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Political Culture, Elite Privilege and Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examined the effect of Nigeria's political culture on its nascent democracy. Drawing on findings from a range of historical and empirical studies, the paper investigated how compatible Nigeria's political culture is with democracy's core values- liberty, justice and equality. Findings from a variety of references showed ways in which Nigeria's political culture not only shapes state inefficiency and poor economic outcomes, but also provided evidence of how culture disrupts efforts at national unity and diversity. The study also showed how Nigeria's political culture creates a winner-take-all approach to elections to the extent that wide-scale post-election violence is normalized. Culture also shapes hard attitudes towards the press and suppression of fundamental human rights. In sum, Nigeria's political process is not likely to consolidate or deliver democratic dividends. The paper recommended that for democracy to act as catalyst for development across Africa, political awareness and social mobilization through new media are crucial.

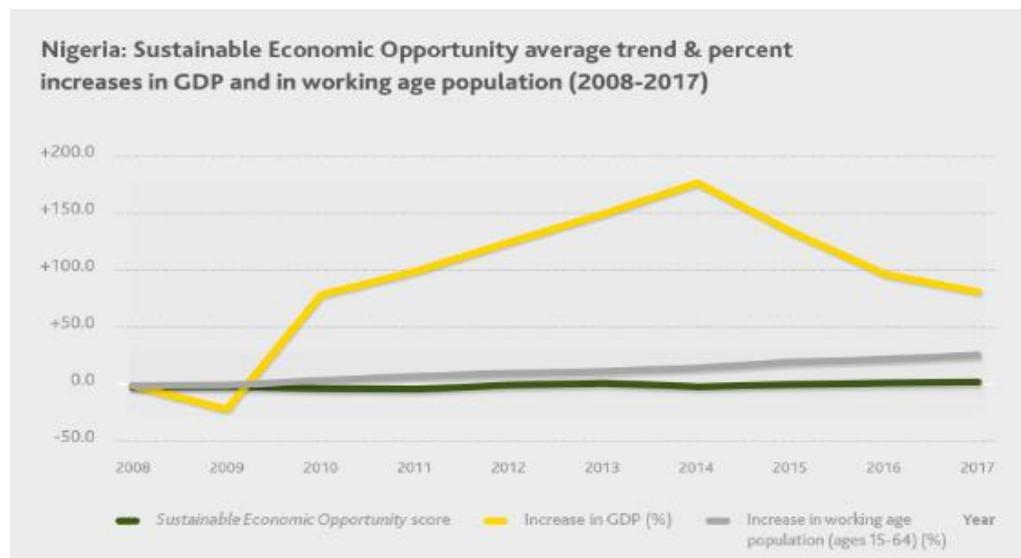
Key Words: African politics, Nigeria, democracy, political culture, development

Introduction

Western democracy in Africa has had a topsy-turvy history since its introduction in 1957 when Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from European colonization. Although democracy displaced pre-colonial African political structures and integrated the continent, in part, with European ideologies; attempts at party politics, universal adult suffrage and constitutionalism across the continent crumbled due to political instability and economic inefficiency. The upsurge of military take-overs in the 1960s disrupted the evolving democratic process with disastrous consequences. Military intervention fueled by ethnic politics in Liberia, Sudan, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, Congo, Burundi and Sierra Leone escalated into public discontent, mass protests and civil wars. However, in the 1990s, a new wave of democratization transformed Africa's political landscape. South Africa abolished apartheid, just as other nations dismantled military governments and single-party regimes. Press freedom and multi-party elections led to separation of power and rule of law.

In Nigeria, democracy was restored in 1999 after three decades of military rule. Democratization was to act as a catalyst for change and modernization. It would fast-track political reorganization, inclusion, and social cohesion; and lay the foundation for national development. Political parties reorganized and reintroduced a politics created by and for the people. The branches of government - executive, judiciary and legislature became fully independent and functional for the first time in almost two decades. Journalists as well as private press organizations no longer faced routine censorship and regime clampdowns. The 2011 Freedom of Information Act (FoI) cemented press freedom and suggested that a significant shift from repression to independence had been made. More importantly, FoI was an important step towards openness, reform and political accountability. This process of liberation was helped by the fact that the economy, particularly since 2009 witnessed growth in gross domestic production (Edo & Ikelegbe, 2014).

One must note, however, that two decades on, these more liberal procedures together with a high economic growth have not resulted in improved access to basic social amenities - security, medical care, education and modern infrastructure (Fernandez, 2018). Efforts at national development are yet to lever Africa's most populous nation from its precolonial poverty and inequality into an economic, technological and political powerhouse with efficient state institutions, modern infrastructures and increased quality of life. Policies (grouped by Garba (2006) such as agricultural expansion and rural development, public sector reform and economic restructuring, national poverty eradication and technological advancement have had disappointing outcomes. Nigeria still ranks poorly on United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) with over 53 percent of her 185 million inhabitants living in poverty; earning less than \$2 daily (HDR, 2017). The World Poverty Clock (2017) estimates that over 90 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty in spite of Nigeria's extensive oil reserves and recent increases in oil output and Gross Domestic Production (GDP).



Increased GDP and average sustainable economic opportunity score in Nigeria (Courtesy: Mo Ibrahim Foundation)

Attempts to dissect Nigeria's modernization puzzle present a problem. Achebe (1984, p.1), noted that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”. The incompatibility of leadership deficit with national development goals has continued to

challenge Nigeria's economic recovery initiatives (Ribadu 2007, Ogbeidi 2012, Gboyega 1986). They argue that the significant correlation between Nigeria's poor standing on the Corruption Perception Index - ranked 144 globally (CPI, 2018) and UNDP's Human Development Index (2018) ranking of Nigeria (157 globally) suggests the extent to which corrupt leadership has slowed Nigeria's development. Other scholars (Uzoigwe 2007, Chete et al 2016) indicated that economic factors such as overdependence on natural resources (crude oil accounts for 80% of national revenues and 95% of foreign exchange earnings) and instability in global oil prices have often resulted in budget deficit, external loans and consequent destabilization of local reforms programs. Attempts to diversify the economy are yet to yield desired results. Changing global dynamics, particularly the rise of China, her manufacturing capacity and the opening of the continent to Chinese investment, trade and partnership has steadily diminished Nigeria's industrial output and increased dependence on made-in-China products. Obadan (2006) and Ekpe (2011) added that policy instability have resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation, which in turn have prevented change and continuity. Inadequate planning, design and execution of Government pro-poor initiatives, particularly those aimed at welfare service delivery. Overlap and duplication of responsibilities by state institutions is also to blame for a top-down policy approach that excludes potential beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of programmes. These policies therefore fall short in terms of local inclusivity and grass-roots participation.

This paper argued that Nigeria's political culture largely shapes regime outcomes and has significantly limited the gains that accrue from representative government. Economic reforms, policy and state institutions are important but not sufficient to guarantee modernization; particularly in the absence of a shared democratic political culture. This is especially so as development largely depends upon the orientations that people have of the political process and upon the political system. Almond and Verba (1963) contended that national development is facilitated by a shared political culture that situates at its core, values of respect for human dignity, equality before the law, resilience, accountability in public office, equal access to opportunities and political democratization. In the Nigerian context, the shared political behavior is yet to nurture, and sustain, over time, a democratic political culture that translate the dividends of democracy to the nation. Policy makers are often preoccupied with policy and economic models; but overlook the centrality of shared democratic values in maintaining a healthy political system. For democracy to serve as a means to modernization, Nigeria needs a reformed political culture.

Political Culture- an Overview

Political culture is the study of regime outcomes in the context of political attitudes and behaviors (Diamond, 1999). It investigates the connection between actors, action and consequences in the political arena. It therefore incorporates both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity (Ketzner, 1988). It includes formal protocols as well as customs, traditions and political behaviors passed down from generations; and encompasses, well-established political traits that characterizes a society (Udim, 2014). Diamond (1984) argued that political culture is the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. Almond and Verba described political culture as the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of the system and thus, rooted equally in public events and private experience. Roskin (2014) stated that political culture is the political psychology of a nation. Political culture therefore is a combination of attitudes and practices held by a people that shapes their political behaviour.

Political culture is potentially a powerful, unifying concept of political science (Chilton, 1988). Almond and Verba (1963). in their analysis of political culture identified three ways through which culture shapes political participation: firstly, they argue that in a parochial political culture (Mexico), citizens are largely informed about their government and take little interest in the process; secondly, in a subjective political culture as in Germany and Italy, citizens are somewhat informed and aware of their governments and occasionally participate and finally, in a participant political culture (the United States and United Kingdom), citizens are both aware and informed and as such, participate in political decision-making process. Almond and Verba concluded that participation shapes outcomes. Studies on the extent to which culture influences regime outcomes in a scientific, cross-cultural valid form by Well (1990) found three broad outcomes: (1) Political culture plays a major role in determining political structures and regime outcomes (Almond & Verba 1963). (2) Political culture plays no role - it follows from structures and institutions (Barry 1970). (3) Political culture and structures affect each other mutually (Almond 1980). Although, formalizing and operationalizing the concept might require new methods, new data, and new theories, the concept itself seemed unproblematic. Political culture today deals with citizen's behaviors in relations to political development and governance in human society. It is one of the most intellectually stimulating approaches to understanding people and politics in a context.

Political cultures matter because they not only shape a population's political perceptions and actions, they also shape regime outcomes. Although political cultures vary greatly from state to state and sometimes within a state, they provide a framework for understanding power, legitimacy, authority and policy; and largely affects a state's democratic development and electoral processes. Political cultures connect to notions of identity, citizenship and nationalism, that is, what separates "Nigerians" from "South Africans", or how Congo differs from Egypt. These concepts have implications on unilateralism, multilateralism and international relations. Economic development or otherwise can also be rationalized in the context of political culture. Inglehart (1988) connected Protestant work ethics to capitalism and economic development, arguing that Western civilization and its attendant global appeal is rooted in a culture that facilitated its emergence. According to Haggard and Kaufman (1995), politics affects economics to the extent that efficient state institutions, policies and governance significantly affect economic outcomes. Haggard and Kaufman argued further that, if well designed, a country's attitude towards politics can propel its economy towards progress even if natural resources are scarce.

History and Politics in Nigeria

Dissecting a nation's political culture is a complex task. A national survey approach is a significant way of sampling the opinions of citizens within a state in the context of their attitudes towards politics. Powell and Bourne (2006) used survey questionnaires to conduct far-reaching opinion polls at specified intervals on national matters of interest related to democratic leadership, policy and governance in Jamaica. Afrobarometer- a non-partisan Africa-based research institution also used questionnaires and interviews to sample the view of citizens on various political issues. Findings from these surveys are conceptualized as emerging patterns or enduring trends of political behavior. A second approach is comparative politics- a study of different political systems. Almond and Verba (1963) investigated the political culture of Germany, Italy, Mexico, Britain and the United States with a particular emphasis on what separates or unites these nations using political culture as a framework of reference. Price (1962) employed a similar approach in investigating the effect of Islamic political culture on economic, ethnic and social development across eight nations. Price concludes that Islam and democracy are not incompatible. These comparative studies delineated defining political

peculiarities, unique to each nation in a comparative context. A third useful method, employed in this study is to analyze historical patterns of events within a polity. According to Formisano (2001), political culture sits within the broad field of contemporary cultural history, studied in a holistic and evolutionary fashion. Formisano argued that history provides elements of comparative studies of era and periods among or between states or within a state to the extent that it becomes possible to discern subtle and significant shifts in political behaviors within a nation or sections of it.

To identify and contextualize key characterization as well as major historical events that define Nigeria's political culture, it is pertinent to examine culture in history. The main elements of Nigeria's pre-colonial political history abound in different studies. For example, Omu (1983) and Osaghie (1988) asserted that three main ethnic groups with different political orientations make up Nigeria. To the North, the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group had established a centralized politico-religious system based on Islam and heavily influenced by long-established Trans-Saharan trade with North Africa and the Middle East. The 1804 Uthman Dan Fodio-led Fulani Jihad that began in Sokoto, spread across the north, overthrowing inheritance-based political systems in favor of Islamic political authority. In essence, the Fulani Jihad transformed the region into an Islamic caliphate with Islam as its only religion and Arabic civilization as its way of life. To the West are well-organized empires- Oyo, Benin and Ife with extensive political and economic influence that stretched as far as Benin Republic and Togo in West Africa. As noted by Johnson (1921), the Yoruba ethnic group believe *Eledumare* (God) ordains kings to exercise rule. Kings therefore exert unquestionable authority. In practice however, they are accountable to people and in some cases, old Oyo Empire especially, kings could be removed by popular uprising (Osaghie, 1988). To the East, the Igbo ethnic group had scores of stateless, segmented, decentralized politically-independent villages that co-existed within the same region. Religion and culture also played central roles in appointing community leaders and village heads. Public outcry often led to removing a community leader, particularly when leaders are inefficient and/or corrupt. Across the West and East, an element of political checks and balances existed, such that no king or community leader had absolute authority.

These three main ethnic groups along with hundreds of smaller tribes and sub-groups amalgamated under British colonial rule to form Nigeria in 1914. Britain did not fully disassemble existing political structures but introduced another layer of authority that superseded local rulers. As far as Britain was concerned, the imposition of colonial rule was essential to consolidate economic gains made along the coast. It was also designed to keep administrative cost minimal. Traditional political structures were used as conduit pipes through which Britain advanced its economic and political aims. Colonialism therefore was a means to an end and not an end in itself. Its success depended on initial and permanent military defeat of local resistance, imposition of a new political system that positioned Britain and its imperial representatives at the top of the pyramid, gradual and progressive introduction of taxes for administrative and economic purposes and finally, trade monopoly in favor of British merchants and companies. To achieve these ends, political, economic and social clampdowns were essential through force, legislations and regulations (Sklar, 1963). Indirect rule was effective in suppressing native resistance but it did not kill it. Local agitation by a few, western educated Nigerians; as well as global events, particularly at the end of World War 2 (1939-1945) and the emergence of the United States of America in global politics led to decolonization and independence in Nigeria and across the Third World.

Deep-seated divisions became apparent after independence that by 1965, Nigeria's First Republic had collapsed due to intense rivalry among the main ethnic groups. These consequently led to military coups in 1965, the Biafra Civil War (1967-1970) and more military

coups thereafter. Military rule was characterized by centralization of power, dissolution of political parties, suspension of parliament, censorship of the press, control of the judiciary, and use of emergency decrees. Pockets of civil resistance, particularly after the overthrow of democratically-elected President Shewu Shagari in 1983 were decisively contained and clinically squashed (Ajayi, 2013). Ten years later, attempts to restore civil rule through free and fair elections were annulled by the then Head of State- General Ibrahim Babangida. These were followed-up by significant clampdowns on civil society. Newspapers such as *Guardian*, *Sketch*, *Tribune*, *Newswatch*, *Tell*, and *Punch*... were heavily censored and in some cases, proscribed. Vocal musicians, journalists and political activists deemed outspoken and radical by rulers were detained, tried and sentenced in military tribunals. However, in 1999, democracy was restored in Nigeria after three decades of military rule.

Nigeria's Political Culture

Two distinct political cultures exist side by side and are often at odds. To the North, citizens almost unquestionably accept hierarchy, class and authority. Religion and politics are so intertwined that they still play central roles in institutionalizing public passivity. Respect for and compliance with political order are enforced by Sharia law. Political society is divided between those born to rule and others, born to follow. Social mobility using education or industry as leverage is rare. Movements that either demand state accountability or challenge policy decisions are almost forbidden (NHDR, 2018). Checks and balances synonymous with Western democracy are perceived as antithetical to Islam; and as such resisted. Manifestations of resistance is long and complicated. It became a nation issue in 2001, when "full" Sharia was reintroduced in 12 states in northern Nigeria. In 2009, a more sinister form of resistance emerged in northeastern Nigeria. Boko Haram, a radical group set up to purify Islam and resist western influence in Northern Nigeria evolved into a terrorist organisation whose attacks consist of suicide bombers and unpredictable armed assaults on both civilian targets and military installations. As at 2013, Boko Haram had carried out suicide bombings of police buildings, Southern newspapers, universities, churches across the north and the United Nations office in Abuja. The group also carried out mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014 (NHDR, 2018).

Resistance to Westernization, aimed at preserving the conservative, pervasive Islamic political influence in the north have legal, religious and political implications. Together, they are diametrically opposed to politics and practices in the Christian-dominated south where the spread of liberal ideas, Western education and press freedom had created a vibrant civil society, often accused in the north as insensitive to Islam and Hausa/Fulani customs.

Tensions between these two dominant cultures account in part for Nigeria's longstanding political divisions with religious, policy and economic undertones. On both sides of the divide, politics means different things to different people. Attitudes towards the State and perceived responsibilities of government to citizens also differ. Although politicians in the north and south share elite privileges; in the latter, public expectations and agitation often create conditions that either compels state performance or creates disruptions. At the national level, these conflictual divergences are accentuated mostly during federal elections when the ethnicity and religion of presidential candidates matter more than their manifestos and policy direction. Pew Research conducted in 2018 showed a wide gulf between Christians and Muslims in their views of the political system. The report indicated that Nigerian Muslims (75%) view the incumbent president- Mohammed Buhari's political party- All Progressive Congress much more favourably than Christians (26%). According to Tamir (2018), "Only 16% of Christians in Nigeria are satisfied with the way democracy functions in their country, while a large majority

(83%) is unsatisfied. Meanwhile, 62% of Muslims are happy with the state of their democracy, and 38% are unsatisfied. Satisfaction among Muslims has dropped slightly since 2017 (when it was 68%) but is much higher than in 2013 (33%), when there was a Christian president. The share of Christians who are satisfied with democracy, however, has decreased slightly since 2013 (22%)" (Tamir, 2018, p.1).

Military rule ended in 1999 but its chief legacy- political passivity is enduring. Years of political suppression as well as grinding economic inequality continue to contribute to public inactiveness. Except for a vocal few and during periodic elections, most Nigerians are mainly uninterested in active political engagement. Evidence of passivity is found in the consistent rate at which voter apathy has increased at a significant rate since 2003 presidential election. The 2015 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) report indicates that an average of one in five Nigerians vote during presidential elections. In 1999, 21% of Nigerians, representing just over 23 million votes were cast; in 2003 and 2007, 23% of Nigerians, representing approximately 30 million votes were cast. In 2011 and 2015 respectively, the percentage of votes cast in proportion to the total population of Nigeria are 13% and 16% respectively. The 2019 presidential election turn out followed the trend of low voters turn out. With a population of close to 200 million, including more than 84 million registered voters, 15.2 million votes hardly qualify as average.

Voter apathy is linked with declining trust in politicians. Nigerians don't trust the political process. According to the 2018 World Economic Forum Trust in Politicians report, Nigerians rank their politicians low. Out of 137 nationals included in the international study, Nigeria ranks 130 globally out of 137 countries polled. Pew Research (2018) showed that "61% of Nigerians were dissatisfied with the political process. 72% said most politicians were corrupt and 57% said no matter who wins elections, things do not change much". These studies indicate that political leadership is based on privilege, aristocracy and benevolence of rulers; not on political institutions, rule of law, separation of powers, limited political authority and accountability. Politics, to a large extent in Nigeria is the exclusive preserve of the powerful, well-connected and wealthy few whose interest do not always align with public interest. These include affluent politicians and former high-ranking military officers like former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Sheu Musa Yar Adua; and current president Muhammadu Buhari. Politics is for "big men"; not for all men. For example, the financial outlay required to contest in elections or run for any political office is beyond the reach of most Nigerians. According to *AllAfrica* (2018), the ruling All People's Congress (APC) raised the fee to stand as a presidential candidate in its primaries in 2018 from 27.5 million naira to 45 million naira (\$125,500). Individuals seeking to run for a governorship post were made to pay 22.5 million naira (\$62,000). Access to political office is a privilege, not a right. Politics and political decision making are the business of politicians, and not of the public. Although, the public expect politics to enhance human development; in reality, such expectations are largely unmet.

Campbell (2018) describes Nigerian elites as privileged. According to him, a Nigerian senator earns slightly less than 480,000 USD per annum but a significant proportion (80 per cent) of the population live on less than 2.00 USD per day. Parliamentarians in Nigeria also receive health benefits and allowances exclusive to them and other top government officials. For example, their medical needs are sourced in the Western Europe and the United States. A case in point is President Mohammed Buhari's frequent visit to London for medical checkup. Egbas (2018) reported that between 2015 and 2017, President Buhari spent more than 170 days in London on official medial leave. Similarly, children of Nigeria's political elite are educated in Canadian, American and European universities. Consequently, Nigeria's political leaders are largely out-of-touch (Baba, 2015). Nigerian universities have become globally uncompetitive.

They suffer from decades of neglect, mismanagement and abandonment. Politicians and elites dictate and are not dictated to by public opinion. They reject demand for inclusive and representative politics and as such, retain power for personalized financial gains. It is often the case that politics is used principally for personal wealth accumulation. According to Anazodo, Agbionu, & Uche (2012), Nigerian elites are unwilling to yield authority, limit their privilege and curb their power for fear of reprisal and economic backlash. Elections in Nigeria, since independence are never free nor fair. Politics is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Another field of evidence lies in the cultural productions that characterize Nigerian society. In sculpture, the visual arts, the novel and poetry we find evidence of deep-seated unease at modern social conditions. The history of these art forms from the earliest days of human mark making demonstrate an increasing dissatisfaction with the imaginative stimuli that the political culture produces and that the human imagination relies upon for stimulus. I will confine myself to two main examples here: Late music legend- Fela Anikulapo Kuti used his *Afrobeat* genre to challenge repressive military regimes as he addressed corruption, police brutality, and colonial mentality in his lyrics. To Fela, music was weapon against social injustice and in more ways than one, he led popular protests against military brutality. Equally, Wole Soyinka, Nigerian scholar and Nobel laureate has written extensively on elite privilege, social inequality and their impact on Nigerian society.

Elite Privilege and Democracy in Nigeria

Democracy in Nigeria is yet to translate into an ecosystem that fosters national development. The quality of the political process as well as the transparency required for democracy to deliver its true dividend are still missing (Wogu et al, 2015). Since democratization in 1999, the executive branch of government at federal and state levels have infringed upon the rights of law makers and law adjudicators to the point that critics compare Nigeria's democracy to semi-authoritarianism. In 2019, President Mohammed Buhari unilaterally suspended the Chief Justice of Nigeria- Walter Onnoghen without due process or prior consultation and knowledge of the National Judicial Council- a body set up to investigate matters of professional misconduct within the judiciary. According to Adegboruwa (2019), Section 36 (4) of the 1999 Constitution stipulates that a citizen charged with a criminal offence must be taken to the appropriate forum with the requisite jurisdiction. The suspension and subsequent removal of the chief justice by the president clearly contravenes Section 153 (1 & 2) that established the National Judicial Council. Flagrant abuse of powers of incumbency are equally demonstrated at state and local government levels where political office holders convert state parastatals and other machinery of government for private political use.

Elite privilege creates hard attitudes towards press freedom. The importance of a free press to a functioning democracy is well documented in literature (Graber 1986). Although press freedom can infringe on privacy, lead to unfair trial in the court of public opinion and threaten national security; its benefits far outweighs the cost. In Nigeria, these benefits however conflict with the elites; most of whom are intolerant to media criticism and uneasy with investigative journalists. In retaliation, reporters deemed radical are denied access to state-held information and also blacklisted. State-owned media outlets (*Nigerian Television Authority especially*) as well as some private operators are not only biased channels of state-sponsored news but propaganda organs of incumbent governments. These outlets are neither free nor fair in their news coverage as they must adhere to official rhetoric. Non-compliant private news organizations are cut-off from lucrative state-run advertisement campaigns and/or monitored by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement arm. A case in point is the recent indefinite shutdown in June 2019 of Africa

Independent Television (AIT) - a privately owned television station in Nigeria, accused of “*airing a presidential election documentary... and the use of divisive and inciting contents from the social media (Punch, June 6, 2019)*”.

Political corruption remains a fundamental drawback to Nigeria’s quest to modernize. As indicated by Ezekwesili (2012), “Nigeria has lost 400 billion USD to oil revenue corruption since independence.” Ending or reducing corruption, in spite of successive government’s good intentions and spirited efforts is not only intractable but symptomatic of a more fundamental problem. The mechanism required to adequately fight corruption are weak and unable to challenge those who wield political power. Chairmen of leading anti-corruption commissions- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) are appointed by the president and as such, are at the behest of the president and other executive power holders. It is difficult, if not impossible for these anti-corruption agencies to act independently. Not only does the law guarantee executive immunity, it is also inconceivable and almost culturally unacceptable for anti-corruption institutions to investigate or prosecute serving political office holders. As a consequence, inequality and privilege have widened since 1999.

Nigeria’s passive political culture has made efforts at national unity elusive. After six decades of political independence, threat of Nigeria’s breakup remains constant today as it was during Nigeria/Biafra Civil War (1967-70) when the Eastern Regional Government under the leadership of Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu attempted to exit the union in 1967. More than fifty years after, claims of marginalization and economic relegation of Eastern Nigeria under the aegis of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASOB) have resurfaced with worrisome populism. In the Niger Delta region, oil installations, pipelines, and drill site are constantly under attack in Delta, Benin, Rivers and Edo states by local’s vigilante groups. They argue, and rightly so, that oil companies operating in the region have degraded the environment and destroyed local livelihood under the watch of the Federal Government of Nigeria. In the last two decades, most rebel groups engage in kidnapping of expatriates and Oil Company employees for money, extortion and oil bunkering- stealing oil from pipelines and selling it locally and in the black market. In the Northeastern part of Nigeria, precisely in Maiduguri state, *Boko Haram* (Islamic State West Africa Province) have carried out sustained terror attacks on churches, universities, government installations, the media and the general public in a bid to resist Western education within the region and across the nation. The group is responsible for the deaths of thousands and was ranked by the Global Terrorism Index (2015) as one of the deadliest terror groups in the world. In 2014, *Boko Haram* kidnapped over 230 female students in Chibok town, Borno state. This attracted global indignation, with the *#Bring Back Our Girls* movement on social media.

Sule et al (2017) observed that Nigeria’s political culture since democratization has had a negative effect on voting patterns and electoral outcomes. On one hand, the process is based on a culture of violence, rigging and corruption. Politicians have often manipulated the electorate using religion, ethnicity, money and other means to divide voters. Political power is central to wealth accumulation; as such, elections are war-like events. It is often winner take all. On the other hand, powerful ethno-regional groups from all six geo-political zones have developed at various times to compete for power. The implications include constant reinforcement of ethnicized politics in drawing lines of regional divisions. In addition to the foregoing complexities, the electoral body- Independent National Election Commission have often been criticized for its unpreparedness and electoral irregularities including inadequate supply of voters’ registration cards, untrained personnel and insecurity of votes (Ali, 2018).

Conclusion

Elite privilege and Nigeria's political culture is incompatible with democracy and its institutions- free press, independent judiciary, periodic elections, checks and balances, sovereign constitution and an engaged civil society. Although, the current political system largely mirrors the United States of America, U.S. political outcomes however differ significantly. While the US enjoys political continuity, credible elections, shared core values and economic development; the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Poverty, insurgency, food insecurity, decayed basic infrastructures, limited access to healthcare, poor quality education are the norm, not exceptions. These are manifestations, symptoms of a culture that is anti-democratic, uncivil and unprogressive. A century of direct political suppression (colonial and military rule) has evolved into a culture that undermines organized opposition from political parties, media criticism, civil society participation to the extent that alternative voices are silenced, discredited and demonized. As noted by Olanrewaju (2015), Nigeria's political culture is still primitive and undeveloped. Nigeria's economic and political future is yet to be set on a firm footing. Nigeria's political culture possess the followings: political corruption, electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganism, ethnic bigotry, elite coldness, and leadership irresponsibility.

Recommendations

To set Nigeria on the path of enduring democratic culture, public literacy campaigns to educate citizens on the essentials of a democratic system, placing emphasis on civic duties and responsibilities must become a priority. Government and civil society, though multiple agencies such as the media, schools, social media must commit to reshaping Nigeria's political culture through public awareness campaigns, mass literacy, public events, and social mobilization. Along with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, civil society groups, religious and traditional institutions, as well as the National Orientation Agency should collaborate in this regard. All stakeholders must act now, from grassroots level upwards.

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