POLITICAL-CULTURE AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: This is a research work of sheer relevance to not only the Nigerian students of politics but also to Nigerian Statesmen as it is aimed at challenging the popular assumption that the mere establishment of Western democratic structures and institutions has the potency of bringing a stable democracy. The task here therefore seeks to expose the relationship between the Nigerian Political culture and the stability of its democracy. I have examined the Nigerian democratic experiment in the first, second and fourth Republics and found that instability has been the dominant feature of Nigeria's democracy. Again, an examination of the Nigerian political culture and its effect on our democracy reveals that Nigeria's political culture has a negative influence on its democracy and is thus, largely responsible for our democratic instability. We, therefore, recommend that Nigeria should develop (through political socialization and education) a national political culture that will be suitable for the practice of liberal democracy.

Introduction

Nigeria's democratic experience has been characterized by endemic instability and a high incidence of corruption. The first democratic experiment at independence, (1960-1966), experienced a short "honey moon". Within two years, conflicts had torn apart the ruling coalition in the Western Region. The next year, suspicions about the national census destroyed what little trust there was among the regions. Finally, in 1965, law and order broke down in the Western Region over election-related fraud and violence, and the military ended the first republic in January 1996.

After thirteen (13) years of military interregnum, the country was returned to another democratic rule in 1979 but the story remained the same as tension and conflicts heated up the then Shagari led government that culminated in another to formal democratic rule, when Olusegun Obasanjo was elected President. Although the current democratic experience, having lasted for twelve years is said to be the most durable, it still does not have good prospects for stability. For instance, there has been shameless rigging of elections, especially by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (POP) and violence associated with such fraud that claimed lives and property; a high incidence of political killings, the Boko Haram crisis in the North and the call for sovereign national conference by most people in the different regions of Nigeria. All these together poses threat to the stability of the current democratic experiment.

The question which readily arises is what are the causes of this instability that has characterized our democratic experiments? To some, this is caused by poor economy. Others

believe that the cause is from ethnicity arising from the plurality of the Nigerian state: Still, there are.those who see the cause in lack of appropriate democratic structures and the constitution.

Conversely, there are those who draw attention to the significant relationship that exists between political culture and democratic stability. Here, it is argued that every regime type has a corresponding political culture that sustains it. For instance, democracy (liberal) is said to be sustained by a democratic political culture called the "Civic culture". Thus, this school of thought, to whom we subscribe, explains the instability of Nigeria's democracy from the view point of the incongruence between the Nigeria's political culture and liberal democratic institutions and structures that have ostensibly been erected to work with the Nigerian political culture. We do hope that this study will reveal in detail the incongruence between the liberal democratic structures erected in Nigeria and the Nigerian political culture and explain Nigeria's democratic instability in the light of such incongruence.

Conceptual Clarification

Political Culture

The concept of political culture is a recent term which seeks to make more explicit and systematic much of the understanding associated with old concepts such as political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national political psychology, and the fundamental values of a people. The concepts of political culture can be seen as a natural evolution in the growth of the behavioural approach in political analysis (Das & Chondhury; 1997:94).

The concept "political culture' like any other concept in political science is defined in various ways. Political culture could be defined as the commonly shared goals and commonly accepted roles about politics". Others see it as "values, beliefs and emotional attitudes about how government ought to be conducted. In line with the above, Nwabuzor and Mueller define political culture of any society as "made up of the political attitudes, values, feedings, information and skills possessed by the members of the political community. To them, it is reflected in a nations ideology, in attitudes towards political leaders, in duties of citizenship, in the conduct and style of political activity and in what is considered political and not. Almond and Verba in their book "the civic culture" refer to political culture as "the specifically political orientations and attitudes towards the political system and its various parts and towards the role of the self in the system. The most detailed definition of political culture in Almond and Powell is that: Political culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics among the members of a political system. It is the subjective realm which underlies and gives meaning to political actions. Such individuals orientation involves several components, including (a) cognitive orientation involves several components, including (a) cognitive orientations, knowledge, accurate or otherwise of political objects and beliefs; (b) affective orientations, feelings of attachment, involvement, rejection and the like, about political objects and (c) evaluative orientations, judgments and opinions about political objects which usually involve applying value standards to political objects and events.

In a nutshell, the concept political culture suggests that the traditions of a society, the style and operational methods of its leaders, constitute an intelligible political belief. There is no political system without a political culture. In every political system, there is an ordered

pattern of politics which gives discipline to the political institutions and social guidance to individual sets.

Almond and Verba identified three main types of political culture. They are:

(i) The parochial political culture; under this type of political culture/ the citizen's orientation to political objects is very narrow. He does not relate himself to national political institutions but to local and tribal politics. Here, the political actors combine economic and religious roles with political powers, (Das & Choudhury, 1997; 99) this implies the absence of role specialization or functional specialization. Some scholars refer to this type of political culture as the political culture of "African Tribal Societies",

(ii) Subject political culture: Under this type of political culture, the citizen is strongly aware of the political system, governmental authority and its output but does not participate in the input structures, which is the avenue through which societal demands are channeled. This makes the input institutions likely to be weakly developed. This passivity amongst citizens is based on the recognition by the citizens that they have only a very limited capacity to influence government, Andrew (2002:200). For instance, an Urban Nigerian is often wejl aware of government politics and programmes, but he may equally well feel that there is no point in his trying to influence them.

(iii) Participate political culture: Under this type of political culture, the citizen has acquired high awareness and high involvement in national political issues. Here, the citizens pay close attention to politics and regard popular participation as both desirable and effective. Political activism, whether pro or anti-government, is a predominant characteristic of the political community (Dowse & Hugbes 1972:229, Heywood, 2002:2002, Nwabuzor & Mueller, 1987 61-62).

The three main types of political culture we have discussed above are the "idea types". They are not found in these pure forms in any society. To account for this fact, the authors further developed the notion of "Systematically mixed political culture". These are:

a. **Parochial-subject:** Under this type, the citizen is gradually abandoning his narrow, local political attachment of the parochial culture for a pronounced allegiance towards the specialized national governmental institutions. In this system, the citizen still lacks personal awareness of his political potentialities in the system. This type of political culture is said to be found in the early stage of kingdom building, where political parties and pressure groups are still in their embryonic stages of formation and so weak.

b. **Subject Participant:** Under this type of political culture, the citizens are divided into those who are politically aware so active and those who are apolitical and so passive. The political active ones are sensitive to all political issues and have developed the sense of political efficacy.

c. **Parochial Participant:** Here, the input institutions are local and tribal association, while the output side are fairly well developed national institution with official encouragement for popular participation in the form of rallies, election andnationalistic appeals. Both the input and output institutions may be impaired by dominant parochial interest that render them in-operative.

The Civic Culture

The civic culture combines all the characteristics of the "ideal" types. In this type of political culture, the citizens have developed both a sense of competence and a sense of trusting other people. These senses of competence and trust allow the citizen to feel at ease with the government. He deems it not necessary to oppose the government on all issues except on issues he feels important. Although, the government acts fairly freely in this type of political culture, it also exercises care not to abuse its freedom to act, (Dowe & Hugbes, 1972:231). This is so because citizens in this type of political culture are capable of associating to oppose the government whenever the government is perceived as suppressing their interests. Thus, the civic culture reconciles the participation of citizens in the political process with the vital necessity for government to govern. (Heywood, 2002:200).

According to Almond and Verba, democratic stability is underpinned by a political culture that is characterized by a blend of activity and passivity on the part of citizens, and a balance between obligation and performance on the part of government. It is in the civic culture that this blend is provided for. At this category of political culture, the is the acquisition of what we refer to as political culture secularization- the process whereby men become increasingly rational, analytical, and empirical in their political action. Thus, the citizen in a civic culture has a "reserve of influence", he is a potential active citizen whose interest in political life is not necessarily high but whose general rate of extra political association is high.

Almond and Verba in their initial study (1963) concluded that the United Kingdom came closest to the civic culture, exhibiting both participant and subject features. In other words, while the British thought that they could influence government, they were also willing to obey authority. Next was the United States which also scored highly. Its relative weakness being that, as participant attitudes predominated over subject ones, Americans were not particularly law-abiding. The difficulty of building or rebuilding a civic culture was underlined by the examples of both West Germany and Italy and France. IN West Germany and Italy a decade and a half after the collapse of fascism, neither country appeared to have a strong participant culture, while the subject culture was dominant in West Germany, Parochial attitudes remained firmly entrenched in Italy. However, in their later study (1980) they highlighted a number of shifts, notably, the declining national pride and confidence in the UK and USA, which was in contrast with a rise in civic propensities in Germany.

In the Anglo- American political system, there is general agreement about political goals and the means of their realization. Majority of the people in this political systems believe in values like individual freedom, welfare of the common people and their security etc, and these common factors make the political culture relatively homogenous. Conversely, in countries like France, Germany and Italy due to different patterns of cultural development among different sections of people, their political culture is fragmented. It is due to this reason that there exist various types of subcultures in these countries which is also explanative of relative instability of the political system when compared to those of the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom and the United State of America.

Although, as a matter of fact, in no society can we notice a single political culture, there is a relative homogenous political culture in a stable political system and has earlier been said about the Anglo-American political system, there is general agreement about the limits and functions of political in such a system. Contrastingly, due to fragmented political culture and the absence of common orientation among the people towards political action, there is

confusion and chaos in the transitional societies like Nigeria. The masses in these societies do not posses stable psychological orientations.

The civic culture is the ideal in which a proper balance between the factors of continuity and change are maintained. Industrial and technological development bring rapid change (Political culture of a country is dynamic, not static). But such dynamism should not mean the complete destruction of all the former or existing values and beliefs of the people. Ideals which have the support of history and are born out of the political experience of the people must be properly blended with modern ideals which came from outside along with development in science and technology. Traditions and political continuity played a great role in the making of the political culture of Great Britain, where ancient values have merged with modern attitudes while the French revolution of 1989, destroyed the then existing political culture in France and started rebuilding a new political culture, in Great Britain, even revolutionary political changes also did not affect the historical traditions and institutions. As in due course, the British parliament became a sovereign body and all powers were transferred into its hands, but monarchy is still regarded as symbol of national pride and the coronation ceremony is viewed as a manifestation of national honour (Das & Choudhury, 1997:98-101, Heywood 2002:200-201, Dowse & Hugbes, 1972. 231-232).

Although there are many more things that could be said about the civic culture, we do not have space and time in a paper like this to go further than as we have done. Nevertheless, from the discussion above, we have been able to show that the UK and US which have the most stable democracies are also the countries with the most participant culture and closets to the civic culture. We have shown for instance that in America, participant roles and norms are widespread both in social and political life and there is a high level of satisfaction with the political system. Social trust is highly developed and levels of emotional partisanship are low. Citizens have adequate opportunity for parochial involvement and can, if they wish, quite easily adopt a passive subject stance. This is also true to the U.K. except that unlike the US, the British Political culture has a strong deferential element which allows those in authority to rule with relatively little participatory hindrance. We have equally shown how these contrast with that of Italy and perhaps German, both of which are far away from the civic culture and have relatively unstable political system. This conclusion gives credit to our proposition that countries which are closer to the civic culture and have a relatively homogenous political culture are bound to have more political stability than those that are distant from the civic culture.

Having done that, we shall focus our attention to Nigeria and examine its political culture to see if we can perform the difficult task of proving that its profound political instability is significantly caused by a lack of a homogenous political culture and its distance from the civic culture ideal.

Political Culture and Political Stability in Nigeria

For social order or cohesion to prevail in any political system, there is the need for national integration and national consciences. National integration is the feeling of a sense of belonging together exhibited by the citizenry of a country while national consciousness is the recognition of belonging to a specific community pursuing defined social, economic, political and cultural interests, designed to enhance the well-being of the members of that community. Here, it suffices us to sayJthat these cannot be realized except there exists a participatory and

homogenous political culture in such a society. This explains to some extent why there is chaos and confusion in Nigeria's political system. The values and beliefs over which there must be a minimum consensus cover a wide range of matters especially about ideas in connection with the legitimacy of policy makers, the constitutional arrangements, fundamental freedoms, principles of majority rule, political equality and popular control of policy makers. In Nigeria like in most other African states, there is lack of this minimum consensus among the people about their political institutions, objects and leaders, thus, leading to political crises that often leads to the enthronement of military regime. This contrasts with what is obtainable in the US and UK.

In his Political Culture and Political Development published in 1965, Pye provided the following as the key elements of political development He observed that the signal of political development could be traced to three different levels,

i)   With respect to the population as a whole
ii)   With respect to the level of government and general systemic performance, and
iii)   With respect to the organization of the polity.

The basic change in the character of the population that brings and enhances political development was that the citizen behaved, no long like a subject passively receiving orders from the higher authorities and carrying them out but, as an active participant who contributed to the shaping and sharing of political decision. In other words, the masses at this point develop participatory political culture leading to greater sensitivity on their part to the principles of equality and a wider acceptance of universalistic laws. Here, Pye has shown us how political culture is directly related to political development. To him, it is the participant political culture that serves as a catalyst of political development. This gives us an insight into the underdeveloped political system of Nigeria. The Nigerian political culture has not transcended to a participatory one. It is mostly a mixture of parochial and subject political culture with parochial culture dominating the larger rural population. This makes the political system less effective in carrying them along with it. It is a truism that an underdeveloped political system is characterized by instability.

An important reason why Nigeria deviates far from the ideal mix is that of the lack of homogenous political culture. This is not to say that in the stable political systems/ there are no subcultures, but at least, there exists a dominant political culture which becomes the pattern of widely shared attitudes and values supportive of democratic institutions and procedures. The problem in the Nigeria's case is that there is no predominant culture. The Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo (not to talk of the minorities) all exhibit cohesive political cultures of their own, cultures which are very different from each other and which resist integration into a Nigerian whole. Who "after all" is to define what the Nigerian political culture is going to be? How does a relative homogenous political culture that will sustain and ensure political stability evolve from such divergent ones"? (The italicized are mine) asked Nwabuzor and Mueller. It is this that makes the parochial culture and at best subject political culture the hallmark of Nigerian's political culture. Nigerians are not willing to abandon their local affiliation for a national one.

Her citizens lack political trust and efficacy. Tne Nigerian political culture has not been secularized.

We have had an experience about the parochial culture of the Nigerian citizen in 2006, when we partook in the National census and voters registration exercise. In a relatively "open"

community (though not urbanized) in Degema LGA where we were posted to, the people generally do not have knowledge of the usefulness of the exercise and were not ready nor willing to participate in the exercise. Even the educated that at least were aware of the exercise were not willing to participate saying that what they will do there (by registering and to be counted) will not change their situation neither will it influence government decision. The majority of uneducated who we try to persuade to partake in the exercises demanded money to be given to them if they were to be counted or register. This experience is not confined to the rural areas alone, even in the capital cities there has always been high level of political passivity. This is manifested in the low turn out of people on Election Day. In the 2007 Presidential election a monitoring survey conducted by the African Independent Television showed that the turn out was very low on Election Day (especially in regions and states that do not have presidential aspirants). In actuality, not up to 30% percent of the complied voters register turned out for the voting exercise, although, in some of these areas INEC_announced a 1005 vote, with over-voting even in some units. But we all know that this is the nature of Nigerian politics that is characterized by rigging and thuggery.

In I960, after the NPC had won majority of the seats in the National House of representative, the Sarduna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bellow was called upon in his capacity as the leader of the NPC to come and be the Prime Minister and form his cabinet, he refused and instead, sent his assistant, Alhaji Tafawa Belewa to become the Prime Minister while he remained as the Premier of Northern Nigeria. He was quoted to have said that he was a Hausa man before he became a Nigerian and so, would prefer to serve the Hausas. This is a direct parochial culture in demonstration. Majority of Nigerians have little expectation that significant changes in their lives can be made through politics. Thus, they hardly expect any thing from the political system; they make no demands on it. Another feature of the Nigerian political culture is the absence of specialized roles. In other words, the king or headman fulfills a religious and economic roles as well as a political one. This is to a higher degree in the traditional rural societies in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the politics of the first Republic was an extension of the ethnic-based politics of the colonial period. The three major political parties of the time - the Northern People Congress (NCNC), the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) later changed to the National Convention of Nigerian citizens, and the Action Group (AG) - consolidated their ethic bases and held sway in their respective regions of origin.

There was a deep ethnic cleavage in the politics of this period which alongside other factors led to the collapse of the first republic. In 1979 after a prolonged period of 13 years of military rule, the country was returned to a democratic rule. Politics of the Second Republic (1979-83) - Nigerian's second democratic experiment, was essentially in many ways, a rehash of the First Republic. The defunct major ethnic based political parties of the First Republic reemerged in new garments as the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) respectively. The politics if regionalism and ethnicity was re-introduced in spite of certain, measures introduced by presidential system of government to develop political norms, practices and culture that could be national in outlook. (Sam & Tunji (ed) n.d)7-8).

The Murtala/Obasanjo Administration introduced certain fundamental structural innovation in the political system. It replaced the parliamentary system of government with an

executive presidential structure at the federal level and their equivalent at the state levels. Also, to ensure that whoever was elected as a president had his mandate from theentire nation, it was stipulated in the 1979 constitution that presidential candidates should not have less than one-third of the votes cast at elections in all the states of the federation as well as have a majority of such votes. Furthermore, the recognized and registered parties were enjoined to maintain a presence in all states of the federation.

With hindsight, we can argue now that the innovations of the second Republic, though laudable, were not far-reaching enough to rectify the failures of the past and to develop and sustain an enduring democratic culture. A major defect of the Murtala/Obasanjo administration's transition to civil rule programme was that no deliberate attempt was made to generate desirable social conduct to complement its structural and institutional reforms.   In other words, greater emphasis was placed on formal legal change over institutional and psycho-cultural development of democratic national political culture. It was this failure to create a new political man whose values and attitude were in consonance with the demands of democratic stability that was partly responsible for the collapse of the second republic.

From the above x-ray of the Nigeria political system and its instability finspite of several reforms put in place) it is clear, and compels one to pitch ones tent with Dowse and Hugbes to argue that the institutional framework within which governmental decisions are taken may vary from polity to polity, a multi-party system, unicameral or bicameral legislatures, a unitary or federal arrangement strong or relatively week Local Government, all are seen as, in a sense, epiphenomenal or at least only part of the picture. Thus "good" constitutions are not sufficient to ensure democratic governments, that underlying these various arrangements of government, there must be an appropriate democratic political culture". And as we have state earlier, we believe with Almond and Verba that the most appropriate political culture for a democratic political system is the civic culture and to the extent that a country's political culture deviates from the ideal mix to that extent does it lack an effective and stable democratic government.   This is why Italy and Germany do not have full effective or stable democracies even though they are formal democracies. It is the consequence of their deviation from the political culture most congruent with democratic government.

Little wonder then why the Nigerian political system is highly unstable. The absence of a homogenous political culture and a distant deviation from an appropriate democratic political culture - the civil culture has together rendered the system crises ridden, confused and unstable.

Conclusion

Instability is undoubtedly, the dominant feature of Nigeria's political system. The system has been aptly described as a condition in which power is sought without restraint and used without restraint and the struggle for political power is so intense that political competition escalates to a form of warfare. While others see factors such as ethnic and religious pluralism, poor economy, corruption etc as responsible for the problem, we rather see the problem as inseparably linked with lack of a homogenous political culture and the absence of an appropriate democratic political culture which distant it from Almond and Verba's civic culture ideal mix. This, however, does not completely close our eyes to the harmful effect of ethnicit, tribalism, religious dichotomy and bigotry, poverty and an underdeveloped economy to the

political system. Nevertheless, we believe that with an appropriate democratic political culture inculcated into the system, ethnic and religious pluralism will be effectively managed and will have less negative effect on the political system. After all, America a multi-racial society has one of the most stable democracies. The problem is also not so much caused by poor economy because it was during the oil boom days of the mid 1970s that the Gowon's government was toppled. If buoyant economy is solely responsible for political stability, Germany and France would not have found themselves in the experience of relatively unstable democracy.

The solution, therefore, out of this political instability will require the creation of a national political culture which will dominate over the antagonizing subcultures. Such culture will develop into a homogenous political culture. This can be spearheaded by the political elites. Our government should through social mobilization; political education and political socialization create a new political citizen. This will lead to the secularization of political culture - the process whereby traditional orientations and attitudes that are inimical to appropriate democratic political culture given way to more dynamic decision making processes involving the gathering of information, the evaluation of information, the laying out of alternative courses of action, the selection of a course of action from among these possible courses, and the means whereby one tests whether or not a given course of action is producing the consequences which were intended. Through the process of secularization, men become increasingly rational, analytic and empirical in their action.

The political culture that will evolve from such will be characterized by participant culture (that which is missing in our political culture) mixed with some element of subject and parochial culture. It is this appropriate democratic political culture that will provide the answer to our protracted question of political instability.

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