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## **Problems Militating Against the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria**

Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of  
Political Science (NAJOPS).  
2002, Vol. 2(2)  
ISSN:2992-5924  
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### **Abstract**

The paper began by postulating that the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria is both an inevitable and imperative need. The paper therefore took an in-depth look at the problems militating against the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Because of the multi-dimensionality of the problems, the discussions were done under several headings comprising of: i. Military, ii. Civilian; iii. nature of Politics; iv. Institutional problems and v. Corruption and many others. The paper analyzed and discussed each of the problems exclusively on the basis of information gathered from secondary sources and documents and proceeding of information gathered from secondary sources and suggesting some categorical imperative which are crucial and necessary for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. After carefully reviewing the literature and weighing all the odds against each other, it was discovered that more weight appears to be on the side of the military having ruled the country for twenty nine years out of her forty-one years of existence. On the basis of this observation, the paper recommended that more than anything else, the military must be insulated and permanently incapacitated from politics.

The paper therefore concluded that on the one hand the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria depends largely on the extent to which the military can physically and psychologically withdraw from politics and governance and keep to their professional role. And on the other hand, the consolidation of democracy also depends on the ability of political actors to keep to the rules, provision of constitutional safeguards for minority groups, the civil society and the press and the ability of the polity to reduce the level of poverty and make the economic conditions better for the masses.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria has not been left out in the ongoing continental race for democratization. Indeed, Nigeria had in the past made several attempts to consolidate democracy (in the years 1960, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1998 and 1999) but several multidimensional problems have forestalled these efforts. Democracy was entrenched in the year 1960 and by 1966 it had derailed and this led to the military coup of January 1966. Again, in 1979 a democratic government was installed but by 1983 there was a nationwide crack in the democratic structures which eventually led to the military takeover in the December, 1983 coup d'etat. Between 1983 and 1998, all efforts to entrench democracy failed as a result of the excessive experimentations the military were performing with their opened democratic transition programmes. It was only recently, in May 1999 that a successful transition programme was experienced which brought the present civilian regime to power. It is therefore an irony of fate that Nigeria which had in the past helped some African nations like South Africa, Liberia and lately Sierra Leone to democratize is finding it difficult to install a stable democracy within her frontiers.

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The objective of this paper is to identify and discuss the problems militating against the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria with a view to offer possible suggestions on how to alleviate these problems, in short, we shall suggest some categorical imperatives for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria bearing in mind the fact that the social sciences have the unenviable task of making human societies a better place for mankind.

In the main, the paper is in four parts. The first addresses the concept of democracy, while the second has to do with the identification of problems militating against the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The third discusses and suggests some categorical imperatives for the consolidation of democracy while the fourth and the last are the conclusion.

### **The Concept of Democracy**

It is by no means a simple task to give a coherent or universally acceptable definition of the concept democracy. This is because democracy is a value laden concept with many of the definitions given by scholars having ideological underpinnings. There is thus the problem of the dilemma of correspondence in political discourse about the definition of democracy. Even though scholars do not agree on what democracy is, but there seems to be agreement on what it is not. That democracy is not autocracy, authoritarianism or dictatorship is widely accepted. This notwithstanding, we shall provide two definitions here for the purpose of this paper which in actual fact does not intend to go into arguments about the conceptual clarifications of democracy.

Appadorai (1975) defined democracy as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves. According to Giddens (1996), democracy is a political system that allows the citizens to participate in political decision-making, or to elect representatives to government bodies. What exactly does democracy as a concept entail? According to Nzongola - Ntalaja (1997), as a universal form of rule with specific manifestations in time and space. Democracy is a political concept founded on three underlying ideas, namely, democracy as a value, a process and a practice.

#### **1. Democracy as a Moral Imperative**

Democracy is above all a moral value or imperative, that is, a basic human need, a necessity, and therefore a political demand of all freedom loving human beings. What, then, is this imperative? It is basically a permanent aspiration of human beings for freedom, for a better social and political order, one that is more human and more or less egalitarian. This is a sociological fact because in all human societies, people always feel the need to improve their material conditions of life as well as to feel freer - whatever the situation might be. This need becomes a necessity, or even a political demand for a new social project, when their situation deteriorates, or when they are in a period of crisis. It should also be emphasized that as a moral imperative, democracy implies tolerance for all sorts of diversity, including physical differences among people. Today, moral decadence, the institutionalization of corruption, together with the destruction of the economic and social fabric of Nigeria by post-colonial dictators, has compelled all freedom loving people to rise up in a new social movement for the entrenchment and consolidation of democracy. The struggle for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria today is thus a moral imperative.

#### **2. Democracy as a Social Process**

Like any human construction, democracy is never perfect. It is a continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental rights of the human rights and civil liberties for all. By this we mean

- (a) the fundamental rights of the human person to life and security;
- (b) freedom of religion, assembly, expression, press, association, etc.
- (c) economic, social and cultural rights – the idea here being that
- (d) the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs through free, transparent and democratic elections, through decentralized government structures; and through non-governmental organizations, (NGOs). This implies the right to organise freely, political and trade union, pluralism, and the independence of the organisations of civil society from the state,
- (e) Finally, the right of people to change a government that no longer serves their interest, or the right to revolution. The second notion associated with the concept of democracy as political practice has to do with the existence of institutions and procedures of government which are compatible with democratic principles. As a form of rule based on the consent of the governed, democracy requires those institutions likely to help the people fulfil their deepest aspiration, while maximizing their presence in the political space. In this sense, democracy is inconceivable without free and fair elections, representative government, and an independent judicial arm. Again, these institutions are not likely to perform effectively in the absence of a vibrant civil society and a free press.

### **Statement of the Problem**

"Few years before the 21st Century, there was some inexplicable concern of many statesmen and important world bodies for all nations to adopt democracy as a form of government. Although in most countries inequality is entrenched in the socio-political system, yet the spokesmen insist that life of men on earth will be greatly improved morally, physically and mentally if all people live under democratic government" (Erne Awa, 1997).

From the above quotation from Awa, one can easily discern the position of this paper. From it, the imperative need for the consolidation of democracy is clearly demonstrated and articulated. The logical questions that readily come to mind now are;

1. Why is it important that democracy should be consolidated in any nation? Or put differently, why is democratic consolidation a necessity?
2. What are the problems militating against the consolidation of democracy and,
3. How can these problems be alleviated?

These and other related questions will be the focus of attention in this study. Mainwaring (1992), Nzangola - Ntalaja (1997) and many other scholars of repute have come up with the thesis that there is high correlation between the level of economic development and the consolidation of democracy. These scholars argued that most of the nations that are experiencing high level socio-economic development are the ones in which democracy have been consolidated.

The second development is the increased intellectual interest in and commitment to democracy. Intellectuals have expressed more interest in writing about and supporting democracy than ever before. In previous democratic periods, many intellectuals remained indifferent or even hostile to liberal democracy. After suffering horrendous persecutions, witnessing the deaths of friends and colleagues, and

experiencing the palpable reduction of forms of sociability during the past wave of military dictatorship, intellectuals became convinced of the desirability of democracy.

From these two premises and the foregoing discussions^ there is thus the clear cut need to focus on the problems militating against democratic consolidation with a view to suggesting some categorical imperatives needed to alleviate these problems. We will now proceed by reviewing the literature relevant to the subject matter of this paper.

### The Literature

In general, the review of the literature on the issue of democratic consolidation shows that it is a multidimensional problem and which is not unique to Nigerian alone. According to Diamond (1999) in many of the third - wave democracies, competitive elections do not ensure liberty, responsiveness, and a rule of law. To varying but often alarming degrees, human rights are flagrantly abused; ethnic and other minorities suffer not only discrimination but murderous violence; power judicial systems are thoroughly corrupt. In such countries, democracy will not become broadly valued, and thus consolidated, unless it also becomes more liberal, transparent and institutional.

The first problem militating against the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria has to do with the military. Nigeria's perennial straggle and efforts to democratize has been hindered by some daunting challenges like persistent ethnic and regional tensions, growing religious conflicts, shallow political institutions, a deeply depressed economy but none is more intractable and more threatening to the consolidation of democracy than the military. (Oyadere 1994; Fawole 1994; and Onunaim 1998). Out of the forty years of Nigeria's existence, twenty nine years have been spent under military rule. This is shown in the table below.

**Table showing the lumber Of Years of Civilian and Military Rules in Nigeria since independence**

Years	Period	Type of Regime	Number of Years Spent in Office
1960- 1966	01/16/60- 15/01/66	Civilian	06
1966- 1979	15/01/66-01/10/79	Military	13
1979- 1983	01/10/79-31/12/83	Civilian	04
1983 - 1999	31/12/83-29/05/99	Military	16
1999-2000	29/05/99 - date	Civilian	01
<i>Total Number of Years of Military Rule 29 (72.5%)</i>			

What is worrisome in the consolidation of democracy is the capacity, readiness and willingness of the military to subvert, hijack or domesticate the process. The propensity of the military subverting the democratic processes is legally as it has become a tradition and a norm, according to Fawole (1994) the military is the main attention here because so far it had been only corporate or institutional group that intervenes in governance with such remarkable popularity, precision and success. Its unique possession of the means of warfare and organized presence make it a danger to contend with. Afterall, it is quite easy for the military to overthrow a civilian regime because of the means of warfare at their disposal, while it is very difficult is probably impractical for the civilian to throw a military regime. The logical question that readily comes to mind of the reader at this juncture is how, in what ways does military

intervention work consist the consolidation of democracy. First is tradition of military readiness to derail democratic experiments each time democracy is on. Coupled with this is the fact that each time the military comes to power, all the democratic structure that they met in place and in operation are usually dismantled. These include - political parties, electoral bodies, suspension of the constitution, dissolution of the parliament and others. This has been the tradition and the trend in Nigeria since the first military coup of 1966 and the subsequent ones in 1983 and 1993. The whole process is now a circle; the military comes to power dismantle all democratic structures in place-initiates a new one then hands over to civilian comes round again dismantles the democratic structures again hands over to civilian then strikes again. The whole process has now become a repetitive one which does neither anyone or the society any good. It is one step forward, one step backward, the polity still finds itself in the same position.

Secondly, the military are not trained in the art of politics and governance but in the art of warfare, that is to kill and to defend. Their expertise is not in governance and as such their involvements in politics is nothing but a misadventure, an aberration. So the military cannot be expected to give or midwife what they do not know nor possess. No wonder military rules are characterized by widespread abuse of human rights, dictatorship, tyranny, military bastardization culminating in the ascending of commandism everywhere. Sometimes they rule by draconian decrees which are not challengeable even in the law courts. The Abacha regime is a classical example of the brutality and lawlessness of military rule (Fawole 1994; Jibrin 1997).

As a result of their regular and perpetual dismantling of democratic structures each time they seize power, there is the absence of democratic continuity and stability which inevitably militates against the consolidation of democracy. This is complemented by lack of precedence of democratic governance, and as such there are no democratic standard and precedents which in-coming politicians can emulate. The military has in every way and manner forestalled the existence of democratic traditions and culture. (Maduagwu 1996, and Jibrin 1997).

Again, the military have always been found guilty of excessive tailoring and doctoring of transition programme. The process is usually monitored and censored in a way that is acceptable only to the military and sometimes in flagrant violation of accepted democratic principles. In the end, what is obtained is not democracy per se but a fake version of it.

Moreover, the military having tested power is unwilling to be relegated to the background in national governance. They are used to being treated like lords (the self acclaimed messiahs) and usually find it difficult to adjust to the solitary, rigid, and unprestigious life in the barracks. • Remaining relevant in the emergent democratic dispensation therefore requires a conscious subversion to democratic institutions. If the military is unwilling to be sideline in national politics, it must either hold on to power tenaciously or deliberately weaken the democratic terrain sufficiently enough to prevent the consolidation of democracy. This they do by entrenching democratic institutions and structures that cannot guarantee lasting and durable democracy. Even though the military sometimes hand over power to civilians, this notwithstanding, they find it difficult to withdraw psychologically from governance. And as such they are usually lurking around or waiting in the shadows and ready at alert to stage a come-back at the slightest and next available opportunity,

### **Problems with the Civilians**

Just like their military counterpart, there are so many problems with civilian regimes in Nigeria which militate against the consolidation of democracy and democratic governance.

First, is the fact that many of those who hold elective offices in Nigeria are politicians of low repute and integrity, and usually illiterates or semi-literates. Most of them lack the knowledge of the true workings and principles of democracy and modern politics and as such they cannot be expected to operate and practice what they do not know. To some of them, democracy is nothing more than "buying and selling of votes". And as soon as the elections are over, the social contract between the elected and the people is all over. Whereas, in democracy, electoral victory itself signifies the starting point of a 'social contract' between the ruled and the ruler.

Coupled with the above is the fact that most of our political actors are untested and lack the necessary political experience and exposure. As a matter of fact, there are no democratic traditions or precedence to follow in Nigeria because of the incessant military interventions in governance. Again, many of the politicians are military apologists and sycophants who when they lose electoral contest usually invite the military to intervene and take over.

Secondly, there is the problem associated with the opposition. Among the Nigerian political actors, opposition in any form is seen as a threat and regarded as enmity and not rivalry. This inevitably leads to widespread abuse of human rights, victimization and even annihilation of political opponents. Political contests are thus seen as nothing but wars and the enemy must be liquidated at all costs. Experience of the previous transition programme in this decade does not give any green light that the politicians have imbibed the spirit of compromise and liberty which is quite essential for the consolidation of democracy. All the misdeeds of the 1960's - electoral malpractice, political thuggery and violence are back again. In fact, a new phenomenon has appeared, this is politically motivated assassinations and those in opposition are the ones usually targeted and liquidated.

In practical terms, democracy does not mean disregarding opposition. It does not mean suppressing or silencing it as the opposition must not only be seen but also heard. Neither does it mean thoughtlessly granting opposition its demands. The democratic ideas stipulated that there must be negotiation over issues of importance by all the concerned parties. Conflict and conflict resolution are essential for the consolidation of democracy and democratic governance. This from all indications is not obtainable in a polity where opposition is treated like an enemy, silenced, suppressed, disregarded and even liquidated.

Thirdly, there is the problem associated with the tradition of pursuing selfish and parochial interests while in office. In Nigeria, many of our political actors are 'ojelu' rather than 'oselu'. In literary sense 'ojelu' means people who aspire to elective offices in order to accumulate wealth and enrich themselves while 'oselu' means those actors who are actually out to render selfless services and make the society a better place. Politics in Nigeria is seen as a short cut to power, money and affluence and as such most people bid for elective offices. Invariably most of the political actors fell into the camp of the 'ojelu'. This is the trend in Nigeria because the Nigerian state is a patrimonial and rentier one in which those who are in control of state power and strategic bureaucratic offices use their positions for positive appropriation (Jibrin, 1997).

In fall out from the above situation is that the electorate begins to lose every hope and confidence they have in democracy itself as elective offices are seen as nothing but an avenue to riches. A high degree of

frustration and general distrust of democracy at all levels sets in. This is followed by a general apathy against governance resulting in withdrawal and thus creating the problem of political participation. At this level, democracy is no longer working most especially when the majority of the people are no longer participating in the democratic processes. Democracy necessarily demands political participation at all levels of governance otherwise people begin to distant themselves from it and it will eventually crumble.

Even in the ongoing democratic dispensation, the political actors seemed not to have learnt any lessons from the past. Intra party conflicts which, while the booming crisis in the Alliance for Democracy (AD) remains a reference point. Again, there is the problem between the executive and the legislative arms of government. It has been a cat and dog relationship and they have always been at loggerheads and at each others throat. There are cries of impeachment today, impeachment tomorrow and probe him the next day. This uncordial relationship between the two consolidation of democracy. In a few instances in the past, it was the mismanagement of simple political matters that derailed the then democratic governments.

Finally, a very disturbing development is the tendency among losers, even in those elections that are widely seen as free and fair, to reject the verdict of the ballot box. This is a manifestation of a widely held conception of electoral outcomes as a zero sum game in which the winners get everything while the losers are denied not only access to state power and resources, but also their fundamental rights as human beings, including the rights to earn a decent livelihood and personal security.

### **Factors Affecting Political Participation**

#### *a. Nature of Politics in Nigeria*

The nature of politics in Nigeria has in several ways created problems for the consolidation of democracy.

First is the problem of corruption in politics. In Nigeria, money seems to be the most potent factor in politics. Money is all that matters as elections and political contests are usually won by the highest bidder. This is complemented by the institutionalization of the 'settlement syndrome' otherwise known as 'egunje' in every sphere of life. Thus corruption is now part and parcel of Nigerian politics. Added to this is the 'winner-takes-all syndrome' which makes political contests a matter of life and death. Politics is conceived totally as a zero-sum game, that is, 'your win is my loss' and the winner selfishly manipulates power and all the benefits that come with it. This is what makes the competition for power so intense\* and people are ready to use any means both legal and illegal to obtain power.

This is the more reason why cases of widespread rigging of elections and other electoral malpractices are common in Nigeria. The rigging of election do not usually reflects the wishes of the electorates. People begin to lose hope in the democratic processes as disillusion and cynicism sets in and political participation is pushed to the background. Proponents of the reinforcement theory in psychology argued that an actor is likely to repeat an act if the actor has been positively rewarded for such acts in the past and if otherwise the contrary happens, in the same manner, people will be more reluctant to participate in democracy again if their condition is not seen to improve because their wishes have been overturned hi the electoral process. Apathy and indifference sets in. Thus democracy cannot be consolidated in such a situation or environment.

There is the Iron Law of African politics which is always coming to fulfilment in Nigerian politics. The law states that no government in power loses elections. This is not because they are good or that they usually perform creditably well while in office, but because they usually use the state machinery, the power of incumbency and other resources at their disposal to maintain their hold hi power. This sit-

tightism is a negation of the tenets of democracy as it does not in most cases reflect the wishes and aspirations of the electorate. Furthermore, there is no respect for the rule of law and this is complemented by flagrant disrespect for constitutional procedures sometimes culminating in the abuse of human rights, in a similar manner, equality before the law is not guaranteed.

Political violence has almost become the second nature of Nigerian politics. Nigerian political actors usually engage in bitter struggle and infightings. By their unbridled bitter struggles, they usually play into the hands of the military who are not psychologically disengaged from governance. Political violence manifests itself through both intra-party as well as inter-party feuds. Since party men cannot successfully manage intra-party disputes peacefully, it is not surprising that there tends to be violence in their inter-party relationships. Intolerance and violence are the enemies of democracy and both work against the consolidation of democracy.

#### **b. Institutional Problems**

There are several institutional problems in Nigeria which either directly or indirectly work against the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

First and foremost is the ethnic problem. According to Arend Lidphart (1977) and Powell (1992) it is difficult to achieve and maintain stable democracy in a plural society and Nigeria is no exception to this rule.

Deep social divisions and political differences within multi-ethnic nations have always been identified as causes of instability and democratic breakdowns (Nnoli, 1980).

Although it is not impossible to consolidate democracy in multi-ethnic politics, but the ethnic problem in Nigeria is critical. It has been the main obstacle militating against national integration and the consolidation of democracy, (Atto, 1998). According to Powell (1992), scholars and commentators assert that a strong system of political parties is essential for the consolidation of democracy.

The history of party formation and voting in Nigeria shows that it is done along ethnic lines. It is usual for political actors to appeal to ethnic sentiments in the pursuit of parochial interest. These differences and similarities of language, custom, religion and historical experience are used selectively to define and legitimize particular claims to solidarity and exclusion (Nnoli, 1980). For democracy to be consolidated, the diverse ethnic nationalities must be united and integrated; political power and offices must be used to benefit all and sundry and not to the detriment of some groups. For instance, the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections is seen in many circles as one of the anti-south agenda of the Northern oligarchy to hold on to power at the expense of the other ethnic groups from the South. Since the said annulment, the Nigerian political terrain had become rather more slippery and shaky for the consolidation of democracy. Unless and until something concrete is done to correct the volatile problem, democracy cannot in anyway be consolidated.

The second problem has to do with the economic and social considerations in Nigeria. As it has been argued in several instances (Okunade, 1994 and Mbachu, 1994) that the economic and social conditions in African states are not conducive for democracy. And to a large extent democratic consolidation depends on a sound economy.



Democratic consolidation demands a minimum equity in the distribution of national wealth. Serious imbalance in the distribution of wealth and a high level of shortage in the provision of basic needs constitute a potent economic problem for the consolidation of democracy. Rousseau, an ancient political philosopher, contended that people cannot be free in a situation of extreme disparity in the distribution of wealth. He argued that extreme inequality would 'kill the state'. In a similar manner, Walter Oyugi (1988) argued, "indeed, the whole idea of democracy does not make sense in a situation where a people's major preoccupation is survival..." Complementing this, Huntington (1991) argued that "Poverty is a principal-probability, the principal obstacle to democratic development. The future of democracy depends on the future of economic developments. Obstacles to economic development are obstacles to expansion of democracy."

The economic and social conditions in Nigeria is quite below standard. Poverty, hunger, diseases, unemployment, inflation, economic depression and the like have made nonsense of the polity. Workers are in acute stage of deprivation as inflation has eroded their purchasing power. The gap between the rich and the poor is so wide and continues unabated. The cost of living is unbearably high while the standards of living had fallen to unprecedented levels. According to the Human Development Report (HDR) in 1996, most Nigerians live below poverty line.

Democracy and democratic governance can only be conveniently consolidated in a just and egalitarian society, with full opportunities for all its citizens. Not a polity engulfed by poverty, deprivation and disparity, not a polity where to survive is becoming increasingly a miracle; not a political economy where the basic needs for survival are in a state of acute shortage, in line with this reasoning we submit that no meaningful democratic consolidation can take place in a polity where scarcity and poverty predominate because these do not allow the affected, the opportunity to participate meaningfully and effectively in politics.

Thirdly, there is the problem dealing with the absence of non-partisan and neutral electoral bodies in Nigeria, in all cases, the electoral bodies are usually set up by the ruling government. No wonder, these electoral bodies are sometimes used or manipulated to rig elections and perpetuate other electoral frauds. The 1983 elections under the then National Party of Nigerian (NPN) in the second republic attest to this fact. The elections were widely manipulated in favour of the NPN with the connivance of the electoral officials. 'He who pays the piper dictates the tune' aptly describes the situation, in the end, the results of such elections do not usually reflect the wishes of the electorates.

Fourth, there is the problem emanating from the partisanship of the judiciary. Because it is the government that funds the judiciary and appoints judicial personnel, the judiciary had become an ally of government and a ready made tool to pervert the course of justice. This is common most especially during military regimes when the judiciary are pressurized to adjudicate in favour of the government. This is exactly what happened in the case between the famous musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti and the then military government of Buhari/Idiagbon. The judge later confessed that he was pressurized to convict Fela at all costs by the military government. In some instances, political and sensitive cases drag on for so long in the courts so that justice cannot be done to matters demanding urgency. Justice delayed is justice denied. A typical example is the trial of the widely 'acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993 elections - Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola.

At the long last, the judiciary which is supposed to be the last resort and hope of the common man failed miserably in the discharge of its responsibilities. Again, justice is quite expensive in Nigeria and beyond the reach of the masses. In many cases, the masses are denied some of their fundamental human rights which is one of the cornerstones of democracy. Democracy cannot in any way thrive and be consolidated in a polity without an upright and non-partisan judiciary.

### **The Civil Society**

According to Oyadare (1994) Diamond (1999) and Walker (1999) there are problems associated with the civil society which militate against the consolidation of democracy. Oyadare (1994) contended that the problem in Nigeria is traceable to the heterogeneity and the adversarial nature of the civil society in Nigeria. The civil society in Nigeria is relatively weak, parochial in outlook and divided most especially along ideological lines. Walker (1999) argued that the more vibrant and military the civil society is, the more readily democracy can be consolidated.

### **The Problem of Corruption**

According to Maduagwu (1996) Nigeria presents a typical case of a failed democracy in Africa due largely to corruption. That corruption has for long become pervasive in Nigeria can never be in doubt. This is evidence enough from the reports of some panels of inquiry, and other measures carried out by a number of regimes to stem the evil. Corruption became completely institutionalized during the Babangida regime and reached unprecedented levels during the Abacha era. Maduagwu (1996) contended that democracy cannot be consolidated in Nigeria unless corruption is eradicated at all levels of governance. Indications are that the Nigerian political class, whether the new of the old breed, has not yet resolved to rise above corruption whenever they come to power.

Finally, in Nigeria, the media is not given any clear cut constitutional safeguard. The Press which is supposed to be the mouth piece and organ of the masses and the oppressed has been placed under strict surveillance and censorship. 'Press Freedom' is only guaranteed on paper and not in practice. The military are always found of using the coercive instruments of the state - the law enforcement agencies to suppress the media. There is no doubt that without press freedom, democracy cannot be consolidated in a polity. Freedom of the press is a necessary pre-requisite for the consolidation of democracy.

### **Categorical Imperatives for the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria**

- a. The military has featured too much in the political process in Nigeria and has often abused its power. Following this, the military must be permanently incapacitated and insulated from governance. Everything must be done to ensure both their physical and psychological withdrawal from governance. One way of doing this is to decentralize the army, possibly along regional lines so that they will not have enough equipments and men to overthrow the government in the centre again. At least, regionally based armies will cut the whole army into smaller units and make it much more difficult to mobilize for coups. Obasanjo's recent retirement of political soldiers is a step in the right direction.
- b. The military should be more oriented towards high levels of professionalism and reduced politization. The military should be more socialized with a view to making it amenable to the

- needs and structures of democratic civil society. There is the inevitable to recast the institutional base of the military to share in the ideals of the nation, which everyone aspires to.
- c. Countervailing social forces such as organized civil disobedience and institutionalized indignation should be encouraged to prevent the take-over of power by means other than those provided or stipulated in the constitution. The greatest danger that military governance poses to our polity lies in the failure of the military to break the vicious cycle of succeeding itself unless Nigeria stands up against this trend it may continue indefinitely. A final stop must be put to their usual open ended transition programmes.
  - d. The people must have ways of keeping their elected representatives accountable. Office holders must be compulsorily made to give account of their stewardship before leaving office. From all indications, good governance is one of the panaceas of the problem j. of incessant military intervention. Such good governance according to its proponents would deprive the military of its reasons to interfere unnecessarily in governance.
  - e. There must be constitutional safeguards for reconciling conflicting interests within a framework ensuring a sufficient overall consensus. All avenues must be opened for dialogue.
  - f. The ethnic problem must be addressed squarely and at all fronts with proper constitutional provisions, with a view to preventing the emergence of purely sectional and ethnically based interest and parties. Coupled with this is the inevitable need to work collectively for a true federal system. By constitution, we are a federation and therefore we must operate as a federal nation.
  - g. There must be constitutional safeguards for press freedom and respect for human rights. At the same time, the existing draconian decrees must be abrogated while the Judiciary must be free and independent.
  - h. It is also argued that for democracy to be consolidated, the past-electoral political arrangement for democratic governance must avoid the politics of exclusion. All the relevant political forces must have a share of executive power if democracy is to be consolidated.
  - i. Political and higher bureaucratic appointments must cease to be means to easy accumulation of illicit wealth. This suggests a new political culture in Nigeria which abhors corruption in public life and which ensures that corrupt office - holders are humiliated and severely punished and then-ill-gotten wealth seized by the state, democracy cannot be consolidated in Nigeria.
  - j. For democracy to be consolidate, there must be a vibrant civil society. Civil society advances democracy in two generic ways; by helping to generate a transition from authoritarian rule to electoral democracy and by deepening and consolidating democracy it is established.
  - k. Democracy can harder be consolidated in a polity of poverty, hunger, unemployment, mismanagement and economic injustice largely prevalent in Nigeria today. Therefore, the socio-economic problems must be addressed and alleviated so that the masses are made to live above the poverty line. A poverty-stricken person forgets his or her rights.
  - l. Finally, the political class need to be resocialized on their style of politics and perception of democratic government and that democracy is not just mere voting but signifies the establishment of a social contract between the ruled and the ruler. The political class should be more oriented towards high level of tolerance and embrace oppositions. The political class should be enlightened about the fact that modern politics and democracy is not characterized by violence, chaos, disorder, thuggery, rigging, fraud, hostilities and bitterness. Neither is democracy an avenue for the pursuit of sectional and parochial interest, and corrupt enrichment but an avenue to render selfless services to the nation.

## **Conclusion**

Our main submission and final thesis in this paper is that the consolidation of democracy is on shaky grounds as long as the military have not divested themselves of their propensity for political violence at the slightest pretext. Therefore, any serious effort at addressing the problems militating against the consolidation of democracy must involve the strategies through which the military can be permanently demobilized and incapacitated. The 'red card' to the consolidated of democracy remains the military.

However, it is clear that other problems emanating from the civilians, the nature of politics and institutional problems such as corruption, prevalent poverty are part of the problems.

We therefore conclude this paper by saying that the major obstacles to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria have been the patrimonial and rentier nature of the state, the militarization of society and the determination of the officer corps to stage a come-back to power, the nature of politics, problems of political participation and corruption, the problems of social cleavages and prevalent poverty, minority uprisings, and an ideologically divided and parochial civil society-among others.

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