

Vindicating Democracy in Frank Cunningham as the Solution to Nigerian System of Government

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Abstract

Frank Cunningham prospects on achieving good governance is in line with guiding principle of democratic culture in other to ensure the happiness and well- being of its citizens since humans are political animals. He notes that; the challenges faced in formulating a successful democratic theory are as follows; domination by majority, failure to recognize views adequately, decline into cultural mediocrity, ineffectiveness of polices, spread of divisive conflicts, manipulation by demagogues, mystification of rule by officials and other elites, and various irrationalities build into decision-making processes. He also points the danger of appeals to "the people", a "contentless and unstable" concept that has been invoked since the French revolution for manipulative purposes. Democratization implies building – building a stable democratic structure. The concept of building evokes other concepts – solidity, durability, permanence, requisite materials, the builders – civil and structural engineers, the terrain on which we build etc. Only structures built on solid rocks can stand the test of time. These past years many Nigerian states have been building their nations on the shifting sand of social injustice, on the marshes of systematic exploitation and marginalization. The declining middle class, a crisis of quality representation caused by aggressive lobbying, corruption, agitations, tribalism, nepotism, ethnicity, discriminations, religious conflicts, etc are just some of the issues that Nigerian democracy must grapple with today. This work therefore suggests that; the democratization process will last only when the citizens build on the solid rock of justice and fair-play.

1. Introduction

It is experiential fact that the act of governance has become a veritable source of alienation of the people and a means of plundering of public wealth and corruption of social morality. The obligation imposed by the common good of society is blatantly violated mostly by instruments of the state in utter neglect of the core values of democracy. Violence and violations of the democratic linnets should be considered antithetical to the idea of democracy as a political system is central in Frank Cunningham's political philosophy. His prospects on achieving good governance is in line with guiding principle of democratic culture in other to ensure the happiness and well- being of its citizens. Since humans are political animals, we all are tend to participate in every political objective for the purpose of realizing the common good of the society.

Frank Cunningham never shrinks from pointing out the challenges faced in formulating a successful democratic theory, as he identifies such potential problems as follows; domination by majority, failure to recognize views adequately, decline into cultural mediocrity, ineffectiveness of polices, spread of divisive conflicts, manipulation by demagogues, mystification of rule by officials and other elites, and various irrationalities build into decision-making processes. He also notes the danger of appeals to "the people", a "contentless and unstable" concept that has been invoked since the French revolution for manipulative purposes. These problems are still prevalent in today's democracy. The Nigerian society is replete with educated men in variety of discipline who occupy executive, legislature and judiciary seats, and could till steer the socio- political economy of Nigerian to height resemblance of the plethoric-Aristotelian utopian commonwealth of being, but unfortunately Nigerian politicians and government functionaries are often too busy in self- aggrandizement and are immersed in the paraphernalia of office, and so, have little or no time to devote for the building of socio-ethnic condition precedent to the pursuit and achievement of the good end. Frank Cunningham in addressing some political challenges

provides excellent analysis of democracy in politics. He equally presents vivid categories of democracy which will help man live in peace, liberty and prosperity. The purpose of this research effort is to note the essential characteristics of democracy as spelled out by Frank Cunningham, and determine how relevance they were at his time and whether they have any application in Nigerian society.

2. Defining the Concept of Democracy

In defining democracy, we are confronted with the problems of description and aspiration, of not only what democracy is *de facto* but with what it ought to be, that is, with both the descriptive and prescriptive meaning of democracy. The word 'Democracy' is a term that comes from Greek and it is made up with two other words *demos* – People, and *kratein* - to govern, to rule. "Democracy" can then be literally translated by the following terms: Government of the People or Government of the Majority. Democracy, as a State form, is to be distinguished from monarchy, aristocracy and dictatorship. You may have already heard about the most common definition of democracy: 'the government of the people, by the people and for the people' (Abraham Lincoln)? To put it another way we can say that a government comes from the people; it is exercised by the people, and for the purpose of the people's own interests. Thus;

Democracy can be used in various ways, hence the ambiguity of the word 'democracy' is reflected in its use to describe very different political systems. One hears of the 'People's democracies' of the communist world; 'Democracies of the free world'; it was said that Hitler described Nazism as 'true democracy.' Thus the word 'democracy' is capable of being used in many different ways, provoking either good or bad feelings. A UNESCO inquiry on democracy discovered that amid the different uses to which 'democracy' can be employed, there is a high degree of agreement on a broad primary meaning. Democracy can roughly be defined "as government by persons who are freely chosen by and responsible to the governed."¹

Austin Ranney and Willmoore Kendall once conduct an analysis of the usage of the word 'democracy' and concluded that the following attributes are broadly agreed to characterize a democratic system; a. Political equality b. a government responsive to the popular will, and c. rule by the majority rather than by a minority.²

H.B. Mayo further outlines the distinguishing principles of a democratic system in the following words: (1) popular control of policy-makers; (2) political equality; (3) effective popular control made possible by political freedoms, such as speech, assembly, association; (4) decision by the majority when the representatives are divided.³

It was Abraham Lincoln who seems to have provided the brave new world with a working definition of democracy, as 'government of the people by the people for the people'. Regarding this, D.D. Raphael writes:

The essential idea of democratic government is government by the people. Strictly speaking, government by all the people should mean unanimous decisions. But this, of course, is impossible in political matters. Democracy in practice has to mean following the view of the majority. Perhaps Lincoln's addition of 'for the people' means..., that the decisive view, which for practical purposes must be that of the majority, should seek to serve the interests of all even though it does not have the agreement of all; otherwise there is the danger...that majority rule may become tyranny.⁴

Particularly, democracy is a form of government where the views of the majority are represented. Those who are represented, by virtue of majority vote and through their representative, impose their will on the minority. People who prefer democracy to any other form of government proffer to the fact that more freedom is safeguarded and enjoyed by the citizens.

The word democracy originated in Greek around the fifth century. E.C. Demos referred to the common people, the masses, *kratos* meant 'power'. It is a type of governance in which all citizens exercise power and civic responsibility, directly or through their freely elected representativeness. Thus, a true

democracy, that is, a system in which all citizens meet periodically to elect state officials and personally enact laws, has been extremely rare. Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pinning democratic labels upon themselves. Democracy is a household political concept in many parts of the world today, which often reoccurs at various political participation discussions. Any government (civilian or military) now laid claim to it because it sounds as an ideal form of government. However, the controversy surrounding the employment of the concept is a clear indication that it means different things to different people and societies. Provisionally thinking of democracy as the exercise of political power where policies and agents charged with implementing them are directly or individually determined by popular voting, leaves open the question of whether this is the best way or even a good way to motivate government.

In the dictionary definition, democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. In the phrase of Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Sartori conceives of democracy as “the power of the people and the rule of the people”.⁵ Furthermore, A. Appadorai describes it as ‘systems of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly through representatives periodically elected **by them**’.⁶ Schumpeter reduces the concept to the procedural, when he defines the democratic method as the ‘institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals require the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’.⁷ And from the Marxist point of view, as represented in the work of Marx and Engels (1981). The communist Manifesto, democracy connect the dictatorship of the proletariat”, that is to say, majority rule of the common people, the plebeians. Democracy is governance by leaders whose authority is based on a limited mandate from a universal electorate that selects among genuine alternatives and has some rights to political participation and opposition.⁸ Democracy is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional power holders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people. Democracy is government by the people; that forms of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole, and is exercised either directly by them... or by officers.⁹

3. Frank Cunningham’s Idea of Democracy

Frank Cunningham's call for a democratic society and other political ideas were expressed in his work; *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, covering the historical development of the many different forms and the problems faced by each. He provides excellent analysis of democracy in politics and equally presents seven categories of democracy which will help man to live in peace, liberty and prosperity. They include; Liberal democracy, Classical pluralism, "Catallaxy", Participatory democracy, Democratic pragmatism, Deliberative democracy, and radical pluralism.

These theories were influenced by his consideration of classical and landmark figures as Hobbes, Rousseau, Madison, Mill, Hayek, Schumpeter and Tocqueville etc. Cunningham in his liberal democracy, investigates the level of participation allowed by the theory, its degree of egalitarianism, its utilitarian versus deontological justification, individualist and communitarian tendencies, its notion of autonomy and selfhood, the role of positive and negative conception of freedom, views concerning the public and private realms, the role of the state, and the issue of Liberal tolerance of illiberal and undemocratic practices within a society. His classic pluralism expresses the dominant approach in American political theory which is very influential in his time, the clash of interest groups and the need for processes by which to establish social order and stability. Cunningham investigates its views of power, leadership, and political culture in this conception of democracy, and some of the criticisms of its conservative implications. Frank Cunningham's "Catallaxy", is a species of "social choice" theory that takes self-interested individual as the units of social analysis. He takes the term "Catallaxy" from the classical Liberal theorist Hayek, which is now called a "neo- liberal" or "free-market view of democracy. In his explanations, he presents a clear picture of this theoretical framework and discusses its analytical strengths and weaknesses, including both empirical and normative problems with applying its economic account to political activity, including governing, voting and citizenship in general.

Cunningham in Participatory democracy provides his audience with a great deal of theoretical material for reflection. He confronts such questions as the seal on which direct democracy can exist in a viable manner, the role of a state in a participatory system, and the tension between the libertarian and authoritarian dimension of self-determination by small-scale, often relatively homogenous group. Democratic pragmatism theory of Frank Cunningham uses the pragmatic tradition of John Dewey and Macpherson, and stressed on the contribution that "democratic pragmatism" can make to contemporary theory. The pragmatist emphasizes the relevance of democratic values and practices to diverse spheres of human activity. the importance of the social context in which democratic phenomena develop, the fact that the achievement of democracy in any realm is a matter of degree, and the need for a creative democratic response to particular circumstances. Deliberate democracy stresses the centrality of questions concerning public discourse, Justification procedures, norms of reciprocity, and the conditions for free rational and democratic formation of policy. While Cunningham's Radical pluralism which is associated with various post-modernist and post-structuralist theories. His analysis shows that many positions fail to clarify their own presuppositions and distinguish themselves from other views, and that this sometimes results in argument at cross-purposes and verbal disputes. Elements of those ideals of democracy prefigure a political culture which put together response positively to true yearnings for dignity, rights and development of society. In sum, Cunningham explains the main objections to democracy, including the challenges of majority tyranny, irrational decision-making procedures and ineffectual government. His work contains three helpful discussion sections that concentrate on the recurrent themes of liberal democracy and capitalism, democracy and representation and the value of democracy. The problem posed to democracy by globalization may be approached with the primary focus on political institutions. He was set to address the following problems, that the interconnectedness of the world's countries calls for inter-country governing structures, which are difficult to achieve on a large and worldwide scale, and that the global forces impede democracy within single countries.

4. Re-Thinking Democracy for Nation Building as the Solution: The Nigerian Experience

For any people, like Nigeria, just emerging from the abyss of tyranny, the installation of a civilian administration signals a new era in the body politic and forms a base for effective dynamic transformation of societal structures with breed misery, humiliation, human degradation, pauperization, social injustice and inequality. By implication, all vestiges of authoritarianism in the state must belong to the past. This involves leadership with prophetic vision, leadership with a sense of direction and purpose, leadership with courage and inspired imagination, leadership with mass-oriented spirit, charismatic leadership rooted in the fear of God.¹⁰

Democratization implies building – building a stable democratic structure. The concept of building evokes other concepts – solidity, durability, permanence, requisite materials, the builders – civil and structural engineers, the terrain on which we build etc. The warning of Christ has internal validity. Only structures built on solid rocks can stand the test of time. These past years many African states have been building their nations on the shifting sand of social injustice, on the marshes of systematic exploitation and marginalization. Our democratization process will last only when we build on the solid rock of justice and fair-play.

The concept of nation-building instinctively paints a picture of some kind of building with real brick and mortar – the edifice this time being the nation. One often hears the expression that “Rome was not built in a day.” This expression does little to remove the idea of nation-building from the activities of mason with regard to an edifice. A man watched a group of tourists admiring the grandeur of the Sears Building in Chicago. He stepped up to them and said: “Do you know what? I built that building!” Yes indeed, for he was one of the workmen. With that imagery the implications of nation-building could be seen to be that all citizens work together to achieve a common ideal of temporal well-being for all citizens. The people adopt the appropriate means to maintain an internal order as they pursue their ideal; and take appropriate measures to safeguard the community from attacks by non-members.¹¹

Nation-building also involves a mutual understanding between the people and the leadership. With this understanding the leadership will be expected to face up to its responsibilities on behalf of the people. It should be careful to recognize, operate within, and never seek to exceed the limits of its powers. It

must therefore respect the functions and operations of other agencies beyond its jurisdiction. These agencies and societies include the family, the group and the Church. These spheres that do not come under association for the common good.

Talking of politics in Nigeria, a lot of political activities go on and involve a lot of people. Most of those involved wind up as sectional chieftains, or even as self-seeking opportunists. What one sees is mostly cheap, largely uncoordinated, free-for-all, jungle politics of hassle and intrigue. Neither in intent nor in its unfolding does it hold and promise or perspective on any meaningful national scale. As a result, there seems to be little serious thought given to policies and their implications for the progress and growth of the country. There is little evidence of any national goal, and this lack can be borne out the successive military regimes that have afflicted the Nigerian political climate. Nigerian politics is one of acrimony, dissension, division, sectionalism, and political sleight of hand. The staking and getting of money seems to be a primary motivation for most of those who engage in politics in which “politicians of different garb grow fatter and fatter and correspondingly the circumference of their “belt”.

Nigerian politics has had as its permanent feature the unwholesome and unsavory epilogue of vitiation and vilification for anyone who ever dared to participate in it. It is difficult to name a leader or politician in Nigeria that ever escaped unscathed either from indiscretions and foibles of his own making or by the contentious clamourings of other people. The irony is that it is only a matter of time and those tossed out as villains bounce right back in grand style to act as national grand patrons and super statesmen who would feel inspired and divinely anointed to make the clarion call to national discipline and probity of life.

5. Democracy and Majority Rule

Majority rule is taken by the layman to refer to democracy. But this is not exactly the case. Scholars are not agreed over the proper relationship of majority rule to democracy. Sometimes they talk about ‘absolute’ majority rule, which is distinguished from ‘limited’ majority rule. But majority rule is here understood as limited majority rule. Majority rule is taken to be a necessary requirement of democracy. By this is meant that. “although the decisions of majorities.”¹²In fact majority does not mean that there is a single determinate majority formed at a particular time in relation to a particular issue. Majority rule, as a working political principle, is a general way of arriving at decisions, for it assumes that there will be a succession of different majorities on different issues. Thus belonging to a majority rule is not a fixed category. Minority will be able to become majorities on certain or different issues; hence what is advocated is a limited sense of majority rule. This position simply denies that “government can act legitimately to curtail the freedoms of thought, expression and association within whose framework free majorities can form;...”¹³ Therefore, majority rule is not explained in terms of numerical surplus to determine the outcome supported by the greatest number. John Dewey has rightly pointed out that;

The heart of the matter is found not in voting nor in the counting the votes to see where the minority lies. It is in the process by which the majority is formed. The minority are represented in the policy which they force the majority to accept in order to be a majority; the majority have the right to ‘rule’ because their majority is not the mere sign of a surplus in numbers, but it the manifestation of the purpose of the social organism.¹⁴

‘Majority rule’ or what the lay-person refers to as ‘democracy’ is not co-existent with the better or best rule. Henry Maine once stated in his *Popular Government* that ‘the establishment of the masses in power is of blackest omen for all legislation founded on scientific opinion.’ In fact, the great ancient philosophers – Plato and Aristotle – feel that virtue or excellence best resides in the individual or in a select few than in the crowd. Democracy, for Plato, is a degeneration of the third ideal form of government – aristocracy.¹⁵Aristotle recognizes three governments or constitutions that aim at common interest in the ascending order: monarchy, aristocracy and timocracy. Like Plato, he sees democracy as the degeneration of his third-best.¹⁶

6. Analysis of the Decay of Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria is synonymous with deep divisions which cause major political issues to be vigorously and violently contested along the lines of intricate ethnic, religious, political and regional divisions. Issues that raise the most dust are those regarded essential for the existence and the validity of the state.

Opposing and contending assemblages have a tendency to assume an exclusionary winner-take-all approach. These issues include the control of state power, allocation of resources and citizenship. As a result, states with such divisions are disposed to decay evident in their being delicate and unstable because almost by definition, they have very little in common with regard to convergence and harmony which are necessary to reduce the centrifugal forces that rip them apart.¹⁷

Therefore, political decay, breakdown, breakaway, civil strife, civil war, minority nervousness, and violent clashes, all of which would typically be regarded unusual in normal states are common forces or actual occurrences in divided states.¹⁸ Because of a complicated network of politically silent identities, coupled with a history of protracted and seemingly stubborn wars and instability, Nigeria is high on the list as one of the most unstable states in Africa. Since its independence, Nigeria has been driven hither and thither by recurrent crises of regional or state illegitimacy, often impairing efforts at democratization, stability, economic transformation and national cohesion.¹⁹ A peak of the crisis appears to have occurred during the civil war of the 1960s, which began shortly after independence,²⁰ but yet still, it has been on the increase till date. Since 1999 when Nigeria transitioned into civilian rule, the country has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of conflicts and continual political decay. A high level of corruption and the looting of state resources is another serious and ‘pandemic’²¹ problem that makes all forms of conflict and trouble worse in Nigeria. The country is ‘richly endowed with natural resources and high quality human capital’²², but corruption is one of the main reasons for the alarming political decay and underdevelopment of the country. The appropriation of state resources by certain hands makes poverty and bitter anger inevitable aspects of daily socio-economic and political routine. In this sense, though corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria, many sources call it the ‘bane of the country’.²³ And of course, corruption is considered to be one of the main causes of ethno-religious conflicts.²⁴ Poverty and injustice caused by corruption weaken any sense of mutual tolerance, social solidarity or coexistence, while reawakening social hatred, radicalism and violence. For this reason, corruption in the practice of identity politics, is seen as one of the most important issues that has to be resolved in order to cope with the political decay in Nigeria.

7. The Question of Identity: A Problem in Democracy (The Nigerian Case)

From a socio-political perspective, ‘identity’ bears a personal and a social meaning. Processes related to identity are ‘located at the core of the individual and yet in the core of his community culture’.²⁵ Thus, identity can be said to be an individual’s ‘sense of belonging to a group if (it) influences his political behavior’.²⁶ Identity is built into an individual’s physiological ‘givens’ and in social roles.²⁷ Identity is characterized by features such as an ‘emotive tie to a group’, ‘love and belief for a group’, ‘pledge to a cause’, and ‘commitments and duties to a group’ with which a person identifies.²⁸ Today, Africa is laced with some of the most obstinate conflicts, most of them constructed from differences in religious, political and ethnic identities. Religious and ethnic nationalism has led to conflicts about control of state power, unequal allocation of resources, citizenship issues, state collapse, economic decline and ethno-religious clashes.

Historically, identities have played a significant role in the Nigerian political process during the colonial period and in the post-colonial era. During the colonial period, the administrators allowed the emergence and aggravation of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ syndrome, where Muslims were pitched against Christians, Northerners against the Southerners, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo against each other, and so on.²⁹ In this era religious and ethnic differences became prominent factors in instituting and executing socio-economic strategies and applications. Therefore, the differentiating outcomes of colonialism became the forerunner of the socio-economic disequilibrium among the different regions, and then this became an important factor in the stimulation of identity awareness so as to efficiently ‘divide and rule’.³⁰ But, as a counter argument it must be said that internal factors are more determinant than the external ones in creating the cleavages in Nigeria. This is also the case in many other countries.

The Hausa-Fulani and other smaller ethnic groups that inhabit the north of the country are mainly Muslims while the Igbo and the other smaller groups residing in the South East are primarily Christians. Groups lying in the middle comprise a mixture of Christians and Muslims while the Yoruba found in the Southwest are almost half Muslim and half Christian. This Muslim North and Christian South

cleavage enhances ethnic fractionalizations in Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria where Islamic identity plays a dominant role.³¹ It is clear that nearly the entire Northern half of the country consists of states with Sharia law.

Lewis attributes the historical prominence of Islam during the formation of Northern states in the early 19th century to the continued prominence of Emirs and religious authorities in framing identities in Northern Nigeria.³² Lewis argues that a number of principles of ethnicity are used by political leaders and others to frame their arguments as to how things should be accomplished. Hence; he posits that:

First, ethnic identification is presumed to be the most silent and consistent source of social identity in Nigeria. Second, ethnicity is regarded as a central avenue for collective action. There is a common expectation that Nigerians gravitate toward ethnic solidarities as an avenue for political organization and participation. Third, ethnicity is assumed to be a generally destabilizing influence, with particularly corrosive influences on democracy.³³

These principles breed a number of outcomes. Because political competition is played along lines of ethnicity, the resultant 'democratic' but authoritarian government ostensibly has an ethnic character.³⁴ Lewis states that civilian governments supposedly promote the creation of an ethnic politicization and political schism. On the other hand, non-democratic regimes like military rules are usually repercussions from the side of the political elite. In most cases, therefore, mechanisms of political governance are formed on the basis of ethnicity via custom-made patronage systems.³⁵

In recent times, socio-economic and political changes have taken place and transformed the delineations of identities and politics in Nigeria. To begin with, patterns of group mobilizations have shifted. In the traditional models of Nigerian ethnic politics, emphasis was on competition among the country's three largest groups – the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. The minority groups comprising over 250 smaller ethnic groups have often been regarded as inconsequential in political contests. Hence; the issue of identity played out in the political life of the country have caused a lot of problems leading to the political decay presently faced in the country. Tribalism, nepotism, corruption, injustice, poverty, discrimination and ethnicity are few among the numerous infamous terms that best describes the state of affairs of Nigeria today. It is said that Nigeria is practicing the democratic system of government, but a close examination of the daily happenstance in the country's polity portrays a state of anarchy where the corrupt leaders that clinch to power have no respect for the rule of law and democratic accountability, there is no freedom and equality of which Fukuyama says thus;

Modern liberal democracies institutionalize these principles of freedom and equality by creating capable states that are nonetheless constrained by a rule of law and democratic accountability. The rule of law limits power by granting citizens certain basic rights- that is, in certain domains such as speech, association, property, and religious belief the state may not restrict individual choice. Rule of law also serves the principle of equality by applying those equally to all citizens, including those who hold the highest political offices within the system.³⁶

a. Minority Rights

One of the greatest challenges the Federation of Nigeria has faced since independence in October 1960 is the apparent contradiction in its geographical and demographical configuration, otherwise known as the "national question." The British colonial administration fashioned an uneven and lopsided Nigeria Federation wherein majorities and minorities of different shades, categories and sizes emerged. While there seems to be no doubt that Nigeria's ethnic minorities have been sidelined, oppressed, traumatized and brutalized in all facets of national life, available literature on Nigeria's "national question" has overdramatized the gains of the majorities and the pains of the minorities. On the whole, scholarly attention has not been paid to the contributions of the so-called minorities to the emergence of national politics in Nigeria.

Nigeria, like many other countries in the world, lacks a consensus on how necessary changes and reforms are affected. This is caused by the fact that different political parties, religious and ethnic groups

have varying benefits in which case some groups will have their interests met while others will not. This means that tension occurs when individuals who feel that they are deprived attempt to increase their stake of power or wealth or to alter the central beliefs, values, norms and philosophies. In Nigeria therefore, there appears to exist a contentious interaction of politics, ethnicity and religions, which has resulted in an increased sense of belonging and militancy. It is important to note that the general outcome of this is the intensification of numerous ethno-religious struggles in Nigeria. And this intensification can be seen as the main source of ongoing discrimination, subordination and domination in this country.³⁷

The population disproportion when combined with the disparities in the political influence of individual ethnic groups roughly classifies the Nigerian population into two major groupings: the majority and minority ethnic groups. When the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo form the majority, the rest of the ethnic groups are fitted into the minority classification which in itself possesses different degrees of status relative to their size and political influence.³⁸

Hence, Nigeria's minorities have suffered from the absence, paucity, fragility or depreciation of key regulatory or mediatory institutions like an effective and independent press, police and judiciary. The role of these institutions in the Nigerian setting has often been severely circumscribed by inordinate political pressures or partisan obstruction or manipulation. The judiciary, in particular, has not been able to enforce the rights of minority groups in Nigeria. This has been particularly true of the many instances when minority rights have been violated by the state itself. The minorities are aware that it is only under a democratic platform that they can have a semblance of justice because democracy is not only the question of the majority having its way, it is also about the protection of minority rights. But under a dictatorship, nobody really cares (for minority rights) since decisions are necessarily enforced through the force of arms.

b. Discrimination

The term "indigenes" describes native dwellers of an area or people with specific rights based on their ancestry or their historical ties to a region and who have a common cultural uniqueness.³⁹ Indigenes are commonly referred to as "son(s) of the soil" or "landowners"⁴⁰, implying that indigenous people demonstrate three components, ancient bonds (their common roots), lineage (their blood connection), and territory (their geographical location). In Nigeria, the term indigene was created because of the need to guarantee ethnic parity in education and employment opportunities and to preserve traditional ways of life for Nigeria's numerous minority groups.⁴¹ However, the concept has become a powerful means for ethnic exclusion in education, politics, and land ownership because of the increase in poverty and the unemployment level.⁴²

The term "settlers" refers to "strangers" or "visitors" or "non-indigenes"⁴³ who have relocated or settled in a region or geographical location that is not their place of origin. Settlers are referred to as non-indigenes and are most often regarded as second-class citizens because they reside outside their ethnic group.⁴⁴ Indigene-settler mentality increases the placement of ethnic members as leaders who tend to display intolerance, injustice, and partiality in the distribution of resources and to promote unfair discrimination among the minorities.⁴⁵

Hence; indigenes and settlers are the foundations of the stubborn ethnic problems and discriminations engulfing Nigeria.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Gulati adds that indigene-settler problems are driven by the desire to exclude people who possess certain criteria such as being a member of a different ethnic group.⁴⁷ Ehusani asserts that indigenes exploit collaboration and encourage greed and craftiness, allowing the unqualified to gain control of employment instead of the qualified.⁴⁸ Bello supports this and affirms that the indigene-settler categorization promotes mediocrity, overpowers merit, and provides concealment and protection for ethnic colleagues.⁴⁹

From one perspective, the 'failure' of the Nigerian political elite to enact good governments, promote national integration and foster good economic progress through thoughtful and pronounced policies has resulted in massive unemployment. This has in turn led to the rise of communal, ethnic and religious conflicts that are characteristic of the Nigerian politics. Since poverty and unemployment have acted as

the mainstay for various ethno-religious conflicts in the country, an accumulation of pauperized people can end up acting as paid militants. This could be the reason why any conflict in Nigeria is usually characterized by a large number of fighters.⁵⁰ There is an absence of the patriotic spirit in the political leaders who scandalously exhibit tribalism evident in the discriminations in admissions of students into institutions of higher learning, settlement in some parts of the country, employment opportunities, political appointments (Ministers, heads of military/security service chiefs, etc), to mention but a few.

c. Ethnicity

Meanings and notions of ethnic groups have changed over time, although the concept of ethnic originated from the Latin and Greek words *ethnicus* and *ethnikas*, respectively, both meaning nation. Some scholars examined the meaning of ethnic groups and described group members as (a) “people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concerned with the preservation of their type. With very few exceptions, they speak the same language and they have a common cultural heritage”,⁵¹ (b) people who view themselves as “primarily the political community... that inspires the belief in common identity;”⁵² and (c) a group of people (nation) living together who share and acknowledge common customs.⁵³

The Igbo people in eastern Nigeria serve as an example; they are bonded by the Igbo culture that is known as *Omenalandi* Igbo and comprises a system of customs, practices, and traditions. The Igbo values are represented in these customs and traditions by visual art, music, and dance forms in addition to attire, cuisine, and language dialects.⁵⁴ Similar to other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo people promote and advance these cultural practices, demonstrating their bond and love. Ethnicity is seen as the most basic and politically salient identity of Nigerians. This argument is based on the premise that in their competitive and non-competitive contexts, Nigerians tend to define themselves in terms of ethnic affinities as opposed to other identities.⁵⁵ Sadly, even the foundation of Nigeria’s party politics was tribally-oriented as portrayed from the first republic till date. Political parties were formed along ethnic lines.

Ethnic identity and mobilization in the Nigerian political landscape has often resulted in political instability and constant conflicts. A number of uprisings and concomitant mayhem have been reported since 1999 and have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and the destruction of property. In recent times, for instance, the militarization of Boko Haram has undermined Nigeria’s stability and placed the country under constant threat. Hence; ethnicity has arguably, been a cause of conflict and an overall obstacle to economic development of the country. Furthermore, the impacts of ethnicity include; inability to fight corruption, unemployment, politics of division, distrust, promotion of mediocrity and suppression of justice.

9. Evaluation/ Conclusion

Democracy is a cornerstone of Nigerian politics. But democratic ideals, admirable as they are, continue to face many obstacles. The declining middle class, a crisis of quality representation caused by aggressive lobbying, corruption, agitations, tribalism, nepotism, ethnicity, discriminations, religious conflicts, etc are just some of the issues that Nigerian democracy must grapple with today. Humanity’s original sin, according to Fukuyama, is the sin of “patrimonialism,” the tendency of people with political power to extend benefits to close family members as a means of securing loyalty. This is actually the root of all the issues of minority rights, discriminations, corruption, injustices, ethnicity, etc continually and consistently leading to the decay of democracy of Nigeria.

“Much of what passes for corruption,” according to Fukuyama, “is not simply a matter of greed but rather the by-product of legislators or public officials who feel more obligated to family, tribe, religion, or ethnic group than to the national community and therefore divert money in that direction”.⁵⁶ With this primordial feature of human nature in mind, Fukuyama argues that many of the failures of modern governance are a function of weak states, weak institutions, and weak commitment to the ideals and values that provide the justification for “good government” – meaning “capable, impersonal, well-organized, and autonomous”⁵⁷ – and not merely “accountable,” in

terms of responsiveness to key constituencies. Identifying the ills of the erroneous identity politics which he views as a danger to liberal democracy, “the rise of identity politics in modern liberal democracies,” writes Fukuyama, “is one of the chief threats that they face;” and moreover, “unless we can work our way back to more universal understandings of human dignity, we will doom ourselves to continuing conflict.”⁵⁸ There is a pertinent need to cultivate the spirit of patriotism evident in a sincere national identity which according to Fukuyama, “begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of the country’s political system, whether that system is democratic or not”⁵⁹ and would function in a significant way such as; physical security; good governance; facilitates economic development; promotes a wide radius of trust; maintains strong social safety nets that mitigate economic inequality; and makes possible liberal democracy itself...⁶⁰

Fukuyama goes further to uphold that liberal democracy has its own culture, which must be held in higher esteem than cultures rejecting democracy’s values.⁶¹ Amidst our diversities, we can still forge a more inclusive identity that accommodates all for a better and the restoration of Nigerian politics. Hence; Fukuyama observes that; while the United State has benefited from diversity, it cannot build its national identity around diversity as such. Identity has to be related to substantive ideas such as constitutionalism, rule of law, and human equality.⁶²

Hence; there are low standards of democracy in Nigeria due to protracted military interferences in politics. This appears to legalize the application of coercion and violence as tools for social change and for the achievement of anticipated desires and objectives.⁶³ The application of both force and intimidation as a means of settling a misunderstanding has become very frequent and is undemocratic. When this is coupled with easy acquisition of illegal fire arms, violence erupts more quickly and there is more difficulty in negotiating peaceful settlements and thereby introducing anarchy, political decay and increase in demands for separation.

Endnotes

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