behaviour in the political system” (Babawale, 1999), while Macridis (1961:40), sees political culture as the “commonly shared goals and commonly accepted rules,” (Babawale, 1999:213) and Heywood (1997:186) sees political culture as “pattern of orientations to political objects such as parties, government, the constitution expressed in beliefs, symbols and values.”

Having examined diverse views on political culture, it is in order now to conceptualise consensual democratic culture. In the **Civic Culture**, Almond and Verba (1963:473) demonstrated the impact of political culture on the stability and effectiveness of democracy across five states, namely, the United States, Great Britain, Italy, Mexico, and the former Federal Republic of Germany. They define a democratic political culture as a pattern of political attitudes that foster democratic stability, which in

some way 'fits' the democratic political system. Specifically, Almond, (Broderick: 2000:19) asserts that political culture consists of three components, namely: 'system' culture, 'process' culture, and 'policy' culture. To him:

System culture includes the sense of national identity, attitudes towards the legitimacy of the regime and its various institutions, and attitudes towards the legitimacy and effectiveness of the incumbents of the various political roles. The process culture of a nation on the other hand would include attitudes towards self in politics (e.g. parochial –subject- participant) and attitudes towards other political actors (e.g. trust, cooperation, competence hostility). The policy culture could consist of the distribution of preferences regarding the outputs and outcomes of politics, the ordering among different groupings in the population of such political values as welfare, security and liberty.

Although Almond argues that the most important aspect of political culture for regime legitimacy is the system, emphasis in our paper will be laid on some components of all the types of political culture as indicated earlier in the study. A democratic culture becomes consensual when it gains wide support within a political system. In other words, going by Almond's description, consensual democratic political culture is all about agreement by different groups on their attitudes towards the legitimacy of the regime, the self in politics, and other political actors on the distribution of preference regarding the political outcomes. Since it is the attitudes of the people, and not their actual participation that makes a democratic culture, evolution of this has profound effect upon the fragility of democracy.

According to Almond and Powell, (Anifowoshe and Enemu: 1999:217), the key elements of what constitutes a nation's political culture include among other things:

- i. the degree of social trust or mistrust which prevails in the society;
- ii. the general attitude of tolerance and inter-personal cooperation permeating political relations among people;
- iii. attachment and loyalty of citizens to the national political system;
- iv. people's attitudes towards authority – degree of public recognition of what constitutes the legitimate authority; and
- v. people's sense of their right, powers and obligations. Do they feel that they can influence and participate in the decision making processes or is there widespread apathy and political alienation in the political system?

These essential features of democratic culture are the **sine-qua-non** for good governance and development, and are carefully assessed vis-à-vis contemporary Nigerian society.

Understanding Good Governance

Globalization, as it is well known today, rests on a tripod stand Good governance is indeed one of the elements of globalization, the other being information technology, and economic liberalization. (Okunade: 2000:24). Globalization simply means an involuntary movement to which all States seeking development and stable polity must be part. Good governance, like issues relating to globalization, transcends national frontiers. It is a matter of international concern and not strictly within the domestic jurisdiction of States alone.

In fact, good governance is one of the minimum international standards required of governments to be recognized in the global community. While emphasizing the importance of good governance in the society, Zouheir M'Dhaffar, the Tunisian Minister of Civil Services and Administrative Development, affirmed that "good governance, efficient and effective public administration, are necessary conditions to achieve sustainable development." Kim *et al*, 2005:647-648). Though the concept "governance" has assumed a wide usage in national and international development parlance, it nevertheless lacks precise meaning. It is therefore imperative to explore its meaning. For the purpose of this paper, it is important to point out the basic distinction between 'government' and 'governance' as a prelude to our understanding what good governance is all about.

In most cases, 'government' and 'governance' like 'good government' and 'good governance' are sometimes used interchangeably, though the former is more commonly used. A clear distinction that could be made between the two terms is that 'government' constitutes the institutions and personnel, or strictly put – the instrumentality of public administration, which is just an aspect of governance (Okunade: 2000:25). To the African Development Bank (ADB: 1999) governance may be seen as denoting how people are ruled, and how the affairs of a State are administered and regulated. Okunade (2000) describes 'governance' as the activities and process of governing not necessarily about outcomes, but how such outcomes are reached. To Ogunjobi, who is the Vice-President, (Operations) of the African Development Bank Group (2004:9), 'governance' not only refers to the quality of leadership and the capacity of governance but also the effectiveness and consistency of policy and the development of institutions that deliver public goods and social services in a stable environment.

In its broadest context, good governance, according to the Organization of Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) “seeks to create capable and effective states, as well as an enabling environment in which the public and private sectors play their respective roles in a mutually reinforcing manner towards poverty reduction, sustainable growth and development.” (Ogunjobi: 2004:9) However, there seems to be a consensus among most governments of developed countries/ donors and the World Banks about the concept of good governance as “predictable, open and enlightened ethos, the rule of law, transparent processes, and strong civil society.” (World Bank: 1989). And, according to Kim *et al* (2005:649) “transparent governance implies an openness of the governance system through clear process and procedures and easy access to public information for citizens.”

In essence, good governance should be concerned with an effective process of management of public affairs, which embraces the normal basis of political authority and the essential demands for peace, order and stability. It demands that government be responsive and responsible to its citizens. In this sense, public organizations or institutions and political leadership are the trustees of the nation’s political authority to serve in the interest of all with a view to enhancing the standard of living of the people in the society.

Most fundamental to the various definitions of good governance are three key terms: accountability, which denotes the efficiency with which the electorates or the governed can exercise influence on their elected representatives or governors; legitimacy which is concerned with the right of the State to exercise power and authority over its citizens and the extent to which the power and authority is perceived to be rightly exercised by the citizens; and transparency which is grounded on the existence of mechanisms of ensuring public access to decision-making. According to Best (2005) “transparency carries with it a powerful array of moral and political associations including honesty, guilelessness and openness.” Good governance, as a minimum requirement in the global community, must embrace accountability of those in government to the people they govern, transparency, rule of law (or due process), in addition to a political system that allows for popular participation of citizens in decision-making process. The opposite of these good governance principles are arbitrary policy making by those in government; unaccountable bureaucracies; unjust legal system; corruption in high and low places; mismanagement of public resources; and civil strife in the society.

Political Culture and Good Governance: A Theoretical Linkage

Much scholarly works establish a nexus between political culture and good governance. However, there is no relationship between forms of government and the nature of governance. To be precise, an authoritarian regime does not necessarily display the characteristics or effects of poor governance, while good governance does not necessarily characterize a 'democratically' established government. In most cases, however, good governance is more likely to be the outcome of a democratic government, which operates democracy in both principle and practice. Ideally, it is expected that good governance could/would thrive best in a society where democratic culture exists.

The development and peace dividends associated with a democratic system vis-à-vis other systems of governance makes democracy a virtue and a 'universally shared political cultural ideal.' Available evidence suggests that rapid economic development is higher in societies that are democratic than in authoritarian societies (Okunade: 2000:27). A few success stories of outstanding economic performance in Africa such as Botswana and Mauritius can also be cited as empirical evidence. Botswana is said to exemplify a country with better governance, characterized by its pluralist nature like Nigeria, that has considerable respect for the rule of law, and protection of press freedom and human rights. As a result, it has been transformed from one of the twenty poorest countries in the world, with per capital GDP equivalent of roughly US \$80 to about US \$8,100 by 2002. In addition, Botswana has an impressive record in terms of human development indicators (United Nation Development Programme: 2004). Similarly, Mauritius has successfully sustained its economic growth over the past 20 years, financed largely from domestic savings with per capital GDP rising to US \$4,000 in 2004 (Ogunjobi: 2004:8). It must be noted that both countries have enjoyed stable parliamentary democracies and an all multi-party political system, with political power transferred through the electoral competitive system. This is because of the level of democratic political culture that exists in those nations. Apart from the belief that democratic governance and economic development are complementary, there is also the belief that democracy is conducive for human development, for two major reasons. First, that since democracy is a rule-governed process, it ensures predictability in governance and hence promotes political stability. The second reason is not unrelated to the ethics of democracy, which has to do with the ability of the individual in the society to decide what to do in terms of who to vote for as leaders and enhance the self worth of the individual in the society. Democracy is people-oriented, which allows for popular participation and, hence, engenders good governance in the society.

Having established a link between good governance and democracy, it is imperative to link democratic governance with political culture to serve as a basis for the next discussion. First, there is no major disagreement amongst scholars that each society imparts its norms and values to its people, and the people in each society in turn have distinct notions about how the political system is supposed to work, about what the government may do for them, and about their claims and obligations to the government. Even the study of political culture as discussed by the **Encyclopedia of Government and Politics** (2004:491) is based on the implicit assumption that autonomous and reasonably enduring cross-cultural differences exist and can have important political consequences in the society. By implication, while political culture influences political institutions, political institutions on the other hand do influence political culture as well.

Scholars over the years have acknowledged the significance of attitudes, values and beliefs in promoting the stability and survival of a regime (Heywood: 1997:186). With respect to the relationship between political culture and democracy, Almond and Verba's **The Civic Culture** (1963) is a classical example. They adopt opinion surveys to analyze political attitudes and democracy in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, Italy and the former Federal Republic of Germany. They argue that attitudes towards the legitimacy of the regime termed as the 'system culture' and most importantly towards the political system as a whole have profound effect upon the fragility of democracy in any society. (Broderick: 2000:18). In other words, regime support is necessary for democratic stability, since it is the affective feelings of the people towards a regime that legitimize it or give expression of discontent to it.

More importantly, according to Almond and Powell (1966:50) "The kinds of orientation which exist in a population will have a significant influence in the ways in which the political system works the demands made upon the system, the responses to laws and appeals for support and the conduct of individuals in their political roles will all be shaped by the common orientation patterns." Thus, the working of the political system is very much affected by the political culture that exists in that society. Dahl (1966) also singled out political culture as a factor explaining different patterns of political opposition, which may likely threaten or strengthen modern political system. Roskin *et al* (2003:116), after demonstrating that periods of stable, efficient government and economic growth solidify feelings of legitimacy, argued that "for democracy to work, participation, which is a key element of political culture need only be intermittent and potential."

The culturalist perspective emphasizes the congruence between mass values, which Almond and Verba (1963) define as a country's political culture and political institutions. In other words, legitimacy results when institutions correspond to the social and political values of the citizens. For instance, in the long-standing Western European democracies, the social and political values have evolved over centuries to exhibit very stable and legitimate democratic institutions. In essence, there is a widespread agreement among the citizens as to the appropriateness in behaviour of their governmental institutions. More fundamental is an interesting survey of common values that has covered 75 percent of the world's population. The survey reveals that "there is a direct causal relationship between the values that citizens have and the kind of democracy or lack of democracy that prevails in that country." (GloboNet: 2005:2). The work of Yoder (2005:3) on the Liberian political culture shows that there is a strong relationship between the State, civil society and political culture. He posits that the love for liberty, support for the rule of law, dedication to checks and balances and devotion to multi party elections are some of the democratic values commonly associated with Liberian political culture. On his part, Miller (1998:48) posits that "a common national political culture... is a necessity for democratic deliberation." (Abizadeh: 2002:502).

Political Culture and Good Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria, by its size and population, is regarded as the 'big brother' in Africa. However, the reality on the ground is different from the dream and aspirations of the Nigerian people. Since independence in 1960, much efforts had been made to take Nigeria to that exalted position where it can dictate the pace of economic, social and political development in Africa. The assumption here is that good governance as an imperative factor for political stability and development is a function of the political culture that exists in the Nigerian society. In this sense, political culture is perceived as the ways Nigerian people think and feel about politics and their cluster of attitudes about government and social relations shared by the majority of Nigerian population. Most importantly, emphasis is laid on a collection of political attitudes that is broadly shared by the political elites and a large proportion of the population.

In examining the nature and dynamics of Nigerian political culture, reference is made to components of political culture described by Almond and Verba. The three components are 'system culture,' 'process culture' and 'policy culture' with much emphasis on process culture on the basis of what they classified political culture into three types: parochial, subject and participant (Broderick: 2000:19).

Experience has shown that all counties have mixed political cultures. In other words, in any country including Nigeria political cultures exist in a mixed form. Roskin *et al* (2003:119) argues in this context:

It is in the mixture of all three attitudes that democracy finds its stability. Parochial concerns for family, church and jobs give individuals meaning and perspective subject attitudes, give the political system obedience and support, and participant attitudes keep leaders attentive and responsive to the attitudes of the people.

The unique combination of historical factors gives rise to one particular mix or the other and in terms of consequence, supportive or non-supportive of democratic governance.

The First Republic: 1960-1966

Prior to independence in 1960, the common feeling that Nigerians should replace British colonial administrators was effectively channeled towards the nationalist self-determination. Although the sentiment was supposed to have common focus and objective, it became fragmented, courtesy of the centrifugal imperatives of a federal state, which Nigeria adopted under the Richards and Lyttleton Constitutions of 1946 and 1954. Even the dominant political parties that were expected to foster a unified political culture necessary for a new nation to emerge were outcrops of pan-ethnic organizations which adopted at best, cautious inward looking and at worst, secessionist approaches to national issues (Anam-Ndu, 1998:64).

The nationalists were pushed further back by suspicion and distrust hinged on their personal biases and prejudices to their ethnic niches in the regions where they mobilized the feelings, evaluative judgments and opinions of their kinsmen against others. One can easily adduce that the 'regionalization of nationalism,' as aptly put by James Coleman, denied the country the opportunity of evolving objective national feelings, opinions and judgments about public affairs. The period after independence witnessed the replacement of nationalism with tribalism. The three regions during the First Republic became centers of ethnic rivalry. (Anam-Ndu: 1998).

The dominant ethnic groups became subject of attack as internal colonial relationships in each of the regions mobilized the feelings and evaluative orientations of the minority groups into solidarity force against them. Due to lack of a dominant political culture in Nigeria, every ethnic group tries to outsmart the other in the quest to satisfy itself. Besides, because of differences in the population of the regions

and the winner-takes-it-all political system in Nigeria, the majority groups were economically and politically positioned to the disadvantage of the minority groups in the country. There was the absence of overarching authority system to weld acephalous communities together prior to the emergence of the Nigerian nation. It was the emerging character of politics at the centre and in those regions that built them into solidarity group. Anam-Ndu (1998:65-66) stresses that a subject – participant culture was notable among economic- political dominant groups subject in the sense that they are conscious of the fact that the Regional government was theirs to be supportive of their government and participant because they have to maintain the status quo through populist participation. He went further to argue that among the economic- politically impotent groups emerged a participant culture of protest to re-define their identity within the frame work of inequality. Let us now examine the major components of political culture in the First Republic.

First, since power was concentrated in very few hands and in particular the elites from the dominant groups, there was no sense of national identity. There was emphasis on regionalization, which impacted negatively on the legitimacy of the central government, and the imperative of integration in a highly pluralistic society. As noted by Adebayo (2001:65) the institutional problems, which faced Nigeria during the First Republic, arose mainly from a system of government modelled for an entity with a different political culture. Also there was a high level of distrust between the dominant ethnic groups and the ethnic minorities, which culminated in a participant culture of opposition and protest. Due to non-cooperation and distrust among the major ethnic groups and political actors, Nigeria witnessed much internal crises during the First Republic such as the 1962-1965 Western Nigeria. 1962/63 census and the 1964 federal election crises. In addition, with absence of culture of tolerance among the elites and ethnic groups, there were cases of inter-ethnic conflicts between the Tivs and Jukums in the Northern Region and between the Urhobos and the Itshekiris of the southern part of Nigeria that claimed several lives and properties, which culminated in the military coup of January 15, 1996.(Akinsanya:2005:20-85)

Similarly, in terms of politics, there was an unequal distribution of preference regarding the output and outcomes of politics among the major ethnic groupings in Nigeria. Such political values as welfare, security, political offices and liberty were distributed unequally at the centre in favour of the dominant groups and at the expense of the ethnic minorities. As a result, there were fragmented political cultures in Nigeria during the First Republic.

The Military Regimes: 1966- 1979

The period between 1966 and 1979 witnessed the first military rule in Nigeria. The intervention of the armed forces contributed negatively to the development of a consensual democratic culture. Indeed, military rule, aside being an aberration, is anti democratic in the sense that it encourages a low sense of political efficacy. By political efficacy we mean the degree to which an individual feels he can act to influence or determine political decision. It has to be mentioned that this had inhibited effective political participation which is one of the categorical imperatives of good governance. When the first military regime came to power headed by General Aguiyi-Ironsi, there were elements of distrust among the major ethnic groups especially between the Hausa/Fulani of the North and the Igbos of the East. Although it appeared that most Nigerians welcomed the **coup** that brought the regime, especially because the nation seemed to be heading towards disintegration because of the high level of acrimony amongst political leaders in the country, Northern elements perceived the coup as being specifically directed against them. With their leaders and senior army officers killed in the wake of the coup the Northerners felt that the exercise was an Igbo device to control the country. They justified this assertion by pointing out that the top planners were of Igbo origin (Asia: 2000:27). The argument advanced by Dudley (1971) when the then Northern Nigeria Premier opposed the quota system of appointment into the federal civil service corroborates this “that it was an indication of the awareness of the political leaders that the armed forces could be used as a political instrument to sub-serve sectional ends.” (See Akinsanya and Ayoade: 2005:97). There was an attempt under late General Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi’s short-lived regime to unify the major ethnic groups through the promulgation of Decree No. 34 in May 1966. It was however greeted with violent ethnic and religious crisis, which led to the collapse of that regime on July 29 of 1966 following a counter-coup. The erstwhile-integrated communities were disintegrated through various policies adopted by past military rulers. For instance, the quota system under Ironsi regime was used to favour the Southerners against the Northerners and the consequence was a crisis of confidence and trust among the dominant regions which led to a coup d’etat plotted and planned by Northern officers in July 1966, during which General Ironsi and several Army Officers were killed. This culminated in a blood civil war that lasted almost three years after the mass exodus of the Easterners from the North. The establishment of some federal institutions like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and some unity schools to foster national unity did little in the direction of integration as it further deepened the fragmented political cultures of the Nigerian people. Even the creation of states created fears among the minority groups. The indigenization policy adopted by the Gowon regime fostered sectional interests as the North insisted that the

Indigenization Decree would favour the Western and Lagos States where most of the businesses concerned were located (Asia: 2001:33).

According to Almond and Verba's argument, the most important of variants of political culture is the system culture that deals extensively with national identity and legitimacy. Since it was military rule, the perception was that it is anti-developmental. The absence of political parties and restriction of few pressure groups inevitably leads to low political culture in the country. The political culture is said to be low in a society. When the centre of power lacks full legitimacy; the effectiveness of governmental administration is poor; the transfer of power is not yet institutionalized; above all, civic institutions have still to find their place in the new political order and with public approval (Akinsanya and Ayoade: 2005:91).

The Second Republic: 1979-1983

In spite of the adoption of the Presidential system of government, the political culture of the Second Republic was not remarkably different from the First. For instance, it is well known that political parties do not only provide a forum for the development of national democratic culture and values, but also are vehicles through which such values are disseminated and institutionalized. During the Second Republic, the multi-party system failed to diffuse the ethnic factor in party formation and support. The five political parties that emerged – National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), People's Redemption Party (PRP) and Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) were not national in outlook, but had their roots in different ethnic cleavages as in the First Republic. Agbaje (2005:194) maintains that these parties tended to be seen as a reincarnation of the parties of the First Republic. In fact, it was established that "the parties helped to reinforce the saliency of the personality, regional and ethnic factors in the election." Not unlike the First Republic voting exercise, the 1979 general elections ran along ethnic lines and all parties presented candidates who were indigenes of the State or ethnic group where such parties were popular.

Even the federal character principle established under the 1979 Constitution failed relatively to foster national integration and the development of a consensual political culture, as it further widened the gap between the dominant ethnic groups and minorities through a lopsided arrangement in the allocation of resources and benefits.

There was sectional resentment and rivalry. The Nigeria's centrist political economy also affected ethnic relations negatively, as it well known that for any group to control or gain access to state power, such a group will automatically control state

resources. The dominant group strives to maintain the status quo by adopting subject participant political culture, while the disadvantaged groups participated actively to resist the move. With the absence of cultures of tolerance, trust, accountability, coherence, cooperation and transparency, which are vital components of good governance, the Second Republic fell, First Republic it on December 31, 1983 as the military took over the reins of government.

The Military Regimes: 1983-1999

The almost sixteen uninterrupted years of military rule did nothing to change the situation. The period aggravated the problems of disunity and integration and heightened the legitimacy crisis. The attendant crises witnessed during this period hindered the evolution of a national /unified political culture. With the creation of more States, the political culture became more fragmented as every section of the country tried to get its own share of the “national cake.” The culture of corruption, which has started to manifest itself since the mid 1960s became an endemic problem particularly in the post-Buhari/Idiagbon regime.

Corruption, which symbolizes a breakdown of ethical and moral values of system, institution of governance and societal traditions and personal behaviours ultimately helped to violate public trust, corroded social capital, hindered service delivery and undermined the authority of the state (ADB: 2003). Efforts to institutionalize democratic political culture were aborted. In fact, the transition to civil rule initiated by President Ibrahim Babangida to terminate military rule in 1993 failed due to the annulment of the results of the June 12 presidential election believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The Babangida regime decreed the formation of two political parties, namely, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) with a belief that the two parties will encourage cohesion in a pluralistic society. Besides, they were seen as instruments to forge some common national political perception and democratic values in the Nigerian political system. But most Nigerians refused to participate in politics as they perceived the parties as government’s parties that were only established to satisfy the interests of the ruling elites. For instance, the June 12 Presidential election adjudged to be the fairest and freest was marked by low voter turn-out when compared with total voting population.

There was public resentment to a dictatorial regime and self imposed democratic structures under Babangida Administration particularly after the annulment of the results of the Presidential election believed to have been won by Chief Abiola. The Shonekan-led Interim National Government established when General Babangida

“stepped aside” was faced with a legitimacy crisis and unable to contain the wave of political crisis as a result of political uncertainty and the frequent protests and strikes. As a result of this, the democratic experiment under the military regime of General Babangida collapsed in what could be regarded as the aborted ‘Third Republic.’

Attitudes of Nigerians since the Emergence of the Fourth Republic

Another transition to civil rule by the General Abdulsalami government, which started in June 1998 after the sudden death of General Sanni Abacha came to an end with the swearing in of a democratically elected government on May 29, 1999. Since then, experience has shown that Nigerians due to the low political culture they imbibed in the past contributed to their inability to fully participate in electoral politics the moment the military decided to disengage from governance. Most politicians were very reluctant to contest because of their past experiences. They doubted the sincerity of the military to transit to civilian rule. The manner in which the April 1999 Presidential election was handled to favour a candidate sponsored by the military elite in the person of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Army General and Head of State indicates that elite politics is still prevalent in Nigeria as against populist politics. The voter-turn out was low and the election was marred with several irregularities.

Even the 2003 Presidential election that was conducted by a civilian government under President Olusegun Obasanjo was fundamentally flawed by most of the political parties that participated in the election. This culture of election rigging has prevented many Nigerians to participate actively in politics. This has a resultant negative effect on the political landscape of the nations and the attendant low political culture is likely to act as a threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The attitudes of average Nigerians towards the politicians are rather ambivalent, perceiving them as corrupt and looters of public treasury. Because they are highly critical about the politicians and even quite cynical about the actions of government, this attitude has furthered deepened the legitimacy crisis.

The resentment on the part of the people against the ‘third term’ agenda of the Obasanjo Administration demonstrates the non-acceptance of the present political structure by the Nigerian people. The culture of accountability, transparency, tolerance, accommodation and selfless service is yet to be entrenched fully in Nigeria’s political system. Even the issue of political succession is still problematic as there is a contention among the ethnic thus calling for a need for government to put in place frameworks to ensure that those basic principles of democracy are

fully entrenched and while efforts are made to resolve the endemic legitimacy crisis in Nigeria.

Recipe for Consensual Democratic Political Culture

Regardless of the perceived constraints, some of which are legally permissible, it is useful to suggest a reform agenda necessary for the evolution of national democratic culture that will facilitate good governance in Nigeria. First, there should be genuine and sincere efforts to increase the levels of citizens' involvement in the political process and policy making. Second, all the facilitators of change in the political culture of a nation, namely, massive investment in education, mass media, mass political socialization via political parties, among others, should be improved upon to foster the spirit of emotional attachment and loyalty to the nation, thereby engendering national pride as a *sine que non* to democratic stability. Third, appropriate modern frameworks and mechanisms especially those that incorporate beneficial primordial values and norms to resolve and effectively manage every ethnic conflict bedeviling the Nigerian polity should be fashioned out. In addition to that, the culture of tolerance, which is capable of facilitating the smooth functioning of good governance should be encouraged and promoted.

Through appropriate mechanisms of enlightenment, individuals and each ethnic group should be encouraged to respect the views, opinions, deeds and motives of others. This is essential for civil tranquility to safeguard social harmony. Finally, there should be constitutional provisions or mechanisms for the evolution, nurturing and promoting of democratic culture.

Conclusion

Although there seems to be widespread support for the notion of democracy, there is little satisfaction with the institutions and practices of successive civilian and military governments. Indeed, major democratic values, norms, and principles such as accountability, transparency, free press, and rule of law, impartial and independent judiciary among others are conspicuously absent. One of the major problems facing the corporate existence of Nigeria as an entity is the lack of trust amongst the various segments of the society. Another significant factor that seemed to have undermined the efforts towards a coherent democratic political culture by past Nigerian governments is what Joseph termed "prebendalism" – the use of state offices as 'prebends' (instruments) for wealth and gains for individuals and their ethnic interest (as cited in Sodaro, 2001:822). According to Sodaro, "the prebendal inclinations of politicians were revealed in a number of scandals often reported by Nigerian's vibrant and independent press; corruption, malfeasance,

manipulation, neglect and political thuggery." The Central government was seen as a funnel through which the nation's oil wealth flowed (Sodaro, 2001:824).

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