

NIGERIA DEMOCRACY IN THE LENS OF MAX WEBER'S POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

¹Charles Nweke

²Johnmary Odinigwe

Abstract

Governance is a function of both the leaders and the followers. By implication, the leaders would be ineffective without the followers. Yet, even when the followers are present, the leaders can only lead the followers successfully with the consent of the followers. Therefore, governance ought to be a partnership, a friendly agreement, between the leaders and the followers. This analysis brings to light the absolute importance of consent to legitimizing leadership. Leadership or governance is tyrannical without consent. This is why democracy is considered to be the ideal form of governance because it prioritizes the consent of the people as a principle of legitimacy for political authority. Max Weber preaches the same ideal in his socio-political thoughts. Unfortunately, the same cannot be authoritatively said of democratic governance in Nigeria, where giant political actors often subvert the consent of the masses through dirty and devious politicking en route to political power. This is the foundation of the crisis of legitimacy in democratic governance in Nigeria. It is this problem that this thesis seeks to address. How is consent related to political legitimacy? Can consent accrue from any other value or quantity outside the will of the people (such as excellent performance in office)? To what extent is democracy democratic if the leaders do not represent the choice of the people? This thesis studies Max Weber's postulations on political legitimacy in relation to democratic governance in Nigeria. It seeks to proffer solutions to the legitimacy crisis threatening democracy in Nigeria vis-à-vis the Weberian standpoint. The thesis finds out that the Weberian standpoint on the three sources of legitimacy (tradition, charisma and legality) is apt. Same can be used to improve democratic governance in Nigeria should the citizens brace up to the challenge of protecting and properly harnessing their assent (consent) by voting adequately during elections. It however notes that traditional legitimacy is at the center of the crisis of legitimacy challenging democratic governance in Nigeria due to the unhealthy influence of tribe and religion.

Keywords: Democracy, Politics, Legitimacy, Nigeria

Introduction

Democracy is commonly defined as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In other words, democracy is a system of governance where the masses have the absolute right to determine who becomes their leaders at all levels. This right of determination of leaders is exercised through participation in periodic elections. This means that for any leadership position to be considered legitimate in a democratic system, it must win over the consent of the majority of the masses. A leader cannot emerge outside the consent of the people. That goes directly against the principles of

democratic governance. Consent and political legitimacy are, therefore, inseparable sides of the same coin. Consent of the governed thus suggests that a government's legitimacy and moral right to use state power is justified and lawful only when consented to by the people or the society over which that political power is exercised.¹ In Nigeria, as in many African countries, the sacred inseparable tie that must exist between consent and political legitimacy seems to have been undone or deemphasized. In recent times, governments, leaders, have emerged who do not seem to enjoy the consent of the majority of the citizens. The abuse of these inseparability of consent and legitimacy in the democratic governance of Nigeria is the primary motivation for the choice of this research theme. In recent times, the Machiavellian principle of the "the end justifies the means" seems to have become the norm for politicians seeking positions of governance in the state. They, therefore, do everything possible to win elections; by so doing, subverting electoral procedures. Electoral crimes such as rigging, vote buying and selling, thuggery, assassination of opponents, identity politics, and all forms of violence have hence become the core features of 'democratic' elections in Nigeria. Elections are supposed to be the absolute means of consenting to any government and hence give legitimacy to power and authority exercised by such government. Since the electoral processes are terribly flawed, the masses (who are the key players in democratic governance) lose both their right and voice in governance. The consequence of this is political apathy, lack of patriotism and distrust for political leaders. Since the people are sure those who represent them in government are not according to their consent, they lose confidence in the democratic process and assume a position of spectators. They see governance and leadership as the property of the political elites that should not concern them at all.

It becomes pronounced that divorcing consent from political legitimacy is one of the biggest crises confronting democratic governance in Nigeria. This is the bane of every negativity confronting governance and political participation in Nigeria. It is the reason why there have been series of military interventions in Nigeria democracy in the past; it will also be the reason for any that might occur in the future. The happenings in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Gabon are instances that give clarity to this possibility. The recently completed elections in Nigeria does not help matters in any way. Despite the sweeping reformations made on the electoral laws by the national electoral umpire, INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission), majority of the citizens still believe that the outcome of the elections does not represent their true consent given on election day. The predominant view is that the INEC was moved by the government in power to sidetrack its own laws in a bid to make the outcome favour their candidate. On 6th September, 2023 the Presidential Election Petition Courts (PEPC) gave its final judgment on the petitions put forward by aggrieved parties against the outcome of the elections. The judgment was in favour of the ruling party's candidate in spite of apparently obvious evidence forwarded against him. The masses, again, reacted negatively to this judgment. The overwhelming sentiment among the people is that the judiciary is in connivance with the electoral umpire to steal the legitimate mandate and consent of the people given

during the elections, and award same to someone that is not wanted. To what extent is democracy democratic when the process is undemocratic? How should a people react to a leadership that emerges against their consent? Is there a democratic way to unseat an illegitimate government when the judiciary (the last hope of the common man) fails to represent the true course of justice? What becomes of democracy in a state where the institutions are absolutely in the control of the political elites? What shall the people do when democracy becomes undemocratic?

These questions and more raise significant worries in this paper. They embody the concern palpable in this paper about the negligence of people's consent as a critical factor that gives legitimacy to the use of political power and authority in the state. The paper hopes to find answers to these concerns as they manifest in democratic governance in Nigeria through the study of Max Weber's concept of political legitimacy. For him, a political regime is legitimate if its participants have certain beliefs or faith in regard to it.² That is, "the basis of every system of authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige."³ Weber posits out that there are three sources of political legitimacy in state governance, all depending on the consent of the people. These are tradition, charisma, and legality.⁴ This paper seeks to indicate how this Weberian perspective could help improve democratic governance in Nigeria.

Weber's Conception of State and Politics

Weber views the concept of politics as extremely broad and comprising of any kind of independent leadership in action.⁵ Weber cites the following as ways one could understand the concept *politics*: "One speaks of the currency policy of the banks, of the discounting policy of the Reichsbank, of the strike policy of a trade union; one may speak of the educational policy of a municipality or a township, of the policy of the president of a voluntary association, and, finally, even of the policy of a prudent wife who seeks to guide her husband."⁶ Weber's idea of politics is not based upon such a broad concept. By the term politics, he points to only "the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a political association, hence today, of a state."⁷ According to Weber, "the political association or a state cannot be defined in terms of its ends. Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force."⁸ Weber suggests that "Every state is founded on force. If no social institutions existed which knew the use of violence, then the concept of 'state' would be eliminated, and a condition would emerge that could be designated as 'anarchy,' in the specific sense of this word."⁹ He admits that force is certainly not the normal or the only means of the state; but force is a means specific to the state.¹⁰

Weber points out that today the relation between the state and violence is an especially intimate one. In modern times, notes that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a

given territory.¹¹ Note that ‘territory’ is one of the characteristics of the state. Specifically, at the present time, the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to the extent to which the state permits it, Weber explains. The state is considered the sole source of the ‘right’ to use violence.¹² Hence, ‘politics’ for Weber means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.¹³ Weber explains further, “He who is active in politics strives for power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egoistic, or as ‘power for power’s sake,’ that is, in order to enjoy the prestige feeling that power gives.”¹⁴ Thus, he explains, “Like the political institutions historically preceding it, the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence.”¹⁵ If the state is to exist, therefore, the dominated must obey the authority claimed by the powers that be.¹⁶

Weber raises the following critical concerns regarding the state’s monopoly of violence and use of power: When and why do men obey? Upon what inner justifications and upon what external means does this domination rest? He replies:

To begin with, in principle, there are three inner justifications, hence basic legitimations of domination. First, the authority of the ‘eternal yesterday,’ i.e. of the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform. This is ‘traditional’ domination exercised by the patriarch and the patrimonial prince of yore. There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift of grace (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership. This is ‘charismatic’ domination, as exercised by the prophet or- in the field of politics- by the elected war lord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political party leader. Finally, there is domination by virtue of ‘legality,’ by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional ‘competence’ based on rationally created rules. In this case, obedience is expected in discharging statutory obligations. This is domination as exercised by the modern ‘servant of the state’ and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him.¹⁷

Weber explains further that “it is understood that, in reality, obedience is determined by highly robust motives of fear and hope -fear of the vengeance of magical powers or of the power-holder, hope for reward in this world or in the beyond- and besides all this, by interests of the most varied sort.”¹⁸ While Weber admits that such legitimations and obedience of the state power based on fear and hope, and even more exist; he avers that legitimation and obedience based on tradition, charisma and legality are the three purest types.¹⁹

Weber turns to another critical question: How do the politically dominant powers manage to maintain their domination? The question pertains to any kind of

domination, hence also to political domination in all its forms, traditional as well as legal and charismatic. He explains:

Organized domination, which calls for continuous administration, requires that human conduct be conditioned to obedience towards those masters who claim to be the bearers of legitimate power. On the other hand, by virtue of this obedience, organized domination requires the control of those material goods which in a given case are necessary for the use of physical violence. Thus, organized domination requires control of the personal executive staff and the material implements of administration.²⁰

Weber explains that the administrative staff, which externally represents the organization of political domination, is, of course, like any other organization, bound by obedience to the power-holder and not alone by the concept of legitimacy, of which we have just spoken. He identifies two other means (by which political organization like the state maintain domination over individuals), both of which appeal to personal interests. These are material reward and social honour.²¹ He explains:

The fiefs of vassals, the prebends of patrimonial officials, the salaries of modern civil servants, the honour of knights, the privileges of estates, and the honour of the civil servant comprise their respective wages. The fear of losing them is the final and decisive basis for solidarity between the executive staff and the power-holder. There is honour and booty for the followers in war; for the demagogue's following, there are 'spoils'- that is, exploitation of the dominated through the monopolization of office- and there are politically determined profits and premiums of vanity. All of these rewards are also derived from the domination exercised by a charismatic leader.²²

Weber notes that to maintain a dominion by force, certain material goods are required, just as with an economic organization. All states may be classified according to whether they rest on the principle that the staff of men themselves own the administrative means, or whether the staff is 'separated' from these means of administration.²³ This distinction holds in the same sense in which today we say that the salaried employee and the proletarian in the capitalistic enterprise are 'separated' from the material means of production. The power-holder must be able to count on the obedience of the staff members, officials, or whoever else they may be. The administrative means may consist of money, building, war material, vehicles, horses, or whatnot. The question is whether or not the power-holder himself directs and organizes the administration while delegating executive power to personal servants, hired officials, or personal favourites and confidants, who are non-owners, i.e. who do not use the material means of administration in their own right but are directed by the lord, Weber explains.

Weber's Idea of Legitimacy

Legitimacy is, and has always been, challenging to define conceptually. Weber's initial, somewhat tautological, description of legitimacy is that it is simply the belief that power is legitimate.²⁴ Weber continues with his conceptualization of legitimacy by describing legitimacy as a normative belief that an authority is entitled to be obeyed- an argument that has continued in modern criminological research on legitimacy.²⁵ According to Connolly, Max Weber's definition of legitimacy provides the starting point for any contemporary discussion of legitimacy.²⁶ In a liberal democracy, legitimacy of governmental action is judged primarily on legal terms. At a minimum, legitimacy entails government action that is consistent with the rule of law. The rule of law requires citizens to be subject to known legal rules and executive accountability to the legal authority.

According to Weber, any system's survival depends on the continual support from its subjects and, more specifically, their perception that the system is "worthy" of voluntary compliance. Existing and acting as a system, or as any organization, is a privilege that must be justified. Anyone who is more favored feels "the never ceasing need" to see his or her position as legitimate and deserved.²⁷ Every system develops some sort of myth that "cultivates the belief in its legitimacy."²⁸ This myth, which could be anything ranging from messages transmitted through marketing materials to a carefully orchestrated story created by public relations officials, serves as a justification of the system's privilege of existing and conducting operations. Weber not only implied that legitimacy is socially constructed, but also that the potential for acquiring legitimacy rests in the citizens' perceptions of the system. In other words, in their beliefs. The myths that are created and cultivated are not necessarily facts and cannot have a legitimizing effect unless people believe in them. Similarly, a system is legitimate only as long as people have faith in its justified right to exist. Acquiring legitimacy, then, becomes a matter of influencing beliefs by gaining acceptance for a particular "myth," making legitimation a strategic process that entails justifications as well as attempts to influence public opinion.

Weber did not go much further in clarifying the myths of a system and how they are developed and used in practice to create and cultivate favorable beliefs. Instead, he directed his focus on ideal-typical principles on which a system's legitimacy may be based, arguing that the basis for a system's legitimacy varies according to the kind of beliefs that support it. Specifically, the validity of the claims to legitimacy may be based on:

1. Rational grounds, resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands;
2. Traditional grounds, resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them;
3. Charismatic grounds, resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person.²⁹

As indicated above, Weber concludes there are three alternative claims to legitimacy: traditional, charismatic, and legal. Legitimacy may reside in an appeal to tradition or the established belief in the sanctity of long-established traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them. Legitimacy may equally be founded on charisma. This is the devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and the “normative patterns of order revealed or ordained by him.”³⁰ Finally, a claim might appeal to rational procedures or a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands.

It follows that Weber’s understanding of “claims to legitimacy” is rather abstract and theoretical. He did not demonstrate explicitly the connection between such claims and subsequent beliefs; rather we must infer from his ideal-typical descriptions that legitimation is an inherent element of successful domination. Furthermore, the type of legitimation differs fundamentally, depending on the basis for which legitimacy is claimed. Legal-rational legitimation is based on laws and rules assuring that rationality is implemented in every aspect of the system and at every level. Assuming that the general public’s belief in rationality is strong – which indeed Weber did – subjects confer legitimacy to a system that works according to a principle that they embrace themselves. In particular, the bureaucratic form of organization adheres to this principle – it is a “pure” type of legal-rational domination. As a system capable of “attaining the highest degree of efficiency,” it is “the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings.”³¹ Any organization that conducts its operations on the basis of bureaucratic structures, therefore, should be able to derive legitimacy from its environments.

Power, Domination, Authority and Legitimacy

In *Economy and Society*, Weber elaborated on the concepts of power, domination and authority.³² Focusing on the right to rule and the principles on which this right could be exercised, Weber was less interested in power, which he saw as an actor’s “position to carry out his own will despite resistance.”³³ Instead, he focused on “Herrschaft,” which “constitutes a special case of power,”³⁴ and which is similar to the English term domination. Weber notes, “To be more specific, domination will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (command) of the ruler or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (the ruled) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct ... occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct.”³⁵ It follows that, for Weber, every form of domination implies some sort of voluntary compliance. The will of the ruler is obeyed because there is an interest in obedience, or at a minimum, a sense of duty to obey, due to the ruler’s acknowledged right to rule. Weber referred to this phenomenon as domination “by virtue of authority,”³⁶ which is fundamentally different from ruling on the basis of power. Examples could include parent-child relationships, religious leaders and their followers, kings and subjects, and the relationship between a formal organization and its environments. The latter is usually not based on giving and

receiving orders, but is nevertheless characterized by some important elements of domination. Organizations commonly seek to “influence the conduct of one or more others”³⁷ through, for example, marketing and public relations campaigns aimed at creating support for or interest in a product or a service, or in the organization itself. However, the attempts to influence potential customers and other stakeholders will only work to the extent that the influenced accept these attempts. This means that organizations depend on voluntary compliance from their broader environments. Weber referred to such compliance as legitimacy. Once organizations have legitimacy, they enjoy sufficient voluntary external support to continue to exist and conduct their business.

Legitimacy Crisis in Nigeria

The Nigerian political ‘leadership’ (past and present, military and civilian) as well as the country’s established institutions have always been suffering from certain legitimacy problems which stems from the nature of its authority, composition (ethnic, religious, regional), intelligibility, visibility, and the way it acts as the *locus classicus* of decision making.³⁸ In essence, the political leaders of Nigeria, both military and civilian, face numerous dilemmas in trying to secure acceptance, support and/or political allegiance. The challenge has been how to construct governmental systems that will satisfy the desire of the states’ constituent and fragmented ethnic groups to have some measure of authority or control over their own destinies and wellbeing and at the same time meet the desire for stability and unity.³⁹ Ogundiya captures the crisis of legitimacy in Nigeria in the following question: What socio-economic policies or political programs could be implemented to ensure a considerable level of support desired and required for political stability, generate high level of political trust and affection from the entire citizenry?⁴⁰ Despite the efforts of successive administrations, the crises of legitimacy remain acute, endemic and seemingly intractable. Hence, Suberu’s argument that “A fundamental feature of the contemporary Nigerian psyche is the deep and profound distrust for government. The dream of responsive and popular government in Nigeria has collapsed in the face of repeated abortion and frustration of popular aspirations by consecutive Nigerian governments, very few Nigerians believe that government can act for the public good.”⁴¹ This high tendency toward distrust for the political leadership is not limited to the academia or the political perception of ordinary Nigerians; members of the political class themselves share the same sentiment. Ayida (a onetime permanent secretary in the Federal Military Government 1975-77) laments; “...The question that worries some of us today is whether or not Nigeria can survive the crisis of confidence, if not one of national identity, arising from the recurring crisis of management and leadership by example.”⁴² Asika, at a more general level, makes a similar observation. He insists that “The problem of legitimacy is the central problem of our time; it is the national question ... all other questions are secondary and arise because of the problem of legitimacy.”⁴³

Several explanations have been advanced to account for legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. A concise summary of the major explanations have been provided by Olorunsola about two decades ago.⁴⁴ These are: the problem of differing political culture among the various ethnic groups in the country as well as the inability of those in authority to reconcile differing norms with another; the problems of differing impact of colonialism which manifests itself in uneven educational opportunities which in turn results in sharp differences in the rate of growth among various parts of the country and the alteration/ disruption in the social stratification of the precolonial societies; the problem of ethnic based political parties which, for the selfish interest of maintaining themselves in power, accentuate sectional feelings and intensify primordial attachments; the loss of idealism, the reckless pursuit of wealth by the fortunate few, and the widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots; a sense of frustration by citizens regarding their future and fortune in the political order (the issue of rigged elections and the absence of freedom to pursue economic activity anywhere in the federation); the politics of cultural sub-nationalism and the politics of regional security; the apparent unwillingness to attack Nigerian problems at their foundation (i.e. preference for patch work has led the country to develop a vicious circle of crisis; and the inability of making national institutions behave in truly national fashion.⁴⁵ These factors put forward by Olorunsola have been used by the students of Nigerian government and politics, though with different emphasis, to explain legitimacy deficit in Nigeria. They are still relevant today, as it was in 1977. A brief examination of the literatures will authenticate this.

The theorists of colonial conquest claim that the crisis of legitimacy forms part of the legacy bequeathed to the African countries by the colonial masters. For instance, Osaghae argues, "The colonial state being essentially a law and order state as was consistent with the colonial enterprise, was built on the monopoly of the instrument but not the legitimate use of force and violence."⁴⁶ While some scholars paid particular attention to the subversion of traditional authority by the colonial policies and its attendant consequences, others stressed the fact that militant nationalism and the struggle for self-rule weakened the legitimacy of the postcolonial state. Such a strategy, to Ekeh "was a necessary sabotage against alien personnel whom the African bourgeois class wanted to replace. By the time independence was achieved, this conception of the state as one to be exploited to further partisan interest had become so firmly established that the leaders themselves found it difficult to convince citizens that the state was deserving of obedience."⁴⁷

Other analysts attribute the problem to both colonial and neo-colonial capitalism, ethnicity and class formation. For instance, Ake argued that the Nigerian bourgeoisie and foreign capital constitute the dominant social forces in the Nigerian state. Their relation is a complex one and it is mediated in an involved manner. There are serious contradictions between the Nigerian bourgeoisie and foreign capital... There is the contradiction arising from the exploitative character of foreign capital which does not help the legitimacy of the Nigerian bourgeoisie (or the political class).⁴⁸ The ethnic theorists pay much attention to the excessive politicization of primordial rivalries and

cleavages. With such politicization, the Nigerian government according to ethnic theorists, has come to depend, “among each tribal or regional group, upon whether the group perceives its interest as advanced or injured by those in power(s). Really, governments are judged *a priori* legitimate or friendly to group interest, not on the basis of the ideologies of those in offices, but on the basis of their ethnic background.”⁴⁹

Agbaje demonstrated that religion could be used as explanatory variable for legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. He maintains that the religious composition of “Nigeria has provided a potentially explosive background for disputes on the nature of the Nigerian state.”⁵⁰ The explosion of which breeds frequent religious disturbances and erosion of legitimacy on the part of the ruling government. Other analysts base their own explanations on the problem of ordered succession and/or poor conduct of elections and inter and intra party feuds. For instance, Ekeh maintains that “succession in any orderly manner is not part of the agenda of statehood in Nigeria.”⁵¹ This, has in many occasions, led to legitimacy crisis in state governance in Nigeria.

Acknowledging the crisis situation in Nigeria, Williams argues that with the dependence on oil, the Nigerian state has been transformed into a rentier state and this according to him, has made the country susceptible to struggle for scarce resources and governing positions, leading to legitimacy crisis.⁵² Turner too attributed the legitimacy crisis through which General Yakubu Gowon was overthrown in the July 1975 coup to intra-bourgeois struggles over the control of oil.⁵³ In Richard’s viewpoint, “the Prebendal behaviour inevitably contributes to a serious crisis in the legitimacy and effectiveness of governmental authorities in Nigeria.”⁵⁴ Few scholars are likely to dispute Richard Joseph’s linking of legitimacy crisis in Nigeria to the prebendalisation of state power and the struggle over the distribution of resources, widely known in Nigeria as ‘the national cake,’ but the facts will always favour those who argue in support of this position. In a somewhat related but different manner Ekeh associated the poverty of legitimacy in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) to the poverty of the moral linkages binding state operations with societal injunctions.⁵⁵

A Weberian View of Legitimacy Problem in Nigeria

Weber notes that the validity of the claims to legitimacy may be based on traditional grounds, resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them.⁵⁶ Traditional legitimacy derives from the continuous cultivation of a belief in the sanctity of old tradition and habit. The system is regulated by a set of traditional rules and norms, giving the ruler authority and his or her government the right to exercise domination. As long as the tradition is shared and the ruler acts in accordance with it, the members of the system are likely to perceive the system as justified and legitimate. New rules can be legitimized only by the claim that they have “always” been there. Traditional authority derives its legitimacy from the sanctity of age-old rules and values. The political leaders are appointed in accordance with, and are obeyed because of, the old

traditions. Tradition creates an order, which can be modified within certain limits; a leader should, however, not overstep those limits or else the legitimacy of his rule will be in danger.

This kind of source of legitimacy has grave consequences for citizens' assent or consent to political power in a highly religious and tribal horizon like Nigeria. Given the almost infallible authority traditional and religious leaders wield in Nigeria, citizens often rely on their insight to decide who to vote or support during elections. Most times too, they rely on these leaders to know when to be critical of underperforming leaders in government. Unfortunately, traditional and religious leaders in Nigeria are often prejudiced in their judgment of national issues and their valuation of the performance of key political actors in government. Most often than not, they make their 'prophecies' and give their support based on subjective sentiments; as Weber would say they allow subjective interests override the object value system of the country founded on the constitution. This negative tendency rubs directly on the political dispositions of their followers who adopt whatever candidates they support and it has damaging effects on governance in Nigeria. Traditional legitimizing is therefore at the fore of the factors that create legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. Such disposition makes some Nigerians less rational and very sentimental because they make their judgment mostly based on primitive factors such as tribe and religion.

What is been said here is that since tradition negatively impacts the disposition of some Nigerians toward politics and state's use of political power; it effectively has a negative influence on political legitimacy in the country. This is because legitimacy is founded on the consent of the people; and if such consents are informed by sentiments that are diametrically opposed to what Weber describes as object 'value system' of a political community, the said consent is therefore anti-nationalism. In the Nigerian context therefore we can infer that traditional legitimacy makes the people make blind political decisions by offer their consent to the wrong individuals who eventually seize the opportunity reposed in this consent to abuse political power, syphon public funds and impoverish the masses. Basically, while this thesis agrees that tradition is a source of legitimacy as Weber enunciates, it is of the opinion that the manner of legitimacy tradition offers or communicates in Nigeria is detrimental to state governance because it is founded on religious and tribal sentiments that are often inimical to the polity. While traditional legitimacy is evident across all parts of the Nigerian federation, it is rife in low literacy areas like the villages. Regionally considered, it is more common in core northern regions (North East and North West). This is why bloc-voting is very rampant in those areas. This is also why people in those areas are most often the last they cry against any government in power, except such a government is not headed by someone from the northern predominant Islamic religion or a major northern tribe. The people simply follow the lead of their religious and tribal heads. Hence, until religious and ethnic group heads begin to be objective in their perception of national issues, tradition as a legitimizing principle of political governance cannot apply favourably in Nigeria.

Charismatic Legitimacy: A Necessity for Political Legitimacy in Nigeria

Charismatic grounds of legitimacy rest on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person.⁵⁷ In this type of “legitimate domination,” a leader rules thanks to the charismatic qualities of his personality. He is considered *charismatic*, because he is thought to be endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least exceptional powers and qualities.⁵⁸ Allegiance of the subjects is directed exclusively towards the charismatic leader. The position of the leader is totally dependent upon the recognition of his exceptional qualities on the part of the subjects. Weber notes that domination by virtue of the devotion of those who obey the purely personal ‘charisma’ of the leader is the root of the idea of a calling in its highest expression.⁵⁹ That is, the call to serve the state and the people as a politician; hence his view that politics is a vocation.

In his idea of “politics as vocation” Weber fronts ‘charisma’ as the fundamental source of legitimation. According to his exposition, the politician is supposed to be charismatic by nature. Hence, for him, politics is a vocation; a calling. Only those who have the calling are able to demonstrate the charisma. This is why he used the prophets and magicians in past civilizations to explain the manner of charisma he refers to while talking about the legitimizing qualities of charisma as a political virtue. Prophets and magicians are not followed or obeyed, or even liked because force they apply to bend the people; the people are simply attracted to them by sheer qualities of their being implied in their charisma. And this attraction is the basis for their love and followership of such prophets and magicians. Weber implies here that the legitimation and followership a politician should have should be as spontaneous as those of the magician and prophet. Should followership should be genuinely based on the good nature, qualities and competence the people see in the politician; not on any material gifts or wealth, as the case in Nigeria where people follow politicians because of his money or some material gifts he offers. Such followership too should not be influenced by tribe or religion. Fair enough, prophets and magicians are followed by people across racial, tribal or even regional divides.

Weber argues herein that politics is not for all; it is only for those who have the charisma. And when those who have the charisma partake in politics or seek governance positions, their charisma immediately shows forth. They gain immediate mass acceptance and followership because of their irrepressible wonderful nature and good qualities and boost the confidence of the masses. The masses following them are sometimes even the ones that push such charismatic fellows to vie for political power. The charismatic politician therefore gains legitimation naturally, almost instantly; without doing much. His nature, his qualities, his disposition immediately communicates competence and confidence. This rubs on the masses who immediately follow his candidacy and engineer support for him organically as it were in the case of the followers of prophets and magicians.

In Nigeria, it can be argued that only two persons have managed to garner the kind of organic support that Weber posits as charismatic legitimacy- Chief M. K. O. Abiola in 1993 and Mr. Peter Obi in 2023. In both cases, the corruption and illegality in the system did not allow the candidacy of these two vocational politicians to see the light of the day. The corrupt electoral system foreclosed and suppressed their candidacy in spite of the massive approval and support they received. However, it must be noted that while Abiola boost his followership using material goods which he distributed to the poor masses, Obi did virtually nothing to garner his following. It is totally spontaneous and organic to the extent that a movement was formed to spear-head his candidacy even without his knowledge- the Obidient Movement. This is charismatic legitimation in its peak. Mr. Peter Obi was and is still the name in the mouth of almost every Nigerian even after the elections; the majority who followed him cannot stop being enamored by his humble countenance, the few who dislike him too still talk about him unceasingly (perhaps worried by the mass following he enjoys). What is notable is that in spite of the mass following Mr Peter Obi and his Labour Party enjoyed, the systemic corruption in the Nigerian stayed found subtle ways to bend the electoral laws against him, and to the favour of corrupt politicians. What this suggests is that, given that politics is naturally supposed to be a vocation (as Weber notes), and that charisma is the fundamental legitimizing principle; charisma will always prove insufficient to give legitimate political power to the charismatic leader unless 'procedural' electoral laws are put in place and followed sufficiently according to its letters and spirit. Charismatic legitimation therefore needs legal legitimation to gain concrete hold of political power.

Legal Legitimacy: A Prerequisite for Charismatic Legitimacy

Legal legitimacy is founded on rational grounds resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands. Legal legitimation is possible thanks to belief in and trust towards an impersonal order, a system of laws, rules and regulations within a community. The rules are explicitly created; they may be established by agreement or by being imposed, on the grounds of being most suitable (expediency) or value rationality (or both) and are binding for at least a part of the members of the organization.⁶⁰ A person in authority is himself/herself subject of the impersonal order created in this way; in conducting his duties, he makes explicit references to the legal system. The loyalty of the subjects towards a leader, politician or a bureaucrat, is conditioned solely by the fact that his position of power has been specified and regulated within the existing law. Thus it follows that the position of power has to be acquired according to the law to be generally accepted and unquestioned. In other words, the legitimacy of political power is dependent on it being legal. The legitimacy acquired in that way is, according to Weber, the characteristic feature of modernity; it is inherent to the modern industrial society.⁶¹

Legal legitimacy principles are therefore a sure requirement for the legalization of charismatic leadership. In Nigeria, this may prove difficult because the principles set to ensure free and fair elections are more at the service of corrupt ‘uncharismatic’ politicians than transparent charismatic politicians. The electoral laws are there, but they do not ensure free and fair elections. In fact, even when the laws unexpectedly apply toward fairness and transparency the chief electoral officer sometimes twists the law to favour some unscrupulous elements. Such were the mammoth electoral crimes that were perpetrated in the last elections where the electoral umpire decides against its own publicized electoral law (on the spot electronic transfer of results from polling units) in order to favour a candidate that was obviously unwanted by the majority masses. Every sitting government is a product of the electoral law. The electoral law is a critical aspect of the Nigerian constitution; it therefore binds all Nigerians, including the president. Unfortunately, this is not the practical case in Nigeria. The incumbent government do everything possible to contravene procedural electoral laws in order to win elections by all means; of course the case of Goodluck Jonathan apart. In such highly corrupt electoral systems as Nigeria’s, charismatic legitimation will hardly gain the legitimate and official consent of the masses through elections, even when the gross majority votes in support of such a leader. The system will always find subtle ways to rig the ballot in favour of the corrupt politician. Hence, the expression by the erstwhile British Prime Minister that Nigeria is ‘fantastically’ corrupt.

What Nigeria needs therefore to harvest the genuine kind of leaders- charismatic leaders during elections is a genuinely independent electoral umpire. In this sense, this thesis is of the opinion that such an unbiased umpire arise in Nigeria except there is a constitutional amendment of the Nigerian electoral order. The INEC chief and the electoral laws must be a subject of open debate to the general public, not one to be decided only by the president and the legislature. That is, electoral laws must be one that receives general public approval. Anything in the law that is not supported by the public must be eschewed. Also, the INEC chief must be decided by the public; he shouldn’t be an appointee of the president or the ruling party. In fact, the elections to determine who emerges the INEC chief should be more carefully organized than that of the president. Same procedure should be applied to electing the head of the judiciary- Chief Justice. In this way, the people would have better control of the INEC and the Judiciary. The reign of impunity in this two critical sectors of the national life will be minimal. Anyone can then contest and win election even without gaining popularity among the corrupt elite class in Nigeria. Once procedural electoral laws are genuinely followed, election results will represent the assent of the masses. Politics, Weber avers, can then become a vocation in Nigeria; a charismatic politician can then image as president of the country. Until then, the likes of Mr. Peter Obi may never triumph at the polls no matter the extent or organic followership they garner.

Conclusion

Nigerian political elites are a bunch of ‘career’ politicians. They are largely a crop of corrupt folk who use dubious means to perpetuate their harmful presence within the corridors of state governance to the detriment of the poor masses. They are not in

power to serve but to be served. In other words, they use the resources of the state to serve their personal wants. This is why political corruption is a theme with undying relevance in the Nigerian sociopolitical space. Some of these career politicians begin as political thugs. They devour the political opponents of their pay masters; then they are eventually rewarded with some political appointment. From there they grow their unhealthy relevance in the governance terrain and rise to major offices such as governor, senators and even president. In all of these, the motive is to loot the national treasury. Sad! Unfortunately, these are caliber of men that wield political power in Nigeria since independence. Nigerians are aware of their ant-people dispositions and corrupt tendencies. They are yet unable to make them irrelevant by voting them out of power because corruption has become 'official' within the polity such that the national electoral umpire is within their control- the judiciary too is no longer the last hope of the common man.

Weber preaches that politics is vocation; it is not a career as is the case in Nigeria. It's a calling. Which means, after your call and service, you return to your original career. This Weberian understanding of politics cuts off the sit-tight syndrome that is becoming the most glaring quality of governance in Africa. These days in Africa, being a politician is now a job! When political governance becomes the job or career of the majority of the political elites, the commonwealth becomes the source of wealth for the privilege few. Poverty becomes the lot of the majority masses. The career politicians find ways to cripple the institutions of the state; individuals become stronger than state institutions. The consequence is the cycles of legitimacy crisis we experience in Nigeria. What Nigeria needs to overcome the challenges perplexing her democratic governance is 'vocational' charismatic leadership. Nigeria as a people must find ways to break away from the grip and control of the present crop of politicians benefiting from the corrupt system in place. A new crop of politicians who are good natured and who are moved to better the lot of the country need to rise up to the challenge of governance.

For this to be achieved, the twin challenge of religious and tribal jingoism must be defeated. Nigerians must rise above the primordial attachment to tribe and religion and allow reason and commonsense to indicate the right path to follow. The bandwagon tendencies of uncritical religion and tribal devotion brings to Nigerians must be eschewed. The sentiment that must prevail and control the thinking and decisions of Nigeria must be those driven by national interests. As a matter of fact, national interests must assume the position of tribe and religion in the social consciousness of Nigerians if this country must harvest the needed crop of political leaders that would lead her to the Promised Land.

¹Charles Nweke is a lecturer of Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

²Johnmary Odinigwe is a student of Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

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