The Challenges of Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Ogbonnaya, Ufiem Maurice

National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS),
Plot 14/18 Danube Street, Off IBB Way Maitama, Abuja – Nigeria.
godscourt24@yahoo.com

Omoju, Oluwasola Emmanuel

National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS),
Plot 14/18 Danube Street, Off IBB Way Maitama, Abuja – Nigeria.
shollcy@yahoo.co.uk

Udefuna, Nnadozie Patrick

National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS),
Plot 14/18 Danube Street, Off IBB Way Maitama, Abuja – Nigeria.
patrickudefuna@yahoo.com

Abstract *This paper examined the nature and dimension of such challenges as electoral malpractice, inter- and intra-ethnic cleavages, religious crises and insecurity, weak democratic institutions and institutionalized corruption, which have confronted democratic governance in Nigeria since the Fourth Republic in 1999. It predominantly utilized secondary data. Findings showed that these challenges threaten the consolidation of democratic formula capable of carrying the Nigerian state out of its endemic cycle of democratic and leadership crises. Despite these challenges, the paper observed that democracy in Nigeria has the prospects of creating enabling environment for good governance. Thus, the paper recommended that for these prospects to be realized, democratic principles in Nigeria must be consolidated and institutions strengthened.*

Key Words*: Democratic Governance, Fourth Republic; Electoral System.*

1. Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century, global economic and political restructuring dictated by the Breton Woods' financial institutions[1] has resulted in the democratization of political systems and electoral processes across the world especially in the Third World Countries (TWCs). This process which began after the end of the cold war, has occasioned the ascension of democracy as a universally embraced governing system for delivering social good and rendering accountability to the people (Duruji 2010: 98). Nigeria has not been an exception. After fifteen years of military dictatorship and authoritarianism, the military in May 1999 disengaged from politics and relinquished political power to a democratically elected government. That was the beginning of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria's attempt at democratic consolidation since political independence in 1960. A decade and three years after, three different civilian regimes have emerged and there have been three successive transitions from one civilian regime to another. Despite these seeming successes in democratic consolidation, governance in Nigeria, especially in the Fourth Republic has been confronted in the main, by a myriad of challenges namely electoral malpractices, inter- and intra-ethnic rivalries, religious crises and insecurity, inadequate and weak democratic institutions, poverty and institutionalized corruption, among others. These challenges threaten the consolidation of democratic formula capable of carrying the Nigerian state out of its endemic cycle of democratic and leadership crises that have persisted since independence (Barrret 2004, 5). Examining the nature, scope and dimensions of these challenges is the central focus of this paper.

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[1] The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (IBRD)

Structurally, the paper is divided into four sections. Section one which is the introduction took a general overview of the paper. Section two reviewed extant literature and located the work within a theoretical framework of analysis. Section three examined in a detailed dimension the challenges of democratic governance in Nigeria while section four drew conclusion and made recommendations.

2. Theoretical Direction and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Direction

Extant literature and scholarship on democratic governance has generated a substantial body of theoretical contributions not all of equal status. A most appropriate way to examine this array of theories might be to consider them along the line of Cox (1991)'s classification of orthodox or "problem solving theories" and radical or "critical theories" (Cox, 1991:276-277). This classification is informed by Cox's observation of the functions of theory generally. According to him;

> *Theory can serve two distinct purposes. One is simple, direct response; to be a guide to help solve the problem within the terms of the particular perspective which was the point of departure. The other is more reflective which gives rise to theorizing and its relation to the other prospective…. and to open up the possibility of choosing a different valid perspective from which the problematic becomes one of creating an alternative world* (Cox, 1991:277).

From the above assertion, Odock (2006) has opined that the line of demarcation between the two classifications of theory can simply be posited in terms of perspective which a given theory seeks to distribution of power or to transcend the existing political or social order. On the basis of these distinctions, much of the theoretical contributions to the contemporary scholarship on democratic governance in Nigeria; the various variants and strands of elite theory as properly utilized by Omodia (2009: 35-42) in his analysis of *Elections and Democratic Survival in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria*; Structural Functionalism as also adopted by Omodia (2010:129-133) in his consideration of *Elite Recruitment and Political Stability in the Nigerian Fourth Republic* and Instrumentalism as adumbrated upon by Duruji (2010: 92-106) in his examination of *Democracy and the Challenge of Ethno-Nationalism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Interrogating Institutional Mechanism;* among others, can easily be located within the Orthodox or Problem-Solving theories in so far as they seek to proffer solutions to enhance the efficiency and the efficacy of democratic governance as it obtains in Nigeria.

Among all the works reviewed, it is only Ekanem (2001)'s *The Dialects of Instability and Underdevelopment in Africa* and Ekanem (1997)'s *Government and Ideology for Nigeria,* which utilized Dialectic Materialism and Crude Marxism respectively as theoretical frameworks that can safely be classified under Cox's critical theory, as they posit the existence of conflicts and contradictions within the African and Nigerian democratic order, and their attempt at the transformation of the order is seen as likely to produce a new order that will necessarily be an amended version of the former.

It is in the light of the above classification that this work adopts the Neo-Marxist theoretical paradigm as its analytical framework. The Neo-Marxist paradigm adopts three basic approaches in its explanation of a given phenomenon namely; history, economy and actors' perception and interpretation of external stimuli. The major assumption and thrust of this theory are vividly captured by Barongo (1981); a leading proponent of the theory. According to him;

> *In a very real sense, the nature of political life in a particular society, the type of institutions that are created and sustained and the peculiar patterns of political processes that emerge are a function of the interplay among three main factors, namely; the condition of the base of society, the history and the experience of the society and the actors' perception, interpretation and response to environmental stimuli (Barongo, 1981: 138).*

Undoubtedly, a proper understanding of Nigeria's political system and democratic experiences cannot be attained without an in-depth knowledge of the political history and economy of the Nigerian state nor can the workings of the political institutions that are created and sustained be understood without a good knowledge of the personal preferences and ideological inclinations and proclivities of those who act on behalf of the state.

Thus, the Neo-Marxist theory as captured above, its short comings and weaknesses notwithstanding, adequately explains the challenges of democratic governance in Nigeria. This is because these challenges revolve around the history and economy of the Nigerian state as well as the nature and character of the political and democratic institutions developed and sustained by the leadership.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

Contemporary scholarship on politics in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general parades a vast array of literature on democratic practices and governance. While some scholars examine democratic governance in Nigeria from institutional prisms; paying attention particularly to the roles of the various democratic institutions in the consolidation of democracy (Bankole, 2009; Zwingina, 2010), others consider it from a comparative perspective; being concerned with the similarities and differences in the pattern and practice of democracy in Nigeria and other states and the influence of contending global variables and imperatives on democratic ethos in various countries (Omeiza, 2010). Other group of scholars see democracy from a normative and legalistic background, being interested in the norms and legal processes in democratic practices such as constitutional provisions and administrative procedures in democratic systems (Adewale, 2009). While these scholars have adequately articulated the institutional, normative and constitutional issues that border around democracy, little attention has been paid to the challenges which confront democratic states such as Nigeria that seek to deepen and consolidate democratic practices and principles.

The second group of literature that set to address this observed lacuna in the literature did not approach the issue holistically. Rather, the various variables and factors that constitute this challenge were disaggregated and considered. Thus, while Ogundiya (2010) examined corruption as a factor that impacts on democratic governance in Nigeria in isolation of other factors, Best (2001) considered religious conflicts; ethno-nationalistic tendencies and weak institutional mechanisms fell within the focus of the issues discussed by Duruji (2010) and Adewale (2009). Class dialectics, elite dynamics and electoral crisis were considered by Omodia (2009). The implication of the above is that this body of literature does not provide in a single volume a comprehensive reading on the challenges of democratic governance as it concerns Nigeria.

These scathing remarks notwithstanding, Oko (2008) and Wali (2002) have within the limits and shortcomings of their work provided a relatively comprehensive account of the crisis of democratic governance and the factors that constitute the challenge. However, the point of departure from the perspectives of the two scholars is that while Wali (2002) focused primarily on Nigeria, Oko (2008)'s scope of coverage extended to other countries within the African continent from where he drew insightful lessons and far reaching policy recommendations and options for Nigeria. Beside this, Oko (2008:15) categorized these challenges into two, namely "domestic challenges and challenges from the international community".

These differences in scope and issue areas of coverage notwithstanding, there is a somewhat unanimity among these scholars that certain of these factors pose more threat to democracy that the others both within and outside Nigeria. For instance, the potency and formidability of political corruption, electoral malpractices, weak democratic institutions and national security crisis occasioned by ethnic cleavages and extreme poverty reverberated in all the literature consulted. This is evident in the listing of electoral malpractice, corruption, ethno-nationalistic issues by Omodia (2009), Duruji (2010) and Ogundiya (2010), while weak institutional mechanisms, security crisis and poverty were listed by Oko (2008) and Wali (2002) respectively.

The import of these recurrent themes in the extant literature is that these factors are fundamental national issues that demand urgent and critical but sustainable solutions if democratic governance is to be deepened and consolidated in Nigeria. However, a fundamental issue not raised in the extant literature is the practicability and workability of the solutions put forward. For instance, while, Wali (2002) has listed among other things; strengthening democratic infrastructure, subordination of the polity to the rule of law, strengthening of party politics, supporting electoral institutions, provision of some social services, and facilitating economic growth; Oko (2008) on his part has listed improving security, revamping public institutions, countering anti-democratic sentiments, fighting corruption, organizing credible elections without clearly stating the strategies and methodologies that could be employed in applying these recommended solutions. Thus, it becomes a cyclical crisis in which solutions for observed challenges lead to another challenge. The reason for this is because the state and its democratic institutions that ordinarily would have facilitated this reform process are considered inadequate and weak.

Be that as it may, the body of literature considered here, has clearly and successfully pointed to us; amidst incomprehensively, and called attention to the challenges which impede the consolidation of democratic governance and practice in Nigeria. By so doing, it has widened the scope of knowledge in this regard and opened up the frontiers of academic research in this direction.

3. Challenges of Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Among the multiplicity of the challenges that have confronted democratic governance in Nigeria since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the following would be considered more worrisome; electoral irregularities and malpractices,

inter-and intra-ethnic rivalries, religious crises and insecurity, poverty, inadequate and weak democratic institutions and institutionalized corruption.

3.1 Electoral Malpractice

One of the cardinal tenets of participatory democracy is orderly change of government through credible, free, fair and periodic elections. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, change of government has been orderly while elections have been periodic. Between 1999 and 2011 three different civilian regimes have emerged and there have been three successive transitions from one civilian regime to another (Obasanjo Regime, 1999 – 2007; Yar' Adua/Jonathan Regime, 2007 – 2011; Jonathan Regime, 2011 till date). The same has been replicated in the legislature. Since 1999, the country has successfully passed through three Legislative Houses both at the State and Federal Government levels viz: 1999-2003; 2003-2007; 2007-2011. However, the credibility, freeness and fairness of the elections that brought about this process have been the subject of thorny debates in contemporary national discourse (Omodia, 2009:1, 2; Tinubu 2009).

Elections in the Fourth Republic have been characterized by monumental irregularities and malpractices which magnitude increases with every election. Institutions of the state such as the police, the military, and even the electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) collude to manipulate the electoral process in favor of certain candidates. Thus, situations where individuals have won elections from prison custody as in the case of Senator Omisore of Osun State and Governor Ahamefuna Orji of Abia State, contrary to the provisions of the Electoral Act, have been witnessed. In some other cases, INEC has conducted elections in states where the tenures of sitting Governors were still subsisting as in the case of Governor Peter Obi against Andy Uba of Anambra State in 2007.

In every periodic election, local and international observers have been unanimous in their reports that the elections generally fall below internationally accepted standards. For instance, the 1999 elections that brought Olusegun Obasanjo to power were said to have been marred by such widespread fraud that observers from the US based Carter Centre concluded that "it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the Presidential elections" (Carter Center and National Democratic Institute, 1999). In 2003, the general elections were widely seen as a test of Nigeria's progress towards more open and accountable governance after four years of civilian rule under Obasanjo. However, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) described the 2003 elections thus:

> *While the voters waited and persevered in the polling stations to cast their votes, the political class and the political parties had different ideas. The voters wanted their votes to determine the winner of the elections, while the political class wanted to corrupt the process and rig their way into elective office…on the whole the result can be said to marginally reflect the choice and will of the Nigerian people (TMG 2003: cited in Adejumobi and Agbaje, 2006:39).*

In the same light, Nigerian's 2007 general elections were widely regarded as a crucial barometer of the federal governments' commitment to the notion of democratic consolidation, but according to Human Rights Watch;

> *The polls marked a dramatic step backwards, even when measured against the dismal standard set by the 2003 election. Electoral officials alongside the very government agencies charged with ensuring the credibility of the polls were accused of reducing the elections to a violent and fraud ridden farce (Human Rights Watch, 2007:27).*

Indeed, the view "that the history of election administration in Nigeria is a history of electoral fraud and violence" (Ajayi, 2007) is widespread.

Also scholars have observed that this poor electoral system in Nigeria breeds persistent crises of legitimacy in governance. Omodia (2009: 38) is one of such scholars. According to him;

> *In Nigeria, just like most of the countries in Africa, elections especially its freeness and fairness constitute the central factor in ensuring democratic survival. This is because the lack of free and fair elections often tends to threaten the democratic process as a result of legitimacy question. This factor, no doubt has characterized the democratic experiment of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in that there have been persistent crises of legitimacy in governance arising from poor electoral system.*

Apart from being one of the cardinal tenets of democratic process, free, fair and credible elections are central to the consolidation and sustenance of democracy. It defines the degree of freedom exercised by the people in selecting who represent them in government. But this has not been the case in Nigeria as the system is manipulated in favor of certain

individuals and political parties. This history of problematic and controversial election administration threatens the consolidation of democracy.

3.2 Ethnic Cleavages and Security Crisis

Inter- and intra-ethnic rivalries, religious crisis and insecurity also constitute potent challenges to democratic governance in Nigeria. Reading through the works of Best (2001), Duru and Ogbonnaya (2010: 1-9); Adewale (2009) and Duruji (2010: 92-106) one sees these issues fairly handled and exhaustively treated. According to Duruji (2010:92-93), the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 opened up the space for expression of suppressed ethnic demands bottled up by years of repressive military rule. The expression of these demands have resulted in the emergence of ethno-nationalist insurgencies such as the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta region, the renewed demand for Biafra spearheaded by the Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the increasing notoriety of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South-West. This has also resulted in incessant ethnic clashes in the Middle Belt region and other parts of the country such as the Ijaw-Itshekiri ethnic clashes in 2009. There have also been frequent inter- religious clashes and sharia-instigated riots in the Northern part of Nigeria as well as the emergence of the Boko Haram Islamic Jihadists with well known preferences in religious belief and social practices (Eso, 2011). Intra-ethnic cleavages as witnessed in the horrors of Ife/Modakeke and Aguleri/Umuleri fratricidal wars in the South-West and South-East regions respectively have also been the order of the day. These inter and intra- ethnic rivalries and religious crises not only result in the loss of human and material resources that cannot be quantified in monetary terms which occasion untold economic hardship, they most fundamentally breed state of anarchy that threaten the unity and corporate existence of the Nigerian state; leaving those who act on behalf of the state with magnitude of national issues to contend with. For instance, while the militancy in the Niger Delta took a heavy toll on the nation's economy because of its independence on oil for foreign exchange earnings[2], the Boko Haram insurgency in the North has at the last count left over 16,000 policemen, soldiers and civilians, including politicians dead (UNCIRF, 2012; Nigerian Crime News, March 31, 2012). This has resulted in Nigeria being considered as unsafe country for foreign direct investments.

Furthermore, given that these inter-religious and socio-cultural crises occur outside of the confines of the law, they challenge and weaken democratic institutional mechanisms that are meant to check them and threaten the consolidation and survival of democratic governance in Nigeria (Duruji, 2010: 93).

3.3 Poverty

Poverty is another factor that constitutes grave challenge to democratic governance in Nigeria. Unarguably, Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources. This notwithstanding, the nation ranks among the world's poorest. According to UNDP (2009:27), in Nigeria, hunger exhibits its ugly face in most homes where the average citizen contends with a life of abject poverty. Thus, the common man is "alienated from himself as he lacks the wherewithal to afford the basic necessities of life such as education, medical facilities, and so forth".

Expectedly, life expectancy is low compared with those of the developed nations of the world" (Olu-olu, 2008:1; see also UNDP National Human Development Reports for Nigeria, 2011). Drawing a comparison in the incidence of poverty between Nigeria and India, Nda-Isiah (2012:56) submitted that;

> Between then and today (1962 and 2012), India has been able to lift 400 million people out of poverty, just as democracy has also flourished in that country… In the corresponding period, however, 100 million Nigerians out of a population of 167 million have slipped into poverty. Statistically, about 10million Nigerians are in absolute poverty, which literally means they cannot afford the basic necessities of life.

From the foregoing, it can be asserted that life generally in Nigeria is threatened by absolute and abject poverty. These realities are much more obvious in rural areas. A factual indicator is the result of the Harmonized Nigerian Living Standard Survey published by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 that showed that large proportion of Nigerians live in poverty (see Tables 2 and 3). Thus, despite the fact that Nigerian economy is paradoxically growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Relative Poverty Headcount from 1980 – 2010.

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[2] In 2008 alone, it was estimated that Nigeria lost over three trillion naira as a result of militancy in the Niger Delta (See Tawiah, 2012).

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	Estimated Population (Million)	Population in Poverty (million)
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69.0	163	112.47

Source: NBS Harmonized Living Standard Survey, 2010.

Table 3: Relative Poverty: Non-Poor, Moderately Poor and Extremely Poor.

Year	Non-Poor	Moderately Poor	Extremely Poor
1980	72.8	21.0	6.2
1985	53.7	34.2	12.1
1992	57.3	28.9	13.9
1996	34.4	36.3	29.3
2004	43.3	32.4	22.0
2010	31.0	30.3	38.7

Source: NBS Harmonized Living Standard Survey, 2010.

Distributing the population into extremely poor, moderately poor and non-poor, the proportion of the extremely poor increased from 6.2 per cent in 1980 to 29.3 per cent in 1996 and then came down to 22.0 per cent in 2004 before reaching 38.7 per cent in 2010. For the moderately poor, the picture was quite different as the proportion rose between 1980 and 1985 from 21.0 per cent to 34.2 per cent. It went down between 1996 and 2004, from 36.3 per cent to 32.4 per cent, and even further in 2010 to 30.3 per cent. On the other hand, the proportion of non-poor was much higher in the country in 1980 (72.8 per cent) compared to 1992 (57.3 per cent). It dropped significantly in 1996 to 34.4 per cent, falling further in 2010 to 31 percent. Undoubtedly, this has undermined and challenged the legitimacy and integrity of government and the functionality of not just the democratic process but also of the Nigerian state. For instance, scholars have argued that the recent security challenges that have been confronting the country (Niger Delta militancy and the Boko Haram insurgency) are caused by high level of poverty in the country (Awoyemi, 2012; Harrington, 2012). These security situations as pointed out earlier breed state of anarchy that threaten the secularity, unity and corporate existence of the Nigerian state upon which its democratic process is anchored.

3.4 Weak Democratic Institutions

The weakness of the democratic institutions in Nigeria is another challenge to democratic governance. By democratic institutions, we refer to the Executive, Judiciary, the Legislature and electoral agencies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In principle, each of these institutions is constitutionally empowered to maintain a certain degree of independence and autonomy while serving as checks on each other. In practice however, the tendency for the Executive to dominate employing all manner of advantages on its side including the control of budgetary allocations, remains a formidable reality. This dominance and over-bearing characteristics of the Executive is located in the pattern and practice of dictatorship in Nigeria especially during the military era. Bankole (2009) has asserted that decades of military dictatorship has had the effect of eroding constitutional federalism,[3] the erosion of the culture of rule of law, the enthronement of a culture of arbitrariness and impunity resulting in high levels of corruption. This legacy has fundamentally impacted on the power relations between the Executive and the other democratic institutions. The consequence of this has been the existence of subdued judiciary, weak oversight capacity of the legislature and the dumbness of the electoral bodies both at the Federal and State levels.

Assessing the independence and autonomy of INEC and the Judiciary in the Fourth Republic, Omodia (2009:38) has observed that events in this democratic dispensation have shown that the electoral body is not independent of the party in power. This according to him has been defined in relation to the manner in which the electoral body has conducted elections in the way that advantaged the party in power while the Judiciary has "served as a tool for creating political topsy-turvy that undermined the democratic process". Duruji (2010:102) has also observed that the judiciary has

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[3] By its concentration of power and resources in the Executive.

been unable to sustain the democratic process in Nigeria by failing to convict anybody through the judicial process for the several cases of arson and killing that have characterized inter- and intra-ethnic clashes while the legislative institution has proven incapable of interfering decisively in the management of ethno-religious and security crises in Nigeria. According to Best (200:75), the Nigeria Police is an instrument of the state for the maintenance of law and other. Yet, it has repeatedly proved to be incompetent with respect to handling both simple and major internal conflicts, be they religious, ethnic, communal, etc. while the state has failed to prosecute and punish people under the law. This weakness of state institutions, impact negatively on democratic practices and also threatens the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria. As Makinda (2004:20) has observed, "democracy is only possible if the structures, processes and institutions through which the people's will is expected to be addressed accommodate their interests, values and aspirations. Constitutional democracy continues to falter not only because of the conduct of leaders but also because of inefficient, ineffective and deteriorating public institutions".

3.5 Institutionalized Corruption

That political and institutionalized corruption constitutes one of the greatest challenges and threats to democratic governance in Nigeria since the First Republic has long been established as evident in Joseph (1991), among other scholarly works. What is worrisome is the magnitude and degree of its manifestation in the Fourth Republic. The incidence of corruption in Nigeria reached a crescendo in 2004 when a German-based international non-governmental organization, Transparency International (TI) in its 2004 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) report, projected Nigeria as the 2nd most corrupt country in the world (132nd out of 133 countries surveyed) (Akinyemi, 2008: 22). The Transparency International's CPI is the world's most credible measure of domestic and public sector corruption. According to the Index, every single public institution in Nigeria is corrupt and has failed to appreciate fully the obligation upon them to do something concrete about corruption.

In 2008, Nigeria sank deeper into the CPI ranking and has since maintained a consistent low rating. From a score of 2.7 to 2.5 in 2009, and 2.4 in 2010 which it maintained in 2011, Nigeria has been ranked as the 3rd most corrupt country in Sub-Saharan Africa and 143rd out of 183 countries surveyed around the world in 2011 (Transparency International, 2011). It is reported by Transparency International that the level of corruption and other related crimes in Nigeria attract between $4 million and $8 million loss on daily basis and a loss of about $70.58 million to the national economy annually, and that the country has lost more than $380 billion to graft since independence in 1960. According to the report, nepotism, bribery and patronage are so deeply engrained in the daily life of Nigerians that even existing anti-corruption laws have little or no impact (Yishan, 2011). It has been argued that the war against corruption has been difficult to win because the act is perpetrated by policy makers themselves (Olu-Olu, 2006; 2008). A clear indicator to this fact is the US$ 620, 000 oil subsidy bribery scandals rocking the Nigerian National Assembly and the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources. This has thrown up public frustration in Nigeria. The 2011 Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows that the public frustration is well founded.

This frustration notwithstanding, corruption has become an ineradicable part of the culture in Nigeria and continues to threaten both constitutional democracy and the nation. According to Oko (2008:60), nothing enfeebles democracy more than corruption. It distorts governance, provides perverse incentives for dysfunctional behaviour, and ultimately diminishes the quality of life by diverting funds for social services into private pockets.

And like the national economy of the country, democratic governance in Nigeria has not been immune to the damages of corruption. Senator Barack Obama perceptively observed during his 2006 visit to Kenya that;

> *Corruption erodes the state from the inside out, sickening the justice system until there is no justice to be found, poisoning the police forces until their presence becomes a source of insecurity rather than a source of security (Obama, 2006).*

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

From the analysis so far presented, democracy in Nigeria is flawed, problematic and threatened by internal and external variables. However, this does not negate the fact that it is preferred more than military dictatorship and authoritarianism. This preference for democracy is predicated upon the fact that it has, despite its shortcomings, afforded within the period under consideration, opportunity for the Nigerian populace to participate in the governance of their state. This is evident in the following examples;

1. The formation of political parties which has provided the platform for Nigerians to come together to articulate and espouse political ideas and seek political offices. This provided the opportunity of participating in the selection of their leaders and representatives;
2. The institutionalization of the legislative arms of government both at the state and national levels with its constitutional oversight function of the Executive. This has created room for checks and balances for the system.

The implication of the foregoing is that its challenges and shortcomings notwithstanding, democratic governance has provided Nigerians the opportunity to contribute to political and national development of their state. This was not the case in the military system of government that lasted for than fifteen years. Implicitly therefore, democratic governance possesses the prospects of good governance.

4.2 Recommendations

To curtail the observed challenges that democratic governance is faced with in Nigeria and to fully realize the prospects of democracy, the following policy options are hereby recommended;

1. Strengthening of Democratic Institutions

The weakness and inadequacy of democratic institutions is the greatest challenge facing democratic governance in Nigeria. State institutions cannot ensure the security of life and property of Nigerian citizens; they are weak to ensure the credibility of the electoral process; they cannot sanction perpetrators of violence nor does the legal framework hold corrupt private individuals and public officials accountable for their actions. Consequently, the electoral process is vulnerable and is easily manipulated; corruption undermines public confidence in the democratic process while insecurity looms large. This therefore calls for the creation and maintenance of institutions that will uphold transparency and the rule of law. This can be done through vast structural and attitudinal readjustments of the public institutions and public office holders so that they will curtail corruption, insecurity and executive interference and indifference to public goods (Oko, 2008: 35).

2. Deepening of Democratic Principles

Democracy generally is characterized by definite and defined principles. These include, adherence to the rule of law, respect for fundamental human rights and the protection of life and property. For the prospects of democratic governance to be realized, these principles of democracy, must not just be imbibed, they must be deepened.

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