

## **POLITICAL CULTURE OF IMPUNITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The political culture of any political system is the prevailing behavioural orientation and attitudinal proclivity to the political system, which the members of the political society have been habituated to over time through networks of psycho-mental and dispositional characteristics generally summed up as their way of life. It is however ironic, indeed paradoxical, that after about fifteen years of Nigeria's return to civilian rule, via barracking the military, the unfettered crusade for democratization/democratic consolidation is still at its crescendo. This paper sees the often over-bloated idea of democracy/democratization as a fundamentally political culture issue, seen, however, by those that subscribe to it as a model for the attainment of the greatest happiness of the members of the society. Relying on the laws of dialectics as theoretical guide, the paper situates the apparent imbroglio associated with the democratization process in Nigeria at the militarization of the political system. It contends with conviction that many years of military rule has promoted a political culture of impunity and arrogance which cohere with the military attitude of operation without constitution, legality and due process, corresponding to the very antithesis of the doctrines of democratization. Data for this study was generated through documentary method and analysed through content analysis of written records. The paper, therefore, recommends amongst other vital ones, the inculcation of the right political attitude to children and the youths through civic education and the promotion of same through the National Orientation Agency.*

**Keywords:** Political Culture, Impunity, Democratic Consolidation, Democratization, Military Rule

### **Introduction**

Like every human society, every political system has a set of attitudes, behaviour and feeling that defines it. In the case of an uncategorized community or society, this set is conceived of as culture. In a political society, this set of attitudes, behaviour and feeling takes on the description—political culture. The political culture of any political system, therefore, is the prevailing behavioural orientation and attitudinal proclivity to the political system which the members of the political society have been habituated to over time through networks of psycho- mental and dispositional characteristics generally summed up as their way of life. In addition to the level of socio-economic development, what distinguish one political system (or

just the politics of one State) from the other are the style, type and/or level of development of the political culture. Essentially, political morality, or better still, what constitutes what is right or wrong in a political system is often determined and conditioned by that system's political culture, the level of development of which they invariably reflect. Suffice it to say that even the wordings and spirit of the constitution are not unreflective of the political culture.

It has become clear over time that political culture is not given *per se*. Like every other element of culture, it is habituated. Even when situations suggest that an item of culture could be received, such "received" item of culture does not automatically become culture upon reception. It only graduates into one after a period of acculturation. It is our opinion here that political culture is dynamic, and that what constitutes a country's political culture emerges either by design or by default. A designed political culture is the one that emerges in tandem with the people's stipulated blueprint. In other words, it is the living spirit of the people's envisaged aspirations to adapt and adopt an ideal political lifestyle under which they will live and actualize their psychological and developmental desires and cravings, to which socio-economic and all round aspirations are engrafted. On the other hand, a default political culture is purely a product of happenstance. The developmental trajectory of the political culture depends on the ideological preferences and personality or personal idiosyncrasies of the leader, reflecting as it were, their whimsical inclinations. In a situation like this, the moulding of the political culture becomes an all-comers affair, with every leader depositing his mangled preferences on the default cultural congelation which in turn provides an incubation ground for all kinds of leadership and followership anomaly.

Political culture of impunity, needless to aver, is an offspring of default political culture. It is never an agreed plan of acculturation by Nigerians whatsoever. In the spirit of political philosophy, a consistent reference to the "Democratian void" would suffice for the demonstration of the sudden occupation of the political landscape of Nigeria by what seems to be a celebrated culture of impunity. To be clear, something is said to be empty or void when what is expected to be in it is not there, otherwise in the absence of all other things, air always fills every vacuum, and as a result, the idea of vacuum or absolute emptiness cannot stand the inquisition of logical factuality. Therefore, the Nigerian political system, having not been filled by requisite culture of political urbanity, was hijacked by its default version, the end product of which is a culture of political impunity. This paper assesses the role of this odious culture in the consolidation process of the Nigerian democracy. In attempt to offer proper account for the incidence of culture of impunity, the paper integrates the "minimalist" and the "maximalist conceptions" of democratic consolidation. While the "minimalist conception," emphasizes procedural or formal democracy, the "maximalist conception," focuses on the outcomes of politics, such as institutionalization of political institutions, social justice, and economic equality (Lee, 2007: 103). For purposes of clarity, Schmitter (1992: 424) defines the minimalist conception of democratic consolidation as "the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during

the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives that participate in democratic governance”. In *stricto sensu*, and as evident in the preceding views of Lee (2007) and Schmitter (1992), there seems to be a very thin line between the Minimalist and the Maximalist conceptions of democratic consolidation. Arising from the above, political culture of impunity is further conceived of as an emanation from the minimalist typology, but which has begun shaping and influencing the its maximalist variant.

This paper is sub-divided into six sub-headings, the first of which is the introduction. While theoretical underpinning of the study followed almost immediately after, certain key concepts were addressed under the conceptual clarification. The next sub-heading—the military and political culture of impunity—tries to situate the thrust of political culture of impunity in Nigeria at long period of military suzerainty. Under democratic zeitgeist, political culture of impunity and the negation of democratic process, the debilitating impacts of culture of impunity on democratic consolidation were explored. Conclusion and recommendations later followed sequentially.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

The theoretical lens through which one could better appreciate the discourse is rendered in the laws of dialectics. By way of definition, dialectics is the universal law of motion, reasoning, thought and of development of human society at large. It has a very long history, with Heraclitus (c 530-470 BC) of Ephesus, a 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek philosopher being credited with the first ever dialectical statements. He was believed to have once held that: “Everything is in a state of flux...things are what they are and what they are becoming...*one therefore* cannot step in running water twice”. He emphasized the idea that the world is in constant motion and change; that “strife” was the source of motion, and that opposites could change into each other (Krapivin, 1985:47). Aristotle, a distinguished Greek philosopher, who came years after him, perfected this view by asserting that everything is constant except change, extolling therefore the inevitability of change. However, without prejudice to the foregoing, the concept of dialectics was enunciated beyond mere rhetorical adumbrations by the great classical German philosopher, George Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831). He conceives of dialectics as an embodiment of continual contradictions along the path of possible perfection.

He discovered and formulated the fundamental laws of dialectics, elaborating the idea that the source of development is a struggle of opposites, the internal contradiction inherent in the object and phenomena are the root of all motion and life (Krapivin, 1985:72).

Hegelian dialectics has three fundamental levels of analysis—thesis, antithesis and synthesis. To him, every idea is a thesis embodying its own

contradictions (antithesis) with which it contends and eventually resolves to form a synthesis. Now every synthesis corresponds to a new thesis, and as such embodies its own innate set of contradictions (antithesis) that must again be resolved to have another synthesis, which is invariably a new thesis, and the process continues *ad infinitum* until perfection is attained.

Added to the three critical stages of Hegelian dialectics explored above are yet again the three fundamental laws of dialectics. They are:

- The unity and struggle of opposites
- The negation of the negation, and
- The transformation from quantity to quality

It should be reaffirmed once again that democracy is that form of government that is people oriented, people centred and people directed. It offers the greatest promise of attaining the *summon bonum* for the people by allowing the people themselves (or through their chosen representatives) to be in charge in the making of decisions that affect them, holding that, *ceteris paribus*, the people cannot use power against themselves. This burning desire for the greatest happiness of the members of the political society impelled the nationalists of Nigeria, even in the light of their obvious diversity (ethnicity, religion, culture, language) to unite (the unity of opposites) and fight against British colonial rule perceived then as a common enemy. The prevailing conviction was that with the going of the British would come the attainment of the much desired and expected political and economic *Eldorado*. As desired, colonialism (thesis) was negated through nationalist agitations against it (antithesis), and the result was political independence (synthesis). The struggle for ethnic and tribal pre-eminence and dominance at the national and regional levels coupled with personality clashes soon became the antithesis of the newly acquired independence. The foremost national political “Messiahs”, in the views and opinions of many, were after all not what and who they claimed to be. They were soon seen, especially by the military, as bunch of impostors and wolves clad in sheep hides, and as such must be forced out of power either alive or dead. Hence, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966, the military ousted the civilian government of the nationalists, who had in barely five year earlier pressurised the British out of government (negation of the negation).

The Nigerian political landscape, needless to say, from the aforementioned date to the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1999 presented a fertile *lebensraum* for the dramatization of the dialectical law of the negation of the negation as one military junta after another removed or sought to remove (negate) the other. The height of these negations was the culmination into a 30 months’ civil war in which the Federal government opposed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of the seceding eastern region (the Biafra), even as the latter struggled against the opposing former (the struggle of opposites). With the end of the civil war on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1970, the *Biafrans* were arguably “reintegrated” into mainstream political life of the country (unity of the opposite). In a similar spirit of optimism that ushered in the independence, the return of civilian rule (usually equated by some scholars with the return of democracy) filled

Nigerians with the expectations of a new beginning. In the view of many, the transition from militarism to *civilianism* was analogous to the transformation from quantity to quality, for the latter is always preferred to the former.

### **Conceptual Elucidation**

Certain key concepts recurring in this discourse deserves clarification for proper grasp of the discourse. Whereas all the concepts are important to the appreciation of the work, the followings, in our opinion, deserve greater attention, hence their elucidation at this juncture.

- **Political Culture**

The truth is that the term political culture has attracted to itself many definitions and conceptualizations, but what is essentially truer is that political culture is an aspect of the general culture of a society. It is therefore a sub-culture which is from time to time influenced by the general culture of a people. A timeless definition of a people's general culture was given by Tylor (1924 cited in Anifowose & Enemu, 1999:210) as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Culture therefore coheres with a multiplicity of what defines a people, the by corresponding to what Kluckhohn (1963:24) described as "the total way of life of a people, the social legacy that the individual acquires from his group". Political culture, therefore, is that aspect of culture that borders on politics. As stated earlier, it is the prevailing behavioural orientation and attitudinal proclivity to the political system which the members of the political society have been habituated to over time through networks of psycho- mental and dispositional characteristics generally summed up as their way of life. It provides the template for what is political acceptable or objectionable, and like the general culture of a people, it is acquired and transferred through political socialization. Political socialization in turn is the way society transmits its political culture from generation to generation. It is, in the words of Greenstein (1968:551):

...all political learning, formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned at every stage of the life cycle, including not only explicitly political learning but also nominally non-political learning that affects political behaviour, such as learning of politically relevant social attitude and the acquisition of politically relevant personality characteristics (cited in Anifowose & Enemu, 1999:219)

There are direct and indirect political socializations corresponding loosely to what we had earlier conceptualized as designed and default emergence of political culture. Often listed as core agents of socialization are: the family, the school, the peer group and mass media. Dahl (1966) outlined four seminal elements of political culture to include:

- Orientations of problem solving: are they pragmatic or rationalistic?

- Orientation to collective action: are they cooperative or non-cooperative?
- Orientation to the political system: are they allegiant or alienated?
- Orientation to other people: are they trustful or distrustful?

The most enduring, indeed, popular effort at classifying political culture was made by Almond & Verba (1956) in their work, *The Civic Culture*. Their three main classifications—Parochial culture, Subject culture and Civic culture—were based on the activeness or otherwise of the individuals or members of the political society to the political process of the political system. They further enunciated that in parochial culture, there are no specialised political roles, and the people have little of the political system beyond what happens in their immediate local environment. This being the case, the people have very little or no expectation from the political system. In subject political culture, however, the people are aware of the policies and programmes of the government but do not participate or make input because they believe they cannot influence the output. They are therefore said to be passive citizens, expected only to be obedient to the directives of the governments without any critical disposition to them. Whereas the subject political culture breeds passive citizens, the third type of political culture—the civic culture—bristles with participant citizens. The people are aware of both the inputs and the outputs of the political system; and do indeed participate in the political decision making processes, believing and causing their involvement to have appreciable degrees of influence on the government of the day.

- **Political Culture of Impunity**

Like political culture, which is a sub-culture of the general culture, political culture of impunity is a sub-political culture of what Finer (1962) described as “minimal political culture”. In countries with minimal political culture, “government ignores public opinion, because the politically articulate are so few and weakly organised” (Finer, 1962 in Anifowose & Enemu, 1999: 216). Political culture of impunity translates to that attitudinal cum behavioural tendency among some politicians, especially those in power or close to those in power, which offers that megalomaniac sense of freedom, if not license, to commit offense without punishment, retribution, reprisal or injurious consequences.

Experience has shown that political culture of impunity reigns supreme in political systems that are still under the regimentation of military government or in militarized civilian democracies like Nigeria. Here, the supposed democratic values and institutions still resonate and bristle with diverse colorations of authoritarianism. When this situation lingers over time, the consequence or end-product is usually the erosion of all hitherto existing democratic virtues (where they had existed before relapsing into authoritarianism). Allied to this is the unconscious socialization of the people into a somewhat carefree attitude where anything goes. The leaders soon go morally bankrupt and remain constantly infested with character deficiency virus. One therefore never wonders why the political class perennially stands aloof of the people’s feeling and heartfelt aspirations, especially those that the dividends of

democracy could ordinarily offer with ease. Having, mortgaged their conscience to and murdered their good sense of humanistic disposition in the court of impunity, they unabashedly deep their hands into the common wealth of the people to line their pockets for their own selfish personal aggrandisement.

- **Democratic consolidation**

The concept of democratic consolidation, like many other concepts in Political Science, has been variously defined, with each definition telling us one or two things about the definer's view of what the root word—democracy—means to him/her. Udeogu & Onwuanabile (2016:7) having deeply explored the import and meaning of democracy, conceived of democratic consolidation as the “consistent procedural institutionalisation and habituation to the ideals of democracy”. Ogundiya & Baba (2007:254) agreed with the above cited scholars when they echoed that “democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and about regarding the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game”. In what seems to be a corroboration of the above, Przeworski (1991 cited in Udeogu & Onwuanabile, 2016:7) noted that:

Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all the losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost. Democracy is consolidated when it becomes self-enforcing, that is, when all the relevant political forces find it best to continue to submit their interests and values to the uncertain interplay of the institutions.

On a similar note, Linz & Stephen cited in Ogundiya & Baba (2007:254) provided tri-dimensional perspectives to the salient issue of democratic consolidation. They are: the behavioural, the attitudinal, and the constitutional perspectives.

Behaviourally, democracy becomes the only game in town when no significant political opposition seriously attempt to overthrow the democratic regime or to promote domestic or international violence in order to secede from the state.... Attitudinally, democracy becomes the only game in town when, even in the face of severe political and economic crisis, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic procedures. Constitutionally, democracy becomes the only game in town when all the factors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict within the state will be resolved according to established norms and that violation of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly.

Their conclusion is as remarkably as it is interesting. They held that with consolidation, democracy becomes regularized and deeply internalized in social, institutional and even psychological life as well as in political calculations for achieving goals.

Be that as it may, Udeogu & Onwuanabile (2016:2) made a fascinating distinction between democratic transition and democratic consolidation. They remarked that “while the former has come to be more or less associated with transition from a military or any other dictatorial regime to a civilian regime wherein some of the nominal, but seldom functional, indicators of democracy are present, the latter envisages a consistent procedural institutionalisation and habituation to the ideals of democracy”. Their informed opinion is that “in terms of relative political practicality, it is easier to attain democratic transition than to attain democratic consolidation, and without the latter, every self-acclaimed democracy is a farce, and embodies all the inherent possibilities of relapsing into a somewhat ‘democratic authoritarianism’”.

### **The Military and Political Culture of Impunity**

It should be stated forthwith that political culture of impunity is “part of the unpalatable legacies bequeathed to Nigerians by the prolonged military rule” (Ogundiya & Baba, 2007:259). However, many years of military dictatorship had socialized the people to the military way of life such that even the elite had bought into the idea that Nigeria would be safer in the hands of a retired military head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd). From May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 to May 29<sup>th</sup> 2007, Olusegun Obasanjo bestrode Nigeria like a military colossus in a manner that had little or no suggestion that the country was no longer under military rule. He could hire and fire at will just as he could induce one to resign against one’s conscience. His growing impunity was felt in virtually every aspect of the nation’s body politics, including the National Assembly. The rapidity at which principal officers of the National Assembly was changed speaks volume of his overbearing impunity on the nation’s law making institution. During his eight years’ tenure, he initiated and brought to definitive perfection of the termination of duty of five Senate Presidents, two Deputy Senate Presidents and Speakers of House of Representative. This is a political development that was hitherto unprecedented in the political annals of the country.

**Table 1: Executive Interference in the Leadership of the Principal Officers in the National Assembly, 1999-2007**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>
1	Senate President	Evan Enwerem	1999-1999	PDP
2	Senate President	Chuba Okadigbo	1999-2000	PDP
3	Senate President	Anyim Pius Anyim	2000-2003	PDP
4	Senate President	Adolphus Wabara	2003-2005	PDP
5	Senate President	Ken Nnamani	2005-2007	PDP
6	Deputy Senate President	Haruna Abubakar	1999-2000	PDP



7	Deputy Senate President	Ibrahim Mantu	2000-2003	PDP
8	Speaker	Salisu Buhari	1999-2000	PDP
9	Speaker	Ghali Umar Na'Abba	2000-2003	PDP

**Source:** Compiled by the Authors

In our opinion, the highest form of *civilio-democratic* impunity was exhibited by Obasanjo, with his personality and regime notoriously looming larger than even the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar. He was a non-respecter of institutions, and this is very well known by his Yoruba people. Ibode & Dode (2007:138) observed that "...Obasanjo was equally of the Yoruba origin, he was in the eyes of the *Afenifere*, a suspect child. For one thing, he was not an adjudged respecter of Chief Awolowo, the late Yoruba sage and the symbol of their unity exclusiveness".

It is therefore not surprising that his own people never wanted him in power as they stoutly voted against him even in his own state of Ogun, while overwhelmingly voting in favour of his opponent, Chief Olu Falae. The table below gives a picturesque breakdown of the electoral outcome.

**Table 2: Comparative Electoral Performance of Obasanjo & Falae in core Yoruba States**

States	Obasanjo's Vote	Percentage (%)	Falae's Vote	Percentage (%)
Lagos	209,012	11.9	1,545,969	88.1
Ondo	133,323	15.0	668,474	85.0
Osun	187,011	23.5	607,628	76.5
Ekiti	191,618	26.8	522,072	73.2
Ogun	143,564	30.3	332,340	69.8

**Source:** Ibode & Dode (2007). *Political parties, voting pattern and national integration* pp.139

Militarization of the society is a potent development in the transformation of society into what it should not be in the first instance. Whatever the mind can imagine is comprehensibly possible in a militarized political system. In addition to having brought about large-scale erosion of attitudinal rectitude:

The militarization of social life has also compromised accountability, transparency, respect for human rights and due process. Military regimes adopt a zero-sum approach to politics, treating governance as war, and the prerequisites of public office as war booty. The opposition is perceived, not as people with different political opinion-with a right to organise and express themselves, but more as adversaries to be disorganised, divided and crushed by all means necessary. The citizens are treated as subjects...people who find themselves in

power do not consider themselves accountable to the people...Under such conditions, very little attention is paid to the welfare and needs of the masses, who are then repressed or intimidated when they make demands on the government (Obi,1999:138).

The citizens, on their own part, especially the youth most of whom were born during the military junta, seem to have been socialized into this life style. Having grown under a regime or regimes that have no regards for individual rights and political freedom; where the whims and caprices of the Military Head of State is the law and where any effort at raising objections, or expressing a contrary view always results in fatal victimization, they unconscious underwent a mental and attitudinal radicalization. Sustained over time, the citizens seem to have been beaten into a somewhat passive conformity, viewing and accepting the rather ugly realities of the moment as a way of life, and hence the *metastasis* across the country of a default habituation of the citizens to a prevalent culture of impunity.

Most incandescent of the major aspects and manifestations of political impunity are political/electoral violence, variously expressed in blatant election rigging and politically motivated killings. Although the tendency has always been for scholars and political analysts to describe and use political violence and electoral violence interchangeably, the true position is that while they are related, they are not the same, and therefore should not be used synonymously. For a start, political violence is broader, indeed, wider, in connotation than electoral violence, which in fact, is an aspect of the former, and thus remains a far narrower concept than the former. Suffice it to say that all electoral violence is political violence but not all political violence is electoral violence. Political violence may, therefore, be seen as all forms of violence directly or indirectly directed at or associated with the processes involved in the acquisition of power, wielding of power and consolidation of power. In a somewhat similar vein, Anifowose (1982:4) put forward a rather all-inclusive definition of political violence as:

...the use of threat or physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within political system against another individual or individuals and/or property with the intention to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property and whose objective, choice of target or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance, that is tend to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequence for the political system.

Electoral violence on the other hand, has to do with an aspect of political violence that is associated with the conduct and process of elections, occurring as the case may be before, during or after the conduct of election. Ogundiya (2003) cited in

(Adereti, 2007) outlines some of the characters and nature that electoral violence tends to take to include all sorts of riots, demonstrations, party clashes, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping. He further asserts that “it could be regarded elections motivated crises employed to alter, change or influence by force or coercion, the electoral behaviours or voters or voting patterns or possibly reverse electoral decision in a favour of a particular individual, groups or political party” Ogunjiya (2003 in Adereti 2007:248). In sum, therefore, electoral violence are injurious acts and behaviour usually directed at persons or things so as to influence election outcomes or deterring elected persons from consolidating their positions after electoral contests.

It is estimated that political impunity expressed in both political and electoral violence has cost over 10,000 lives of Nigerians while hundreds of thousands of Nigerians have been displaced; this is in addition to properties worth billions of naira that have been destroyed (Suberu, 2002:457).

### **Democratic zeitgeist, Political culture of impunity and the negation of democratization process**

Democratization process starts with democratic transition through democratic acclimatization and ends in democratic consolidation. All of these are stages in the developmental or maturational trajectory of stable democracy. By implication, therefore, even democratic consolidation is itself a process that seeks to culminate in a stable democracy. While Nigeria has successfully transcended the rudimentary transitory stage (democratic transition) it currently stands at a somewhat equidistant position between democratic acclimatization and democratic consolidation. The return to democratic civilian rule in 1999 came with certain new concepts and ideas that were hitherto unknown or unfamiliar to the traumatized and militarized masses. Terms like the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, due process, equality before the law, periodic elections, tenurial expiration, constitutional supremacy, etc, were strange to most Nigerians, especially those that were either not born before 1966 or were still very young to appreciate the pre-1966 political arrangement, or those who knew before but have forgotten in the face of prolonged military suzerainty. The process through which this category of individuals get used to these “strange” concepts and ideas so as to enable them appreciate the new political dispensation corresponds to democratic acclimatization. Without prejudice to the opinion expressed under conceptual clarification, but in support of it rather, democratic consolidation represents the “consistent procedural institutionalisation and habituation to the ideals of democracy” corresponding thereby to “the process by which a new democracy matures in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock” Udeogu & Onwuanabile (2016:2) and Wikipedia (2009:1) respectively.

The crusade for democratic consolidation in Nigeria is being vigorously confronted with emergent political culture of impunity. Within the belly of political culture of impunity lies behavioural cum idealistic tendencies that threaten the sustainability of the not-too-impressive strides already made in the direction of

democratic acclimatization. Among other values of democracy that tends to sustain it through the best of times and the darkest of hours is a network of interrelated passion, habits and idiosyncrasies encapsulated within the capsule of what is termed the democratic spirit. It is, in fact, the zeitgeist of democracy. This idea is better appreciated when one reconciles oneself to the illuminating fact that democracy is a way of life, and like every other historical ways of life, democracy has a spirit that defines it. This spirit which re-launched itself into significance since the end of the Cold War has equally become a movement to which the United States of America has been at the forefront of propagation and defence in recent times. While practically frowning at and vigorously rejecting high-handedness, individualistic perfectionism and authoritarianism, democratic zeitgeist promotes and encourages pluralism, tolerance and the sovereignty of the people. In addition to promoting the rights and liberties of the individual, it sees government as a trust, and as such must not be used by the leader upon whom it is entrusted against the interest of the people. Although unspoken, it was this democratic zeitgeist that spoke through the mouths of Thomas Jefferson and the Continental Congress of the American Colonies during the Declaration of American Independence, thus:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness- That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers on such forms, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness (Ranney 1975 cited in Anifowose & Enemu, 1999:148).

Political culture of impunity threatens the democratic zeitgeist and negates the democratization process by breeding attitudes that militate the two. It stands, as it were, opposite the democratic spirit in the spectrum of good governance, encouraging all that democracy discourages and vice versa. While the zeitgeist frowns at breach of rule of law, political impunity thrives in it. Hence in Nigeria since the return of democracy, all the indices and empirical indicators of political impunity have been in constant manifestation, from contemptuous observance of the rule of law and established institutions to dramatic violence on democratic institutions as in the case of removal of principal officers of the National Assembly. Political impunity fans the embers of over-bloated feelings of megalomania, instilling in the lives of the people the feeling that they are above the law, and therefore can do anything and get away with it. The greatest danger posed by this abominable culture is that it has the inherent tendency of uprooting the fastening norms and values of a nascent

democracy like the one we have in Nigeria. It provides the very antithesis of constitutional and legal avenues of seeking redress just as it promotes the politics of do-or-die and violence. Consequently, politics in Nigeria, has taken a life and death character to itself with spates of pre- and post electoral cum political violence, expressing itself in assassinations, abductions and waste of costly property of imagined or real political enemies.

**Table 3: Some political culture of impunity motivated political violence in Nigeria**

S/N	Names of Victim(s)	Date Killed/ Attacked	State	Remarks
1.	Mr Sunday Ugwu	Sept 9, 1999	Enugu	A case of mistaken identity. The victim was an elder brother of Hon. Nwabueze, the target who is a member of Enugu State House of Assembly
2.	Lambert Saturday Dagogo	April 26, 2001	Rivers	The victim died in a fight that broke out between ANPP and PDP supporters in Ogubolo Local Government
3.	James Ibori	Feb. 4, 2001	Delta	Attack on the governor of Delta by hired assassins
4.	Momoh Lawal	March 5, 2001	Kogi	Kogi interparty conflict between ANPP and PDP
5.	Odunayo Olagbaju	Dec. 21, 2001	Osun	The victim was a member of the Osun State House of Assembly. His death was "unofficially linked" to the political intra-party crisis in Osun State
6.	Chief Bola Ige	Dec 23, 2001	Osun	The victim was a Minister of Justice His assassination was also associated with the intra-party crisis in Osun State
7.	Janet Olopade	Aug. 13, 2002	NA	A prominent PDP leader stabbed to death by assailants, mainly Youths for preventing them from pasting posters of a chairmanship on her house. This was presumably an inter-party conflict
8.	Ahmed Pategi	Aug. 15, 2002	Kwara	Kwara state PDP chairman murdered along his orderly when his car was accosted on his way to Abuja. Possibly intra-party.

9.	Victor Nwankwo	Aug. 20, 2002	NA	The victim was the younger brother of Arthur Nwankwo, a high-profile politician and founder of the Eastern Union Mandate (EUM).
10.	Alhaji Isyku Moh'd	Sept. 25, 2002	NA	The victim was until death the National Vice-chairman of the United Nigerian Peoples Party (UNPP) for the Northwest, possibly as a result of interparty clash.
11.	Dele Arojo	Nov. 25, 2002	Lagos	The victim was the DPD's gubernatorial aspirant for Lagos state.
12.	Unspecified number of people died from gunshot wounds	Jan. 13, 2003	Oyo	This was an intra-party clash at Oyo state secretariat of the ANPP.
13.	Adamu Waziri	Jan. 18, 2003	Yobe	Inter-party conflict between the rival gangs from ANPP and PDP.
14.	One person killed in Owo	Feb. 2003	Ondo	Factional fighting in the Alliance for Democracy (AD)
15.	Malam Inuwa Kabo	Feb. 23, 2003	Borno	Assassination attempt on the life of the speaker, Borno State House of Assembly
16.	Ogbonnaya Uche	Feb. 2003	Imo	He was a popular ANPP senatorial candidate, eliminated because of his popularity
17.	Theodore A. Agwata	Feb. 2003	Imo	He was until his death a principal secretary to the Imo State Governor
18.	Eight people died in political clash	Feb. 2003	Benue	ANPP and PDP thugs engaged themselves in a battle for supremacy Jato-Aka, Kwande LGA.
19.	Mrs Emily Omope	Feb. 2003	NA	Her death was as a result of acid poured on her in Dec;2002. She belonged to Alliance for Democracy (AD).
20.	Marshal Harry	March 05, 2003	Abuja	The victim started as a PDP stalwart and later decamped to the ANPP. He was the South

				South coordinator of the presidential campaign of the ANPP. He was killed in his house in Abuja.
21.	20 houses burnt to ashes	March 12, 2003	Kebbi	It was as a result of fracas between ANPP and PDP supporters.
22.	One person killed and several others wounded, including two commissioners in Obubra, Cross River State	March 20, 2003	Cross River	Inter-party clashes and several other gubernatorial candidate supporters
23.	Moshood Gidado and Ibrahim Rasak	March 21, 2003	Kwara	Inter-party clashes between the supports of PDP and ANPP gubernatorial aspirants Mohammed Lawal (ANPP) and Bukola Saraki (PDP)
24.	Chuba Okadigbo	Sept. 25, 2003	Kano	Chuba Okadigbo was the running mate to Muhammed Buhari, ANPP presidential aspirant. His death was linked to tear gas sprayed in his car by the police at an ANPP rally in Kano on 23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2003. The ruling party was accused of using the police to terminate his life. PDP denied this allegation.
25.	Dikko	Feb. 6, 2004	Killed on his way to Delta state	He was the vice chairman of PDP south-south. There were counterclaims as some believe that he died from armed robbery attack while some believe he was killed by hired assassins.
26.	Mr Luke Shigaba	March 4, 2004	Kogi	Until his death in the hands of assassins, he was the chairman of Bassa LGA.
27.	Attack on George Akume	March 4, 2004	Attacked on his way to Abuja	George Akume is the Governor of Benue state. His convoy was attacked on his way to Abuja. One person lost his life in that attack.
28.	Philip Olorunnipa	March 7, 2004	Kogi	He was until his death the chairman Kogi State Electoral Commission.

**Source:** Yaqub, N.O. *Inter and intra-party conflict, and Democracy in Nigeria* pp.

298-302 cited in Ogundiya & Baba (2007), *Electoral violence and prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria*, pp.256-258.

In view of the foregoing, Ogundiya & Baba (2007) insisted that the value orientation of the political elite must change for democracy to thrive. They further opined that:

...the behaviour of the political elites that if we cannot have it, we must destroy it. Certainly, these tendencies are worrisome, as they tend to question the country's preparedness and willingness to allow the seed of democracy to germinate. The on-going political motivated assassination, which has claimed many lives, darkens, as it were, the future of democracy in Nigeria (Ogundiya & Baba, 2007 in Jega & Ibeanu, 2007:261).

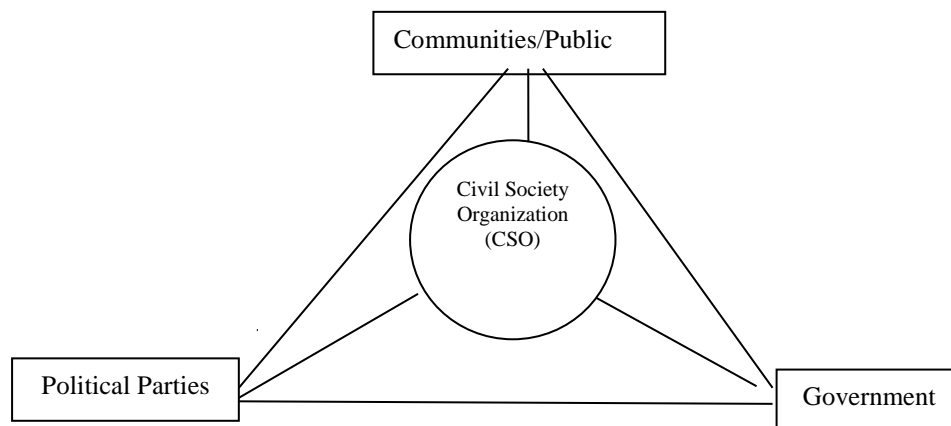
### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

Democracy as a system of government has a very long and far history. Although what we have in the world today is a variant of the original idea of democracy as was first practised in Athens of the ancient Greece, it still holds fast and tenaciously onto the maxim of the people's sovereignty. Today, following the obituary of communism as signalled by the end of the Cold War, the concept and idea of democracy is fast becoming a global political culture to which every society is expected to be acculturated. The US, as the police of the world politics, has since taken it upon itself to propagate and defend this movement for the acculturation of the globe. And more than ever before, greater number of nations States have either subscribed or have been forced to subscribe to this thorough-going wind of democratization. Nigeria's effort at making hers firmly rooted (democratic consolidation) so as to be able to reap the dividends or benefits often associated with it has come under unmitigated challenge in the form of political culture of impunity.

This study, therefore, investigates political culture of impunity and the challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The central argument is that the former is a negation of the democratic zeitgeist or spirit without which the crusade for democratic consolidation in Nigeria shall remain a distant possibility. Being a derivation of default political culture brought about by prolonged military suzerainty, political culture of impunity embodies all the antithesis of democracy. In this way, it promotes and sanctions arrogance, rascality, high-handedness, contempt of the law, negligence of moral obligations, due process, among others. Reforms upon reforms geared at making democracy fare better have not done the expected magic either, as the requisite attitudes, feelings, behavioural orientation—all of which are summed up in one supper spirit—the democratic zeitgeist. Hence the lamentation cum recommendation by Ibeanu (2007:303) that "...political leadership cannot achieve the necessary changes/reforms on its own, however well-intentioned. Instead, what is required is a strategy that builds a synergy among the public, government and political parties. This synergy will necessarily revolve around a movement in civil society."



**Figure 1: Synergy for democratic consolidation**



**Source:** Ibeanu, (2007). *A troubled path to democratic consolidation*, pp 303.

Added to the above fascinating recommendation of Ibeanu (2007) and taking into cognisance the fundamental issues raise in the preceding pages, the paper makes the following recommendations:

- ✓ The inculcation of the right political attitude to children and the youths through civic education and the promotion of same through the National Orientation Agency. In this connection, the introduction of civics in post-primary schools curriculum is timely, and should, therefore be channelled at encouraging value re-orientation.
- ✓ On no condition should the military be looked up to for national leadership. The benefits of hind-sight have revealed most vividly that military authoritarianism is incompatible with democratic liberalism, and as such negates the normative argument for a benevolent dictatorship in countries undergoing transitory democracy.
- ✓ Nullification or annulment of the victory of a politician, whose victory, upon confirmation by a body set for that purpose, was made possible via the encouragement or promotion of violence resulting in voters' intimidation, destruction of property and/or death. By so doing, impunity would be made unattractive.
- ✓ A body, the political equivalent of EFCC and ICPC, charged with the responsibility of identifying and recording actions and attitudes that smacks off impunity, should be set up to investigate the activities of elected politicians found guilty of impunity related offences. Such persons, if and when found guilty, should be made to face the long arm of the law.

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