

Nigeria's Fourth Republic and the Challenge of a Faltering Democratization

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Abstract: Nigeria's present democratization, which culminated in the country's Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, started amidst great hope and expectations. Although the military regime that mid-wived the process could not significantly convince the generality of the citizens on its success, a huge section of the populace still believed it could herald the dawn of good governance in the country. Disturbingly, twelve years after the commencement of democratization in Nigeria the political landscape is yet to show clear evidences of good governance. The rule of law is merely pronounced, elections and electoral processes are subverted, and political parties and other important public institutions are manipulated in favor of the privileged few. This essay critically examines the probable sources and dimensions of the impediments confronting the democratic desires of Nigeria and its people who often proclaim their preference for democracy. The research methodology is both descriptive and analytical, while the framework of analysis is eclectic. It combines the explanations offered in Max Weber's (1975) concept of patrimonialism with such others as Ekeh's "two publics" (1975), the prebendalist perspective of Joseph (1991) and the World Bank's "state capture" (2000). In conclusion, it suggests that the state and its institutions in Nigeria need to be strengthened for democracy to thrive in this country. In the light of this, it is noted that although the role of leaders or "who" is in charge cannot be underestimated, the "how" should be emphasized more.

Introduction

Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which has witnessed four general elections (1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011), is yet to show profound evidence of a growing democracy. All of these elections were marked with controversies, just as their processes and end products encountered credibility and legitimacy crises. Obviously, all of these account for the lack of appropriate policy formulation and effective implementation that are needed for the improvement of the standard of living of the people and development of the country as a whole. The net effect is that the ordinary citizens seem to have gradually lost hope in the system that replaced the military regime, while the rulers and supposed representatives of the people— who live in opulence that does not conform to the current economic realities in the country— seem less bothered. Apparently, it

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may take some time to feel the full impact of the slight improvement recorded in the conduct of the 2011 general elections.

Can Nigeria's presently faltering democratization facilitate true democracy in the country? What led to the gradual squandering of the initial hope and expectations that accompanied the process in the late 1990s? Can the process be remedied? What significant roles can the present political institutions and the individual beneficiaries play? Can civil society groups and other non-governmental organizations re-enact their activities that contributed to the fall of past military regimes? These are some of the questions that this paper sets out to answer. In addition to these introductory remarks, the paper has four sections: conceptual clarifications, the Nigerian state and politics in theoretical perspective, the experience of the Fourth Republic, and concluding remarks.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of democratization, which is our main focus in this paper, is well covered in the extant literature. Apparently most of these existing works, especially since the mid-80s in southern Europe and Latin America, and from the 1990s onward for the African continent, emphasize a common trend in the sense that democratization is a process that implies a series of continuous actions and changes. Remarkably, these are geared toward the replacement of an existing order or system of authoritarian and undemocratic rule with one that is participatory and democratic in nature.

More explicitly, Gunther *et al.* (1995) contend that the democratization process has three phases: the fall of the authoritarian regime, consolidation, and enduring democracy. Obviously, the foregoing opinion and similar others do not specify a time frame for the actualization of the three highlighted phases. It, therefore, means that the peculiarities in each system would play a profound role in the process of actualization. In the case of Nigeria, the slow pace of the process raises doubt in the minds of the generality of the people who, for instance, are confounded as to why such basic aspects of democracy as elections and legislative duties still lack significant purposiveness, ten years after the Fourth Republic commenced. Additionally, the executive arms at different levels of government have also performed so abysmally that discerning minds now wonder how long it will take democracy to flourish in the country. Indeed, the observation as to whether the democratization process in Africa is "merely political liberalization, or genuinely a democratic transition" seems to aptly capture the Nigerian situation at the moment.¹

Political liberalization is, undoubtedly, part of the democratization process, but it is susceptible to dangerous reverses.² Even as the present process in Nigeria is yet to manifest any strong evidence of relapse, it is worrisome that the democratic space is not expanding or deepening as rapidly as expected. Some of the areas where the democratic ethos is visibly lacking include the scant regard for the rule of law or constitutional rule; stifling of critics and opposition, especially from other political parties, thus hindering effective multipartyism; controversial and fraudulent elections; and political corruption. Although the effects of the foregoing factors vary, their combination, in positive terms, vitalizes democracy. For instance, while the existence of a viable opposition makes an alternative choice possible, sacrosanct

elections serve the purpose of the driving force for the actualization of alternative choice. They, just like other factors, are the linchpins of democracy. For now, the slow pace of democratization in Nigeria, in spite of the profound pro-democracy activism in the aftermath of the 1993 annulment and the conduct of four general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011, clearly exposes a process that probably commenced with great deformities. In this sense, the entire process, regardless of the amount of efforts, might produce insignificant positive results. It is, perhaps, another example of "a long journey with a small miracle."³ For a better understanding of the peculiarities of the challenges confronting Nigeria's democratization, we need to examine critically the nature of the Nigerian state and its politics.

The Nigerian State and its Politics in Theoretical Perspective

The roots of Nigeria's politics are well entrenched in its colonial history. The main elements in the country's socio-economic and political fortune and misfortune, as argued in several scholarly works, have helped to establish that the probability of Nigeria's existence, in its present form, is quite low if not for the superior fire power and diplomacy of the colonialists. This, they attributed to the existence of diverse ethnic nationalities, which were forcefully amalgamated in 1914. In essence, the colonial state and its successor had no legitimating ideals. It was, therefore, not surprising that authoritarianism became its major defining character. On the other hand, it also helped in raising ethnic consciousness and the salience of the ethnic factor, but mostly in negative perspectives. Scholarly works that have sufficiently discussed all of these include Coleman (1958), Crowder (1962), Schwarz (1965), Lewis (1965), Sklar (1966), and Dudley (1973) among others. Similarly, Ekeh (1975), in his seminal essay on the concept of the two publics, crystallized the negative effects of colonialism and primordialism on the socio-political development of Nigeria.

Weber (1948) had much earlier adopted patrimonialism for the explanation of similar challenges, albeit on a larger scale. The patrimonial perspective has also been adopted variously as decentralized patrimonialism, neo-patrimonialism, and the patrimonial administrative state by such scholars as Theobald (1982), Callaghy (1987) and Ikpe (2000) for explanations on Nigeria's predicament. In another vein, Joseph (1991) also adapted the prebendalist perspective to further explain the dynamics of socio-political behaviour in Nigeria's public life. In all, the dangers associated with the political tendencies that these scholars highlighted include clientelism, godfatherism, nepotism, administrative inefficiency, political corruption, poverty, and political instability.

Hope was once again raised with the euphoric reintroduction of civilian rule in 1999. This was expected to serve as a new beginning and as an end to the long period of military rule and its characteristics such as intimidation, personalization, egoism, debauchery, sycophancy, and poverty. Amazingly, the situation has not significantly changed. In our own opinion, this can partly be linked to the "pacted nature of the process which mid-wived the present democratization in the country."⁴ Invariably, most of the conceptualizations by these scholars point to the incapacitation of the state in Nigeria by the officials in charge of various public institutions and their sponsors, the godfathers. For a better understanding, we may situate all

these explanations within the context of such relatively more recent conceptualizations as the social closure and state capture. According to Parkin, social closure is:

The process by which social collective seeks to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles. This entails the singling out of certain physical attributes as the justificatory basis of exclusion. Virtually, all group attributes – race, language, social origin, religion – may be seized upon provided it can be used for the monopolization of specific, usually economic, opportunities.... Its purpose is always the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders.⁵

In contemporary Nigeria, this practice of social closure is carried on with little or no restriction because the actors have, more than ever before, seized the machinery of the state for their own interest. It is in this sense that the explanations in the concept of state capture can be adopted. According to the World Bank, state capture stands for:

The actions of individuals, groups or firms both in public and private sectors to influence the formation of laws, regulations, decrees and other government policies to their own advantage as a result of the illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials.⁶

While such institutions as the legislature, executive, judiciary, and regulatory agencies represent the structures that are seized or captured, the captors are private firms, political leaders, political parties, and other narrow interest groups.

The main thesis in the foregoing explanations on the nature of the Nigerian state and its politics can be summarized in two parts. First, “ethnic consciousness and, by extension, ethnic politics is mostly exploited by the modern day Nigerian political class for its own selfish interest.”⁷ In the second place, these activities of transactional and predatory political and economic leaders are possible largely because of the weak nature of the state, especially exemplified by its rapidly eroded autonomy and functionality. Furthermore, the second point explains why the “beneficiaries of the state’s loss of its moderating role” may never willingly work for its restoration, as the weakening effects of their activities on the democratization process clearly show.⁸

The Experience of the Fourth Republic

A key aspect of the eclectic framework of analysis that is adopted in this study is its emphasis on certain exclusionary tendencies that ensure that the entire public policy process functions largely in the interest of the privileged few. The Abubakar transition program that gave birth to the Fourth Republic, not surprisingly, exhibited these traits in many ways. In the first major assignment of the transition program, for example, the draft of the constitution was considered and approved by the military populated Provisional Ruling Council (PRC). It should be noted that neither the membership nor the professional skill of this body qualified it to perform such a sensitive democratic exercise. Thereafter, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the body saddled with the responsibility of supervising the entire electoral process, was put in place. Obviously, the formation of this body was also faulty, mainly because its members

were chosen not necessarily on merit but, most probably, based on political connections or expediencies. Similarly, the registration of the first three political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), All People's Party (APP), and Alliance for Democracy (AD), that was INEC's first major assignment was widely criticized for its restrictive, selective, and discriminatory character. Nonetheless, it should be noted that PDP and APP appeared to have sufficiently satisfied the electoral requirement of physical presence in the thirty-six states of the federation. It should be noted that such radical political associations as Gani Fawehinmi's National Conscience Party (NCP), Balarabe Musa's People's Redemption Party (PRP), and some others were not registered until 2003, when the political landscape was further liberalized by a judicial pronouncement on the registration of political parties.

Apparently, the first three political parties lacked significant ideological differences just as they did not have sufficiently convincing manifestos. It is in the light of this that Obi noted that they were probably registered to merely pursue an unwritten agenda between the various factions of the hegemonic elite, which was "to repossess power from the military, and a geopolitical power shift from the North to the South."⁹ In fact, the logic of this assertion can further be established by referring to the fact that the AD, the only southwestern Nigerian dominated party at that time, was hurriedly approved for registration on the last day of the exercise. Certainly, all of these were in line with the need to launder the military's battered image and, probably, redeem Nigeria's identity as a pariah nation as at that time. The self-inflicted image problem of the military was, however, different from another interest of its political arm. Essentially, this had to do with the protection of the fortunes acquired by many retired army generals, especially those who were in government or indirectly connected to government between 1985 and 1999, when participation in the governance of the country provided huge opportunities for illicit wealth.

In the light of all of these, the Abubakar regime, after the well-publicized strategic meeting of all former military heads of state (except Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari), retired army generals, and ex-police chiefs that it convened on October 3, 1998, embarked on a search for a candidate with "national credentials." Perhaps it was no coincidence that General Obasanjo, the only southerner out of the two former heads of state absent at the strategic meeting, eventually emerged as the presidential candidate of the winning PDP in 1999. It was not surprising that the initial opposition from the Group of 34 (G34), the originators of PDP, was not formidable enough to stop the choice of Obasanjo. Undoubtedly, it did not surprise any discerning mind to see the domination of the list of PDP's financiers by such retired generals as Lt. General T.Y. Danjuma, Major General Alli Mohammed Gusau, Lt. General I. Wushishi, General I.B. Babangida, and several others.¹⁰

With everything seemingly in place, it looked set for Obasanjo's electoral victory as well as for other PDP candidates at other electoral levels across the country. There were slight differences in other areas outside the presidency, however, particularly where the APP and AD had greater influence. Remarkably, this setting further fuelled skepticism and attracted criticisms from different sections of the society. In fact, an election monitor in 1999 observed that: "No one had any illusion that anything but high-stakes bargaining would determine the structures of powers in the civilian government. Elections would influence this process to the extent that the crowd influences a soccer match."¹¹

More than a decade after this assertion, Nigeria's democratization that has since witnessed four general elections and several others at different levels has not shown any remarkable improvement. Rather, elections have over the years become more controversial, public institutions increasingly manipulated, and the generality of the citizens impoverished. We shall discuss all of these by concentrating on three key areas that should assist in understanding the persistent threats confronting the Fourth Republics faltering democratization. These are:

- Institutions, which pretend to be democratic but lack the basic ingredients of democracy. They include INEC, political parties, the legislature, and so forth.
- Political elites who can no longer empathize with the electorate because they "are too far removed from the realities of their environment and have total disregard for those they are supposed to serve."¹²
- A despondent electorate that is increasingly forced into sycophancy and higher criminalities because of poverty and intolerable standards of living.

It should be noted that the first key area on our list is central to the development of any society in the contemporary world, while the second and third should assist us in understanding how the reciprocal exchanges between leaders and followers can catalyze development in a country like Nigeria with her failing public institutions.

Perhaps the most important institution in Nigeria's present democratization in terms of electoral administration is the INEC. This is mainly because of its sensitive assignment, which includes the registration of political parties and the monitoring of their financial activities but more importantly the conduct of elections for various political offices. These include the supervision of party primaries and the actual conduct of general elections. The INEC's performance in all of these functions since 1999 has been abysmal. It should be noted that the INEC did not appropriately sanction any of the political parties for their primaries that were most of the time scarcely democratic in nature. It is not surprising that most of these political parties that suffered from a lack of internal democracy have been unable to imbibe a democratic ethos at higher levels. In addition, most of these parties do not publish their financial activities, including campaign and elections funding, as regularly as required by the electoral laws. Incidentally, elections and campaign finance has been discovered to be one of the greatest sources of abuse and impunity in the country's Fourth Republic.¹³ In this connection, it is appropriate to recall some of the activities of political godfathers and election financiers especially in the PDP whose electoral slates, for obvious reasons, are the most attractive. While the governorship tickets of the party in Edo and Ekiti States were, for instance, given to those who did not win the primaries before the 2007 elections, the candidacy for the same office in Rivers State was awarded to a candidate who did not participate in the exercise. In the latter case, Honourable Rotimi Amaechi, who was illegally prevented from contesting in the 2007 exercise, was declared the governor by the elections tribunal about a year after. Similarly, Senator Ifeanyi Araraume from Anambra State was also allowed to contest the senatorial elections, in 2007, only after the court intervention that returned his ticket, which he had earlier won in the PDP primaries.

None of these activities, however, exposed the INEC's abysmal performance as much as the conduct of general elections since 1999. In the controversial 2007 general elections that were followed by the court ordered re-run exercises in such states as Kogi, Adamawa, Osun, and

Ekiti, the electoral body displayed incompetence and, sometimes outright bias. Perhaps there is no better evidence for this than the open cases of ballot box snatching, falsification of results and other forms of electoral malpractices, many of which were confirmed in places like Edo and Ondo States where the initial governorship results were overturned in favor of Adams Oshiomhole and Olusegun Mimiko respectively in 2009. Similarly, the results of the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States were later overturned in 2010 in favor of Dr. Kayode Fayemi and Rauf Aregbesola respectively. It should also be noted that in all of these, the police as an institution is also constantly indicted for its ineffective role that compounded whatever challenges the INEC probably encountered from the exploitative acts of the political class.

In a similar vein, the open declaration by President Yar'Adua, shortly after the inauguration of his administration in 2007, that the process of his election was faulty and the establishment of the Uwais Electoral Reforms Commission before Yar'Adua's death also helped to confirm that the INEC did not sufficiently perform its role. In another related matter, several of the reports and comments of election observers from within and outside the country supported the shoddy and controversial nature of most of these exercises. While the European Union (EU) criticized the INEC for "usurping the role of Nigerians in determining the legitimacy of the outcome of the election," others noted that the whole exercise "fell far short of basic international standards."¹⁴ In view of the bloody violence and rigging of monumental proportions, the *Vanguard* newspaper concluded in part that "given the lack of transparency and evidence of fraud, particularly in the result collation process, there can be no confidence in the result of these elections."¹⁵ Obviously, all of these and the unending squabbles over the verdicts of the various election tribunals across the country constitute great challenges for Nigeria's democratization as well as threats to national cohesion and stability.

The legislature is another weak public institution whose lackluster performance over the last decade has been a source of worry. In view of its central role, particularly being the most distinctive feature that differentiates democracy in Nigeria from other forms of government that the country has had, we shall critically examine two key aspects of its activities since 1999: policy formulation and oversight duties. In terms of policy formulation, it should be noted that the quality of life and standard of living of the entire citizenry can easily be traced to the type of policies formulated by the legislature, while the oversight functions of this same body requires it to monitor and ensure that the executive arm implements the policies efficiently and effectively. It may be appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness of policies in Nigeria by closely looking at the conditions of physical infrastructure and social services in the country in the last decade. The obvious decay in the health sector; collapse of education; deplorable conditions of road networks; increasing insecurity from robbery, abduction, and other polymorphous violence; scarcity of potable water; and the collapse of the remnant manufacturing sector among others are evidence of the rapidly deteriorating living conditions of ordinary Nigerians. Although a school of thought is of the opinion that the ailing economy bequeathed by the military to civilians in 1999 requires a lot of corrective measures to facilitate the resuscitation of decrepit physical infrastructure and social amenities, many aspects of the activities of the legislators and other political elites do not portray them as the change agents. We can cite several instances to support this assertion.

First, the legislative arms at different governmental levels have since 1999 been frequently engaged with the executive in squabbles over their sitting allowances and other such mundane issues. It is on record that at the national and regional levels the demands by legislators are too often completely out of tune with the country's economic realities. It should, for instance, be noted that legislative duties at the National Assembly were suspended for several weeks in 1999 before it was resolved that each legislator could have between 14,000 and 21,000 naira (\$156 to \$234) as a daily accommodation allowance.¹⁶ The "furniture allowance palaver" in which the legislators demanded to equip their new official quarters by awarding the contracts by themselves also erupted before the end of their first year in office. This was subdued by the huge negative public opinion and subtle "blackmail" from the executive. More than ten years later, there are still strong evidences of unrealistic and unreasonable demands from lawmakers. For example, in May 2010, a majority of the legislators in the lower chamber of the National Assembly demanded a new quarterly allocation of N42 million (\$277,000) each. This is apart from their monthly salary of about N1.3 million (\$8,600) each. Obviously, the request of the upper chamber of the same Assembly should be higher and thus more provocative in a country where the vast majority of ordinary citizens earn less than \$2 or N300 per day! Incidentally, in view of the fact that such allowances were not considered in the 2010 budget of the National Assembly, the most probable way to accommodate this may be to collapse the capital vote of the chambers. In other words, no capital project shall be executed by the legislative arm in the year.¹⁷ Surprisingly, all of these seem not enough to discourage lawmakers from various forms of malpractice such as contract scams, bribery in connection with oversight functions, and sundry activities that have led to the removal of most of the principal officers in the various legislative chambers across the country between 1999 and 2010. In a similar vein, it should be noted that although prosecution is still ongoing, Dimeji Bankole, the immediate past Speaker of the House of Representatives was arrested in June 2011, shortly after the expiration of his tenure, over serious allegations of abuse of office and financial mismanagement.

Secondly, it is most disturbing that the annual budget, both at the national and regional levels, is unnecessarily delayed by the legislators during the statutory process of approval. Right from the days of President Obasanjo up to the time of the late President Yar'Adua, no national budget was approved before the end of March in any particular year that such budget was meant for. Incidentally, most of these delays were caused by the legislators' regular requests for upward review of allocations directly affecting their allowances and other privileges. At the regional level, the case of Anambra State may serve a useful purpose for illustration. In 2008, Governor Peter Obi presented a budget proposal of N84.2 billion (\$706 million) to the states House of Assembly, but this was slashed to N57.6 billion (\$483 million) by the latter's Committee on Finance and Appropriation.¹⁸ In other societies, such a reduction could be for altruistic purposes; but in this case, just as in some other states since 1999, it seemed not. It should, for instance, be noted that while the reduction affected recurrent expenditure that was cut down from N24.2 billion (\$203 million) to N21.9 billion (\$184 million), and capital expenditure from N60 billion (\$503 million) to N35.7 billion (\$299 million), it curiously increased the allocation to the State House of Assembly by more than fourfold, from N284 million (\$2.4 million) to N1.235 billion (\$10.4 million) without cogent reasons. The legislature is, however, not alone in such acts of insensitivity. The governors, ministers, and

local government chairmen constantly evoke the negative memories of military rule when the executive, with its huge vote to disburse, was the most attractive arm of government. Up till now, the president and governors still have access to certain unspecified amounts of money that they refer to as security votes, which they often spend without giving an account.

In fact, at one point in 2009, then President Yar'Adua called for a cut in the salaries and allowances of political office holders. From all indications, even as this call was not implemented during Yar'Adua lifetime, it confirmed that the huge salaries and allowances collected by the political class were absurd. In a like manner, the executive can also be faulted for the non-implementation or poor implementation of the national budget. In 2008, for instance, the Federal Ministry of Health was in the news over the N400 million (\$2.7 million) unspent budget allocation scandal. Having ended the year 2007 without fully implementing the budget, the then minister, Professor Adenike Grange, and some other top ministry officials with the connivance of the Senate Committee on Health, were alleged to have shared the unspent allocation. Investigations into the matter are yet to be concluded more than three years after.

More disturbingly, the legislators have over the years also exploited the constitutional provision on the impeachment of an erring chief executive, just as their counterparts in the executive do with the immunity clause in the 1999 Constitution. In the case of the legislative arm, it is confounding that both Presidents Obasanjo and Yar'Adua were severally threatened with impeachment over the poor implementation of constituency projects, probably because this could negatively affect the image of the legislature, while the latter overlooked a more serious constitutional violation by Yar'Adua between 2009 and 2010. The violation was in connection with the vacuum created in the presidency when President Yar'Adua travelled out of the country in November 2009 for medical attention without appropriately informing the National Assembly or handing over to the then Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. The crisis was eventually resolved through political intrigues, which included the adoption of an interview in Saudi Arabia granted by the then ailing president instead of the letter of notification as required by the constitution. It also included the invocation of the doctrine of necessity to proclaim Goodluck Jonathan as acting president in February 2010. Even then, the ailing president was brought back into the country and kept incommunicado by relations and close aides until his death in May 2010. Yet, it appeared not to be any serious problem or threat to Nigeria's democratization in the face of the ruling PDP. To the party and its important stakeholders, it seemed all of this was merely a party or "family" affair which the PDP-dominated National Assembly would be able to resolve to the party's best interest.

In another vein, the seeming unwillingness of the National Assembly to adopt the recommendations of the Justice Muhammadu Uwais Electoral Reforms Panel constituted a serious threat to the country's preparation for fresh elections in 2011. The adoption of the recommendations could have significantly helped to put in place the necessary framework to resolve all issues concerning election petitions before a candidate is sworn into office. By this, the practice whereby an illegitimate occupant is allowed to remain in office for up to three out of the four-year tenure, in some instances, shall be resolved. It should be noted that the present arrangement, which allows a beneficiary of a fraudulent election to have access to state resources that he deploys to defend such a "stolen" mandate, portends great dangers to the democratic process. This is because it indirectly encourages every contestant to adopt all

means, fair or foul, to gain access to office. Similarly, the adoption of the Panel's recommendations would most probably further insulate the judiciary against total descent into the murky water of politics and the corruptive influence of the highly monetized political landscape to which the long drawn out legal battles on election petitions expose the judiciary. So far, the judicial arm of government has won accolades for its role in sustaining a modicum of hope in Nigeria's democratization. Apart from the several election related cases that have been overwhelmingly applauded, the judiciary has also helped in resolving many inter and intra-governmental conflicts. These included the case between the Federal Government and Lagos State over the latter's withheld allocations under Governor Bola Tinubu; the issue of minimum wage; the illegal termination of the appointment of some lecturers at the University of Ilorin; and several others. The judiciary, with the support of the National Judicial Council (NJC), has also appropriately dealt with erring judges and other judicial officers by dismissing or prematurely retiring such individuals who threatened the democratization process. In this connection, we can cite the case of Justices Wilson Egbo-Egbo, Stanley Nnaji and Chris Selong who were dismissed for official corruption in 2006.¹⁹ Others, such as Justice Naaron and his team that initially looked into the petitions from the 2007 general elections in Osun State, are still being investigated.

We can now return to the list of parameters from an earlier part of this section by linking our explanations on the abysmal performances of the key organs of government in a democracy with the attitude of most officials in charge of these institutions. It should be noted, for instance, that the ostentatious and provocative lifestyles of many of the country's political elites and other categories of public officials portray them as being too far removed from the realities of their environment. In simple terms, it clearly shows that most of these people in the privileged class can no longer empathize with the electorate that they are supposedly representing. Undoubtedly, the abysmal performance of the democratization process, in terms of the economic well being of the large population of ordinary citizens, confirms the nexus between wealth creation and good governance, especially in a democratic system. It also negates the more "solidaristic" character of past civilian administrations in the country and the general communal nature of African traditional societies.

It is, therefore, not surprising that many ordinary Nigerians over the last decade or so have been pilloried into sycophancy, while some others are engaged in armed robbery, abduction, kidnapping, electoral violence, oil bunkering, and illicit drug trafficking among other criminal activities that have risen phenomenally over the course of the decade. Undoubtedly, all of these can also be linked to different reports on the national economy and the general living conditions of Nigerians. The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), for example, reported that 820 companies either closed shop or suspended production between 2000 and 2008. About twelve months later, 37 additional companies joined the list.²⁰ In a similar vein, UNICEF reported in 2009 that ten million Nigerian children were out of school, while the United Nations Human Development Report in 2009 ranked Nigeria 158th out of 182 countries surveyed. The global agency used such parameters as life expectancy, education, and income and purchasing power.

In a nutshell, Nigeria's twelve-year democratization is yet significantly to fulfill the hope and aspirations of the generality of the citizens. In fact, it seems to have created more anxieties in such areas as security of life and property, electoral violence, and the national economy.

Remarkably, the evidently slow pace of preparations for the 2011 general elections by the INEC, the ruling PDP's controversial zoning arrangement, bomb blasts, abductions, assassinations and even the apocalyptic prediction by American Ambassador John Campbell that Nigeria may disintegrate before 2015 for political reasons, combined to constitute another "acid test" for Nigeria's democratization process. Even with the evident improvement in the outcome of the 2011 general elections, which local and international observers applauded and which, unlike previous exercises in the country's relatively recent past, did not attract too many petitions, the election backlash, particularly in some parts of Northern Nigeria, still constitutes an imminent danger to the democratization process. Until all of these are effectively addressed, Nigeria's democratization and developmental processes and, indeed, governance in general remain threatened.

Concluding Remarks

The main thesis in this paper is that Nigeria's twelve-year old democratization is faltering. Rather than maturing with time, the country's fourth democratic experience has continuously shown evidences of a possible relapse into its immediate past autocratic experience. Although the most recent electoral exercise in the country, the April/May 2011 general elections, showed elements of improvement and possibly restoration of hope in the democratization process, other aspects of public life such as political violence and corruption still constitute great threats. Obviously, the initial high hopes and expectations could have been sustained and probably have led to democratic consolidation if the autonomy and functionality of the modern state and its agencies had been strengthened in contemporary Nigeria. Troublingly, not only is democracy threatened in the country, but Nigeria's corporate existence is also endangered by the activities of many influential public officials who seem to be above the law. Just as many of these well-connected, elected, and appointed public officials as well as their associates escape reproach for different offenses, many of the ordinary citizens who increasingly perpetrate other forms of crime that further incapacitate the state also escape from the law. Incidentally, this has over the years also become very weak in Nigeria. In order to address effectively these negative impacts on Nigeria's fragile state and public institutions on democracy, civil society groups and other professional bodies that actively participated in the termination of military rule in the country should rise up again. Similarly, the role of transformational leaders who, preferably, should be identified at the local community levels cannot be overemphasized in Nigeria's democratization and developmental processes.

Notes

- 1 Diouf 1998, p. 1.
- 2 Ibrahim 2003, p. 1.
- 3 Friedman 1994.
- 4 Yagboyaju 2008a, p. 44.

- 5 Parkin 1982, p. 175.
- 6 World Bank 2000, p. xv.
- 7 Egwu, 2006, p. 14.
- 8 Yagboyaju 2008b, p. 5.
- 9 Obi 2000, p. 76.
- 10 Adekanye 2005, p. 12.
- 11 Kew 1999, p. 33.
- 12 Abiola 2006, p. 2.
- 13 Yagboyaju 2009.
- 14 Okunade 2008, p. 11.
- 15 *Vanguard* August 23, 2007.
- 16 Naira have been converted into dollars for the years indicated for specific naira amounts, using the currency convertor at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.
- 17 *The Punch* May 24, 2010, p. 6.
- 18 *The Punch* April 21, 2008, p. 14.
- 19 *The Punch* June 21, 2006, p. 14.
- 20 *Sunday Punch* May 30, 2010, p. 10.

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