

**DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS: MYTHS, ILLUSIONS AND
REALITIES**

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Introduction

Liberal democracy has become a daunting challenge in Nigeria. Rather than build democracy, the façade of multiparty system and pluralism have become the cover for unleashing despotism and authoritarian democracy in Nigeria. Elections are the weakest link to democracy in Nigeria, they are the key context used for displaying the inability of Nigerian political elite to show that they have internalised the values and nuances of liberal democracy. They hate competition, are insensitive to public opinion, they are not accountable; above all, they are self-seeking, greedy and corrupt. They abuse public office and exhibit a culture of impunity in their conduct. Elections are weak primarily because of the way political parties emerged, the principles upon which they are constructed, their target audience and their objectives. Political parties have become nothing other than agencies and platform for candidate shuffling, defection, compromise and negotiation in the contest of the *politics of entryism*. All these are not merely a product of militarism or military rule, but they are also products of the nature of the post-colonial state and the manner in which decolonisation politics was carried out. The post-colonial state in Africa was *de-racialised* and *Africanised*, but it was not *democratised*. Hence all the apparatuses of repression inherited from the ex-colonial masters were indiscriminately applied without being dismantled. This is not merely a function of colonial legacy, but also of colonial structural inheritance. This partly explains why the struggle for democracy in Africa cannot merely be that of demilitarisation or subordination of the military to civil control. It must seek to address structural questions relating to colonial inheritance.

There is a lot of alarmist and sensational writings on Nigeria's polity and its future, including US State Department Report about how Nigeria may break up in a few years. A journalist, Karl Maier, wrote a book titled *"This House has Fallen"*; this has become standard reference text of western European scholars and policy makers. Maier's book is so impressionistic, journalistic and lacks any deep understanding of the political sociology of Nigeria. Even the people consulted or interviewed for the book suggest that it is not a study to be taken seriously.

Others have said that Nigeria is a "collapsed state", "failed state", or a "failing state". Many of these writers do not even understand what a state means or how it is socially constituted. They confuse the manifestation of conflicts and crisis for state collapse. The German state did not collapse merely because Nazi Hitler was uprooted. A state is much more than its political actors and the manifestation of crises.

The Nigerian state has contradictory tendencies, it is both dependent and nationalistic; parasitic and self-initiating. It is constituted by social classes and forces in contestation, they therefore have paradoxical and contradictory tendencies and values, some tending towards the *Common Good* and others gravitating towards liberal individualism and the theology of the market. All these are predicated upon the nature of the political economy and the character of the social formation and the pattern of accumulation. The problem of Nigeria has been blamed on leadership and

corruption. But, there is no analysis of corruption and greed in Nigeria that can wish a way a rigorous analysis of the pattern of accumulation and the role of the state in deciding the direction and nature of accumulation. Neither can leadership be abstracted from social classes, the undergirding ideational system and the values of the political elite. Yet, most analysis tend not to take all these into account, as complex and intricate factors for study.

Today, being in government is the most lucrative business in Nigeria and therefore it is also the greatest investment and profit yielding venture in town. The private sector has collapsed. The so-called private sector in Nigeria is a victim of de-industrialisation. The private sector is nothing but a foreign-rooted private sector. The private sector is also an appendage of the government sector. All attempts by government at divestiture and privatisation have not led to a private-sector led growth in Nigeria. The private sector has weak absorptive capacity and it manifests all the tendencies which the public enterprises were accused of: corruption, inefficiency, and lack of profitability.

Today, Nigeria's social standards and social indicators are low. Our health and education standards are low. Our contractors do substandard work, we import substandard and fake drugs, and everything is substandard. Yet we have resilient and competent people, whose skills and capacity demand more than what they get. Our wasted potential is much more than our realised potentials, over 7.2 million children are out of school. Many trained medical doctors have no placement for Housemanship, many trained teachers are without jobs, and many qualified lawyers cannot practice. Yet, we are not able to meet UNESCO student/teacher ratio, WHO doctor/patient ratio. Many cases are pending in courts because there are not enough courts and judges. Why is this so? Along time ago, Claude Ake avers that it is "politics not economics that underdeveloped Africa". Billy Dudley states that political instability in Nigeria is a by product of lack of elite consensus over constitutive and regulative rules that undergird the polity. Bjorn Beckman, Yusuf Bangura and Jibrin Ibrahim have variously argued that liberal democracy is a project worth building in Africa (cf. Rudebeck, 1989). How much have our politicians been sensitive to the project of building liberal democracy? Can Liberal democracy be constructed without liberal morality? Can politics be abstracted from morality? Put differently is there no tension between the "morality of politics" and "politics of morality" in Nigeria? Every profession, every practices has its ethical principles. As it is with the teaching, medical, or sporting profession, so it is with politics as a vocation. In Nigeria, we have taken ethics out of politics as if ethics are not important to political practices, instead we blame everything on the failure of the constitution, "false" federalism. No matter how perfect our constitution may be, no matter how "true" our federalism may be, if there is no ethical basis for political practices, we will not develop a political culture that promotes democracy.

There is the banal talk and celebration of so-called "dividends of democracy"; others call it the "consolidation of democracy" (cf. Jega et al, 2010). The dividends of democracy are posed in economic terms. But where are the dividends? To whom do they accrue? Are we consolidating democracy or consolidating authoritarian rule?

Have we made progression or regression on democracy since 1999? What is accountable for this? Are elections a true test of democracy or democratic practise? How have elections further undermined our quest for democracy? How can we sieve the myth and illusions in our democracy?

In this Lecture, I intend to shift attention away from the traditional preoccupation with the legacies of militarism, electoral institutions and agencies in the understanding of the distortion of our political practices. I wish to focus on the role of political parties in the reinforcement of specific myths and illusions, and therefore in undermining elections and democracy in Nigeria. I will then demonstrate how this rub on the polity.

Defining Democracy

The definition of democracy as “Government of the people, by the people and for the people” is not tenable. This Lincolnian defining is a myth. It never existed anywhere from the Greek city state to the United States of America. In Greece, there was classification of people into citizens and slaves, city people and ruralites. Only Citizens had franchise and could vote. Slaves did not. The Greek city state created an Assembly with direct representation, due to the small population involved. That is no longer possible today.

Aristotle noted that democracy is not the best form of government, but the best compromise and most acceptable form of government. There are more than 200 variants of democracies in the world today. Indeed, there are no two similar democracies in the world, whether they draw from the same philosophical template or not. The most popular form of democracy today is liberal democracy. This is the form of democracy that is practised in Western Europe and North America. This form of democracy is significantly different from social democracy, socialist democracy and popular democracy. Liberal democracy is rooted to or has some distinguishing characteristics including liberal individualism, multi-party system, pluralism, social atomism, fetishism of the market, and the commodification of the individual. It further talks about individual rights rather than group rights; competition rather than cooperation and so on.

In Nigeria, we have come to assume that liberal democracy is the only template for building democracy. That is yet another myth. We also believe that liberal democracy can empower the ordinary people. It cannot, because liberal democracy is built around economic means and majority of the people are impoverished. Hence liberal democracy disempowers them.

Furthermore, liberal democracy is said to allow for choice between different competitors, the reality is that because those whom the liberal democratic system throws up are constructed around the logic of the market, it only throws up people who are standard bearers of the market and who believe in the market logic. In a word, liberal democracy is an exclusionary political system. Hence liberal democracy narrows and limits the choices of the people. Thandika Mkandawire calls it “choiceless choice”.

All democracies are artefactual. In other words they are constructed. But democracy is not merely about executive, legislature and judiciary. Indeed, the judiciary is not a organ of democracy because it merely mediates between the two organs of democracy, namely the executive and legislature. It is therefore an illusion to believe that the Judiciary is constructed in the spirit and values of democracy. The judiciary is one of the most hierarchical and authoritarian professions in the worlds the dichotomy between Senior Advocates (SANs) versus non-SANs in Nigeria is highly suggestive. The behaviour and social relationship between SANs and non-SANs within the court room is most absurd, to say the least. It is more like what happens within the Army.

I want to reconstruct and redefine democracy as values than rather than as artefacts or system. I wish to argue that it is because we have failed in these values that is why we cannot find and get our politics right. Political parties are meant to carry out functions they currently do not carry out. In so doing, I will argue that democracy is not something that is merely attributable to political parties and political institutions. Democracy is something we internalise and values we express at all times and in all structures, sites and spaces. Reformulated and reconceptualised in this form, we should begin to ask how democratic are our schools, factories, military, Christian movements, Islamic movements, traditional institutions, Non Governmental Organisations, and the family. If all these institutions, sites and spaces share and understand the value of democracy and people internalise those virtues then a nation can be said to be democratic.

The key challenge to Nigeria today, is that we expect democracy only from among our political parties, legislature and executive and yet we cannot find it, we cannot get it. Why is this so? This is because political parties were ill prepared for the project of democracy; the transition programme was not designed to succeed and was built on militarist foundation with militicians as it key actors. You can and may win elections without sharing in the values or virtues of democracy. Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany through an election, yet, he and his party did not believe in any single thing about democracy, because they did not internalise the values that came with democracy.

I am making two separate arguments here. I claim that democracy should be conceptualised as values that are taken to all sites and spaces, and not just as artefacts that are restricted to institutions, structures and agencies. Second, I am proposing that we should not seek the understanding of the failure of our polity merely in INEC's catastrophic past, and in military rule but also in the failure of the political parties to carry our their traditional functions and the role of *militicians* many of whom have become godfathers. The lack of democratic values and the failure of political parties have reinforced the structural contradictions in Nigeria and hence continue to throw up all forms of political aberrations including godfathers, political thugs, rigged elections and so on. For instance, we can not learn civility by joining a political party. Civility is a virtue that we can bring into a party; we must have learnt civility growing up in the family. Our lack of civility is not due to

prolonged military rule per se, it is due principally to the attitude of our parents, our teachers, our managers, our colonial past and the institutions they left behind, before it got to our military rulers. To escape and ignore these and merely focus on agencies and structures will not be fair. The relationship between parents and children, teacher and students, manager and worker is hierarchical, deterministic and unilinear. It is therefore anti-democratic. The challenge is how can we make these relationships democratic? In doing this, we are expanding the democratic space.

What is not often known is that although the 1998 transition was hurried, but more fundamentally it was not shed of its militarised character. This was what caused the division in the pro-democracy movement, the disputation was whether to embrace, participate or resist the transition programme. In the end, those who struggled for democracy were not the beneficiaries of the transition process. Hence many of those who took over the reins of power, were neither the traditional politicians that were inherited from the Second republic, nor were they known for or associated with any democratic struggles. The transition programme was built or constructed on weak foundation and its actors were not keen about building democracy but simply seeking power and money. It is not by accident that the first challenge of members of the National Assembly (NASS) was with taking furniture N5 million Naira loan, as if their professional calling was that of furniture making.

Myths and Illusions

As Mahmood Mamdani often says, a myth is not necessarily a lie. The first major political myth in Nigeria is that the political elite believe in elections. No, they do not. They want raw power, they wish to be in power but they do not believe in competition or competitive politics. This is because many of them did not go through mentoring and did not internalise the traits, virtues and nuances of democracy. They served the military, made a lot of money from undisclosed sources in the private sector or simply had a sponsor and therefore gatecrashed into politics. Most of them were never involved with popular struggles and resistance against military rule. They therefore cannot understand or value democracy. They are scared of competition, they are scared of elections and they abhor democracy, even though they verbalise and sloganeer about them. Since 1998, only few political office holders got to power through competitive elections. Many of them use money, thugs and violence to acquire power.

The second main myth is that of North-south dichotomy in politics. This is a point that is often instrumentalised and used to manipulate the people by the political elite. This is the basis of the consociational principle of federal character and zoning. But federal character has further divided rather than united the country. This is because of the emphasis on “son of the soil” or the settler-native question, which today is one of the greatest problems bedevilling Nigeria. However citizenship is at the core of democracy, because citizenship defines the basis of rights and entitlements. Where such is denied to the people then a basic tenet of democracy is undermined.

The third major myth is that military rule is responsible for our ills today. That is not entirely true we need to go to locate our problems in inherited colonial social structures and institutions and the rise of the group of politicians called *militicians*. The post-colonial African state was a violent state; it was overdeveloped and had sophisticated super-structure and apparatuses of repression or violence. Indeed, military rule is a product of this superstructure and its over-politicisation.

Fourth myth is the role of elections in deepening democracy. It is assumed and asserted that no matter how flawed, elections allow democracy to grow. That is not true. Flawed elections can indeed lead to malgovernance, democratic regression, de-democratisation or what I called *authoritarian democracy* (Momoh, 2010). Let me make a disclaimer. By this assertion, I am not saying that military rule is a substitute for or better than flawed elections. No. I am merely suggesting that flawed elections lead to divisiveness, anarchy, agony, tension, unmitigated animosity and anger, which often find outlets in both physical and psychological violence. Both of which heat up and endanger the political system only grow where democracy has been internalised and accepted and not vice versa. Today, most of those in power did not win elections. The case of General Elections of 2008 in Kenya are the clearest example.

Fifth myth is that we have a political class. This is untrue. What we have is a political elite that is preponderantly *militician*. Claude Ake quite correctly differentiates between a political class and political elite. A political class is coherent, disciplined and has some values and ideas. A political elite does not, in addition, it is self-seeking, vain and hedonistic. Politics is the only profession in the world where there are no rules of entry or exit. There is lack of elite-consensus in Nigeria because there are no formal rules of entry into politics and there is no national project or a shared vision such as those defined in the Second National Development plan. Chapter Two of the 1999 Constitution is seen as the rhetorical aspect of the constitution, with “make feel good” principles. And no political party has a special school of democracy prior to or during membership recruitment. The Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS) set up by General Ibrahim Babangida merely became a scientific outfit to defend military rule.

Sixth myth is that our political parties are divergent or share different ideological viewpoints. The manifestoes of the parties do not so suggest. Virtually all our dominant political parties share the same viewpoint hence they have no answer to the youth and women question and how to get the working people out of their condition of marginality, indignity and domination. They have no clue about how to construct an inclusive, participatory, and accountable polity. Indeed, these are not their preoccupation. Neither are they concerned about social policies that favour the toiling people. These political parties have no links, networks and connections to the ruralites. As such they do not know and do not care about what the people want. All they do is to instrumentalise the toiling people during elections. Take for example education, and indeed basic education as conceived in Universal Basic Education (UBE), which is supposed to be free and compulsory. Yet, by 2006 over 7.2 million children were not in primary schools in Nigeria, and close to one-thirds of those

figures had dropped out of primary schools in Nigeria. Yet, UBE has become a conduit pipe for accumulation, as obscene cases before the EFCC suggest. But what should political parties have done, as a policy measure to get UBE right. It is to have adopted what is euphemistically referred to as the **4 As of Public Education**: (i) Availability-free and compulsory to ALL. (ii) Accessibility-accessible to ALL irrespective of sex, ethnicity or religion. (iii) Acceptability-relevant to the national and community in its contents. (iv) Adaptability-being able to meet the existential needs and expectations of the people.

Seventh myth is that the civil service is an insulated from politics, that it is neutral, impartial and aloof from the intricacies of politics. That is also not true. The Nigerian civil service is highly engrossed and enmeshed in politics. It is partisan and manipulative. It is partisan and serves specific political interests and viewpoints. It is enmeshed in the greed, avarice and corruption that have overwhelmed our political elite. Indeed no act of corruption can be successfully carried out in any of the Ministries, Departments or government agencies without the cooperation of the civil servants. Very little attention has been focused on them, even at the level of the NASS. Indeed, it takes the centre stage in directing and controlling the political elite/contractors on how to steal, what to steal and how to conceal the loot. Yet, our civil service is anti-democratic, old fashioned and with mundane values. Reform is coming to the civil service so late and too slowly. And the reform is not such that can reposition the service. Above all, key civil servants are resisting the reforms, because they do not wish to change. And it is resisting reforms, including reform to sit for examinations before promotion, reform to adopt non-hierarchical leadership style and reform to be open and accountable to the public rather than hide under the rubric of anonymity and secrecy to perpetrate crimes. The oath of secrecy and anonymity have indeed become the cover for Nigerian civil servants to carry out their heinous and anti-democratic assault on democracy. It is useful to begin to focus on how the civil service is a drawback, a constraint weighing heavily on the democracy.

The eighth myth is that local governments are the lowest level of representation in Nigeria. If anything, local governments have become the lowest level of consolidation of authoritarian rule and corruption. Local Government Chairmen see themselves as an extension of the office of the Governor and the prominent traditional ruler in the Local government Area. The Governor and Traditional ruler-Oba, Obi or Emir-decide what is often done at that level. Again, Local government Councillors combine both the role of the Executive and the legislature. They see themselves as part of the Executive, and at the same time the Council-in-session; they also legislate over budget and carry out other legislative functions including impeachment of the Chairman. They want to eat their cake and have it. Is that how to build democracy? How close are Local Government Councils to the grassroots? There is need for people-centred-decentralisation at the level of local government. There must be a point of convergence between local government and *community governance* and between both and grassroots empowerment. To actualise this, there is also need for *evidence-based advocacy* and *result-based Monitoring and Evaluation* (M&E). The key challenge in the local and grassroots levels is how

marginality can be turned into agency, and how agency can be used as a context for social and political empowerment of the toiling people.

The first illusion is that free, fair and credible elections can be guaranteed by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) alone. That is not true. INEC had used the biometric method in voters' registration in 2006, but how much did this curb multiple registration or voting? It was only in few places that verification of voters list was carried out. Many candidates did not know they will still stand elections until a few days to the election day. Ballot papers used for the 2007 Presidential election had no serial numbers. And EFCC was used as a weapon to surreptitiously disqualify candidates opposed to the government of the day such as Atiku Abubakar. Yet, not a single person was paraded as having registered twice. Electoral impunity has become the order of the day.

The second illusion is that godfathers will be wished away easily by having formidable political parties. The point however that is Godfathers are often the owners or co-owners of political parties. Those who are critical about the role of Godfathers in political parties are perceived as irritants, and reminded that they are strangers and members who could easily be suspended or expelled. The challenge here is how can genuine, people-rooted, people-focused and people-inspired political parties be formed?

The third illusion is that the political elite can become progressive merely by moving from a dominant party to an opposition party. The progressive-reactionary divide does not fit into the politics of today as it used to fit the ideologically-based politics of the Second Republic-Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) versus National party of Nigeria (NPN). *All the dominant political parties of today lack ideology. They are mere electoral machines, designed, interested and used for the purposes of elections ONLY, and oiled by the wheel of Godfathers, moneybags, ethnicity, religion and other forms of sectarianism.* Today, politicians defect to other political parties not on the basis of party ideology or programme but simply on whether they can find a platform to contest election. On the cabinet of a former Governor of Lagos state, 9 of his commissioners indicated interest to run for the post of Governor in 2007, and virtually all of them defected to join other parties when their ambition was not realised; and more than half of them have found their way back into the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), for the sake of continued political relevance. Claude Ake calls this the "*anarchy of ambition*". I call it *political nomadism*. Nigerian politics has become so ensconced in cultural aesthetics that are banal and vulgar. Current political aspirants are not distinguished by their ideas but their personal traits: less corrupt, and self-discipline. This is the kind of judgement being passed on Muhammadu Buhari and Nuhu Ribadu. This does not really offer Nigerians substantive choices. That one aspirant is more disciplined or is less corruption or has better personal traits or values than another does not say much. How can such a candidate address the burning issues confronting Nigeria? Nigerians are being offered the choice to vote on the morality of candidates and not the ideas of candidates, they are being told to vote on the basis of geographical divide and not the competences of candidates offering themselves for election (ala Northern

elements within the PDP, ably led by Adamu Ciroma). Is that democracy? True, the character of a candidate is useful and important, but that is a second order question in politics. The first order politics is what does he/she have to offer the people? But that is the level to which we have degenerated in Nigeria. Our political standards have become so low and too cheap. In the past Awolowo, Azikiwe, Aminu Kano and so on were identified with certain ideas, beyond their personal discipline and focus. But why have things suddenly changed? A political party ought to be measured by the values and principles of his/her party, the party in turn ensure that those values and principles are upheld and internalised. They party ought to and should give leadership and serve as the driving force in all key directions. However, political parties are currently driven and nurtured by individuals who dominate over them like some *latifundia conquistadores* of the Latin Americas. These individuals are anti-democratic; they have no sense of national Interest but personal and selfish interest. They perceive power as a personal repository for the pursuit of hedonistic and self-serving agenda. The state is then constructed for and in the interest of what Julius Ihonvbere calls the "African Bigman". The portrait of the African Bigman adorns every office in the name of officialdom. The news about him/her and the first family occupies front page of the news papers and first news item in the electronic media. In the Fanonian sense, the "African Bigman" is a good for nothing member of the governing class that does not know, neither does he/she believe in what is in the National Interest.

The fourth illusion relates to the claim that generational shift amounts to change. *The key problem of Nigeria is not just generational but ideational* or it is not about paradigmatic but ideological shift. Many of the youth who served in government from 1999 to date do not have ideas that are different from the leaders they served. Indeed many of them were appointed into government because their parents, uncles or godfathers lobbied for their appointment. Also, many of the youth movements, including student unions are up for sale to the highest bidder. They are no longer driven by idealism but materialism and opportunism. The greatest tragedy that has befallen Nigeria is that the most critical segment of its youth, who constituted the fulcrum for change have shed their idealism, many of them have become political hirelings, using the platform of youth organisations to give Awards to politicians and business barons, they have become tools, surrogates and hangers on of the political elite. Some of them have become pure mainstream/status quo players. How can these youth be the agents of change? They themselves required to be changed.

Fifth illusion has to do with the role of Deputy Governors or Vice President as tutelage or trainee positions. Hence they are being mentored for the real post. This is a pure illusion, a mirage and an impossible desideratum. In 2007, many Governors had served their mandatory two-terms in office, but virtually all of them supported other candidates rather than their former Deputy Governors for the post of Governor. The same thing happened with the post of President of the federation. This merely shows that Deputies and Vice Presidents are seen simply as sparing partners that tag along rather than having any strategic role to play in deepening democracy or carrying on with the policies and legacies of his/her predecessor. In the United States of Africa, it is almost an unwritten rule that a Vice President for

two terms is sure to secure his party ticket for the Presidential election. Why is the case of Nigeria different? The point is that incumbents never saw their Deputies or Vice as people undergoing mentoring, tutelage or learning. Most Deputy Governors, all over Nigeria were treated with contempt by their bosses, they did not see them as partners but as spare parts. Above all, many of such departing Governors did not find their Deputies trusting and worthy of being handed power because they were not sure they will cover their flanks or loot, and whether they could use them to further their future political interest.

The sixth illusion is to believe that Nigerian politics will change once there is change in leadership in INEC. True, Attahiru Jega has an unimpeachable integrity. But that is not enough. INEC has both institutional and structural constraints and handicaps, and unless these are checked in a decisive and fundamental manner, Jega may be embarrassed. The corruption at INEC and SIECs is like a stench, and it stinks to the high heavens. Everybody knows this, including ICPC and EFCC.

Seventh illusion is to believe that politicians will change their bad ways merely because there are stiff Electoral laws (ala Uwais Report). The full implementation of the Muhammadu Uwais Report will not be enough to guarantee free, fair and credible elections. After all, there are still laws relating in the criminal code yet, there are more cases of armed robbery today in Nigeria, than there ever was in the entire history of Nigeria. This is so because we lost our values and sense of morality. Our politicians have become amoral, and as such blind to all virtues and values of civility, showmanship, spirit of give and take, and willingness to build rather than destroy. In all this, they have found willing accomplices in INEC officials, the Police and party Agents both from opposition and their own parties who all collude to “fix election results” for a fee.

The eighth illusion is to believe that the media is neutral. They are not. They are partisan and aligned to key politicians and candidates (not necessarily political parties) depending on who lubricates their palms. Hence they can have as many clients across political parties as possible, depending on who is paying. And this partisanship goes beyond the owners to the individual interest of Editors, News Editors, Correspondents and Reporters. They disinform, misinform and manipulate news and information, editorial comments, opinion articles and contributions to favour their candidates and political clients. Many of them end up with rewards of Special Assistant, Special Adviser or Commissioner in charge of Media.

Political Parties and Political culture

Our political parties are the weakest link in our quest for democracy. The political parties do not understand the meaning of how to build political parties and due to the high propensity for opportunism and over-exaggerated ambition of what I call *candidate-members*, they are also unable to manage internal party crisis. By candidate-member I mean those who join a particular political party purely because they want to contest election and nothing else. Internal democracy is one of the many problems bedeviling the political parties. There is no more political education,

consistent and sustained financial membership, regular grassroots meetings, except when elections are at hand. As such, party executives are imposed by one tendency against another tendency in the interplay of internal contestation for the soul and heart of the party. The dominant tendency does not wish to have a few positions, they prefer to take all, if not the strategic positions viz-Party Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. They can choose to trade Vice Chairman, Publicity Secretary, and Women Leader to other tendencies. When democracy and contest for power is designed in such absolutist winner-takes all spirit, it spells doom for democracy, as this behaviour is again brought into the arena of national politics. The executive serves the parochial interest of that tendency. Even if this requires changing the by-laws and laws of the party, just to serve the interest of the godfather or the dominant tendency in the party. Our political parties are not being built for the future, they are built to serve the narrow interests of their self-seeking owners

The concept of godfather should not be seen as nebulous or an aberration in Nigerian politics. It should be seen as being consistent with the new role of political parties. Godfathers arose purely because political parties are weak. Godfathers now play the role of the political party and even more. They take laws into their hands and become arbitrary and there is nobody to call them to order. They have the party machinery under their armpit. The party appeases and kowtows to them. The political parties bend rules just to meet their demands and terms. The godfathers in this way are able to impose candidates of their choice, rather than popularly elected candidates, on the political party by violating all known rules. They are also able to control such politicians if elected into government.

Because we no longer have faithful and loyal party members but over-ambitious *candidate-members*, there is often convergence of interest between godfathers and candidate-members. By candidate-members I mean those politicians who joined a political party not in order to build it, but purely in order that they can find a platform to become the flag bearer or candidate of such party. Hence they come to the party highly opportunistic, strange to other members and only known to the willing godfather who is equally cashing on the opportunism of the candidate-member. The two sets of opportunists-godfather and candidate-member- then go into deal that is often disproportionate in terms, but mutually agreeable and acceptable to both of them. The godfather is always the winner in both political and material terms. Once the deal is sealed, there is no more need for any opposition, or party primaries or congresses. Or where this occurs the anointed candidate is already known. Any opposition is either decried or crushed. It is good to condemn godfathers, but have we examined the system and processes that throw up godfathers? I locate the problem in *political nomadism* and the greed and opportunism of candidate –members.

Given this kind of scenario, the party candidates are more enthusiastic to appease the godfather rather than the party members, because the godfather can violate all known party rules only to have his way. The political party is built around the godfather. Rather than raise funds to engage in political mobilisation and education of members, rather than raise funds to train political party agents and potential

voters about the procedures for the elections, the candidates and godfather are more concerned about strategies to rig elections, bribe INEC staff, Police and agents of other political parties. They fund the youth on how to use violence to snatch ballot boxes and assault opposition parties during elections.

The political parties manifest tendencies that are alien to traditional political parties. Many of the parties are anti-democratic, more of a one-man show. They can not mobilise membership. They do not have financial members. They do not engage in membership drive and voter education. Campaigns are often more of sloganeering and abuse of opponents, than explanation on candidate's skills, competences and party programmes. The manifestoes of virtually all the political parties are the same. *They were written by consultants rather than party members and activists.* They look up to INEC to help them educate the voters. They forget that INEC's mandate for voter education is different from the political parties' responsibility for political education of the electorate and mass mobilisation of voters. Party Agents mobilise resources from candidates only to collude with INEC and Police to share votes according to the highest bidder.

Political parties are owned by individuals and controlled and manipulated as such. In some cases, politicians have interest in and control more than one political party. Political parties have no clue about how they can deepen in democracy. Their leaders are often in the pockets of those who founded them. Where a party forms the government, such a political party is in the pocket of the incumbent President or Governor, as the case may be. Such executive is often described as "leader of the party" in total disrespect to the party executive at the national or state level, as the case may be. Most of the internal crises in the key political parties in Nigeria today, particularly the PDP, ANPP, and ACN have a lot to do with the nature of this relationship.

Nigerian political parties are not grassroots -based. They are alienated from both members and the electorate at the grassroots. That is why, many people also carry the cards of different political parties, depending on how best their interest is served or could be served. That is nothing but crass opportunism which has become a common feature of our political practises. Many political rallies are based on "rent a crowd". In the absence of jobs for youth, the most lucrative, but ad hoc business in town today is renting a crowd for political rallies. These crowds do not care about anything except their money. More often they are short-changed at the end of the day. This had torn apart many campaign groups, as violent assault, had been used to settle scores, in some cases. Hence the same youth can appear at four different rallies organised by four different political parties. This is because at the end they have to collect their fee for a professional job of a rented crowd. This is not healthy for the growth of democracy in Nigeria. This is not only unethical but also dishonest.

Candidates decide what they want political parties to do and not vice versa. Candidates fundraise for themselves at elections. After the elections they do not feel any sense of commitment to any party or any body except the godfather. This makes

them to feel being above the political party. It is also the basis of indiscipline and lack of commitment to democratic values.

A new political culture must emerge, one that is built on values and virtues; one that must undergird the practice of democracy. Politicians can only be civil if society itself becomes truly civil and internalise the values and nuances of civility. In this way they will collectively reject, disown and resist uncivil conduct of politicians. Politicians cannot become democrats over night. The INEC whistle will not change them. The key bane of Nigeria is that the dominant political actors are not politicians but militicians. This class of politicians are made up of a combination of ex-military officers in politics and those civilians who share their worldview, ideology and values. They have found it difficult to shed their culture and values. They have brought these values to bear on the Nigerian political culture. This culture also permeates our outer society-PMAN in the past 10 years can not hold a credible election, and they are highly factionalised. NANS in the last 14 years cannot hold a credible election and they have 4 factions today. NURTW has a highly hierarchical and authoritarian structure. The Chairman of NURTW in any branch is more like a military Head of state. His cars and buses are given priority in loading passengers at the garage, they jump queue and abuse their office. Other vehicle owners and drivers are helpless, they grumble but they cannot do anything about this. In the market place, rather than competition and a culture of inclusiveness in decision making, only a few who are incorporated into state ideology have the say and their view holds sway.

A democratic political culture has not taken roots in many of courts. Some of our laws are still based on the oppressive colonial laws; this is in spite of the role of the Law reforms Commission. The jury system is one form of democratising the courts, there are many other ways to democratise the courts and the law. My claim is that for there to be a political culture that is democratic we must go beyond merely arguing that politicians and political parties to follow INEC guidelines.

Much more than all this, there can be no free fair and credible elections merely because there is a credible INEC, campaign for "One Man, One vote", making the vote count. No matter how credible INEC becomes, if we do not have credible Police, credible party Agents, credible voters, credible Elections Tribunal members and above all if the entire people of Nigeria are not willing to stand up and defend the truth, democracy and credible elections cannot be institutionalised in Nigeria

The reality of Nigerian Politics

The reality of Nigeria's politics is that all core political parties have godfathers who call the shots. Many incumbents at the state have the political party machinery in their pockets. They also pocket the State Independent Electoral Commissions. It is little accident that in virtually all the states of the federation, there is scarcely any where the opposition won even the post of a Councillor. At the Local Government

level, the councillors play the dual role of Councillors and Executive. This is not only contradictory but a duplication of role and responsibility. This needs to be checked. Political party meetings hold at the instance of the godfather or incumbent. The pre-meeting meeting (this often takes place at the home or at the instance of the godfather or incumbent), and that is where all decisions are taken ahead of the party meeting. Such decisions are then foisted on the rest of the party executive or Board of Trustees. Membership drive is no longer considered important. What is important is political mobilisation of youth for the purposes of rigging and violence. Members do not pay financials dues, regularly. Indeed their membership card is often purchased by the godfather who also gets such members to engage in multiple voting. In the end he keeps all the voter's cards in his custody until election day. He corners all the cards and deploys them during elections. At all times, party members ask from godfathers, incumbents and serving politicians if there is anything to be shared in form of money (including *owo mugu*, rice, *Murtala Sandwich*, bags of rice or salt etc)

There are no checks on party finances as political parties are engaged in cash and carry economy and huge resources are withdrawn for elections. There is a high level of political nomadism because no politician wishes to show patience and build a political party. Every body wants to be party flag bearer. Electoral Assistants are selected and imposed on INEC by politicians (Donald Duke has told the full story). Ballot boxes do not get to remote, rural and riverine areas such as in Bayelsa and Rivers states. Fake polling stations are created and Police, INEC and the political party in charge all collude to use their thumbs and legs to print. Children and women are assembled 24 to 48 hours to elections to stuff ballot boxes with collusion of INEC officials. Genuine polling station results are jettisoned for fake results from the fake stations, which INEC prefers to announce. INEC then stands in the perversion and travesty of justice, by refusing to cooperate in releasing genuine document to political parties to prosecute their case before the Election Tribunals. Tribunal members are also corrupt. To hide the truth they look for flimsy technicalities even against the overwhelming "weight of evidence" to pervert the cause of Justice. It is an irony of history that a few of the genuine electoral victories that have indeed been secured at the Election Tribunals, in particular at the Appellate Courts. The Nigerian judiciary must clean up itself. Some Election Tribunal members have not conducted themselves honourably.

At the risk of repetition, the same can be said of the press. Some media owners, editors, correspondents and reporters are on the payroll of some politicians. As a result they disinform or kill what is perceived as negative story against such politicians. This conduct is unprofessional and unethical. The press must desist from it. So many cases of corruption allegations against top media practitioners have come to the open. Some state correspondents feel that it is a taboo to publish anything that is uncomfortable about the Governor of the state. Those who call themselves "Governor's Press Crew" even feel a stronger sense of obligation to the Governor rather than to Nigeria or the reader. This is not ethical.

The onlooker, the Nigerian public continue to lament and organise and refuse to do nothing. This will not push our country forward. The struggle to build democracy in Nigeria is not an isolated mandate of INEC and political parties alone, even though they all have strategic role to play in building and deepening democracy in Nigeria, however the democratic project is a collective one. This is because democracy is not an isolated value restricted to the domain of INEC and political parties or at elections alone. Democracy is an everyday matter. It is a virtue we must express and externalise in all we do, daily.

Towards Empowerment and Openness

In light of the bleak and gory picture painted above, there is need for what Wambadia-Wamba calls a *new mode of politics*. Such mode must abandon the methodology and technique of mainstream politics to alternative mode of organising and it must be rooted to four core principles, if it is to empower the toiling people viz: participatory, inclusive, accountable and restraint. Both participation and inclusion have the potential to empower the people through fair access; whilst accountability and restraint have the capacity to ensure openness and expansion of the democratic space.

- (a) **Participatory Political Party:** political parties must be reconstructed afresh or rebuilt on new principles that truly allow for members to participate at all levels. Officers elected must also not be subservient to some Godfathers, incumbent Executive whether at the Federal, State or Local Government level. Participation shall entail, open debates, fair and credible mode of nomination of party Executive, party candidates at elections and maintenance of tenure. Fee-paying membership should be the basis of participation, absentee party members or Abuja- and foreign-based party members who fly in and out will not be encouraged. Party membership shall be based on individual party member's discipline. Nobody shall be above the law; and the party constitution shall be applied equally across board without fear or favour. Regular attendance at party programmes, including education programmes will be the basis of measuring activism and commitment to the party. Recruitment-drive shall also be pursued in line with party rules, without let or hindrance.
- (b) **Inclusive Party:** whether rooted to the community, region, state or national, a political party should have a sociological composition that shows inclusiveness. A party is not inclusive merely because it has satisfied the requirement of having party offices in two-thirds of the LGAs in Nigeria. Most hegemonic political parties alienate the majority of the people. This is why the PDP is the worst culprit in this regard. This is not to suggest that the ANPP, ACN, APGA and Labour Party are not also guilty of this accusation. For a political party to be inclusive it implies that all the sociological groups that make up the party are well represented, such as working people, women, youth, and physically challenged people. Everywhere in Africa, the demographic suggest that *youth and women are in the demographic majority, yet they constitute a political minority*. In the context of trying to seek new meaning for inclusiveness for sociological groups within political

- parties we must begin to reconceptualise the meaning of minority. In Nigeria, there is often the mistaken belief that the only minorities we have are ethnic minorities, who in turn suffer marginalisation and exclusion. This view is wrong. There are several other minorities including gender and generational minorities such as women and youth. Women and youth in Nigeria are a minority in relation to the question of power. They are under-represented and all avenues to empower them are being blocked by the masculinised, hegemonic, patriarchal and dominant political interests in the party apparatus.
- (c) **Accountability:** every form of democracy is based on accountability and openness. There are two forms of accountability-self and public accountability. Governance and electoral processes must be subjected to both. Those who govern must be able to allow the governed to assess them and peep into their activities, ask questions and get appropriate responses. Every public officer must be able to account for his/her action or inaction. Financial, administrative and personal accountability are crucial while in public service. If the instruments and agencies for ensuring accountability are in place, the culture of impunity, excesses, recklessness and insensitivity will not occur. There must be executive accountability, policy accountability, parliamentary oversight, parliamentary accountability, judicial accountability and result-based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). The media must be critical and scrupulous in a professional, ethically-nuanced, non-partisan and unbiased manner. At present, the media is highly compromised, unprofessional, biased and partisan in their conduct. Accountability in Africa has always been to donors, it has always been externally-driven, and not inspired and driven by citizens. Our hold on governance and the polity must be designed by the internal reversibility of the pressure for accountability. Citizens must demand their leaders to account to them, and to their peers on the continent through the example of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Citizens must also be accountable and uphold their civic responsibility. The culture of impunity is pervasive in Nigeria and this culture permeates many sectors and institutions.
- (d) **Political Restraint:** a polity is said to be democratic not necessarily because people have choices, rights or freedom to do things, but also because there are institutions, agencies, individuals and groups who act as checks and restraint on people's ability to do things beyond what is prescribed and permissible by law. In government, within the parliament, in political parties, in schools and all other public spaces, there are and should be instruments that serve as restraint on conduct of individuals and groups. In one word, power politics has its limits. And there should be ways to check excess of power. This is how to build democracy.

The Ifaki Debacle: Gubernatorial Re-run and a Public Intellectual

I cannot complete this lecture without saying a few things about the Ekiti Gubernatorial re-run election of April 2009, particularly the lessons learnt. Once Dr. Kayode Fayemi was declared winner by the Appellate Court sitting in Ilorin on Friday

October 15, 2010, I received no less than 120 calls and SMS all saying what may be summarised thus: "Your struggle was not in vain".

My simple response is as follows. Symbolically we (the four of us assaulted at Ifaki) disclaimed and resisted the view by anti-democratic forces, including the Nigeria Police, that Election Observers are not needed at elections. Observers are the conscience of any election, they confer credibility on elections. Second, I had no illusion that the Ekiti rerun will be peaceful. From the very outset we knew it will be violent. My life could have been wasted, no doubted, and it could have been robed in lies manufactured by the Nigeria Police, PDP and a section of the media. I escaped death only by some twist of events and by miraculous irony of fate. But even if I were killed it could not have mattered. The enthronement of democracy and emancipation of Nigeria can not come through armchair theorising. It will only be actualised through sacrifices, selfless and genuine struggles. Our political elite have not demonstrated that they have cultivated the right values to be left unchecked and Ekiti is the highest exemplification or crystallisation of the perverted values of Nigeria politicians. What Segun Oni, Ayo Arise, Dayo Adeyeye and many of their co-travellers said about us, is to say the least condemnable and does not show that they have respect for human life.

The victory of Dr. Kayode Fayemi should not be seen as a victory for the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). His victory must be seen as a product of the relentless struggle by the Ekiti people and all democratic forces in Nigeria against injustice; it was a struggle for the restoration of a stolen mandate, a victory for justice, the triumph of good over evil. But why must such justice come through the law courts? The cost of electoral justice in Nigeria is too high and coming too slowly. If Governor Fayemi did not have the perseverance and financial wherewithal to sustain his cause at the Court of Appeal after three previous trials, the mandate and will for the people could have been squandered. Just assume that Dr. Fayemi got fed up and became disillusioned and refused to appeal the judgement of the Ekiti Tribunal? The electorate of Ekiti state could have been denied an opportunity of political collective self-expression.

Let us all resolve that the Ekiti crisis will not occur again. Let us work to put in place a virile and reliable electoral process that will make politicians sportsmen and women and make litigation unnecessary by the credibility and fairness of the process. Only the people can guarantee this. The Ekiti debacle occurred because our Police and Electoral Tribunals are all corrupt. Ekiti crisis occurred because some people holding public office do not have a sense of responsibility and commitment to posterity. The only thing they believe in and worship is money.

Whose democracy do we wish to build through elections? There is no such thing as election for election's sake. We have not been able to build liberal democracy. Neither have we put social democracy nor popular democracy yet on the agenda. Current debate in Nigeria is not focused on the kind of democracy we wish to build, but on how we can get our elections to be free, fair and credible. The two debates must go hand in gloves. So far, the debate is highly limited, narrow and

circumscribed. Even the debate on the elections is narrow. What kind of election will permit inclusion of marginals and vulnerable groups? Is it First Past The Post (FPTP) or Proportional Representation (PR)? What kind of PR system do we wish to build? All the most successful democracies in Africa all have some elements of the PR system.

In Nigeria today, the focus is on zoning, ethnicity, the personal discipline and incorruptible pedigree of politicians, whiles these are novel, however, the focus should go beyond that to focus on what new ideas the candidates can bring to the table. Today the debate over the zoning formula has become more a substitute for the programmes and ideological orientation of candidates. Compare this to what happened in the Constituent Assembly (CA) in 1977 or among the key political parties between 1978 and 1979. Have we made progress or we have regressed? Is this how to consolidate democracy? Can there be dividends of democracy where the politicians have no clue about how to govern? Why are all our politicians concerned about the public treasury and nothing else?

All this should make Nigerians resolved to turn a new leaf, to become vigilant and pro-active. There are several ways we can participate in the electoral and democratic process as political commentators, Ad-hoc INEC staff, Election Observers or credible voters, party agents, Police and judges who will no longer allow themselves to be used or manipulated by dishonest and corrupt politicians. This is the only way we can begin to rebuild our democracy.

My patriotic role in Ekiti rerun should not be seen as a political oddity or aberration. I went to Ekiti state because I do not believe that mere classroom pontification and theorising will change the reality of our polity, we need to participate, voice out the limitations of the system and work to improve things. As a public intellectual, I went on "field work" in Ekiti. We need to expose the anti-democratic forces in our midst, which stand as obstacles to democracy. We need to build popular fronts and coalition for democracy and empowerment in Nigeria. Ekiti symbolises how an Electoral Management Body, can conspire with the state to deny the choice of the people, and how the media, police and security machinery can be used to suppress the voices of the people. It also points to the way the Nigerian judiciary can be misused and abused. The Electoral Tribunals in Nigeria need to be fundamentally reformed and overhauled-they are as corrupt and partisan as the politicians. Many of those who seat as members of the Electoral Tribunals have no credibility. They are out rightly corrupt. Their judgement is guided not by the "weight of evidence", but by the "weight of the Naira".

Many Election Tribunals often gave judgement to the highest bidder. The Tribunals have come to realise that they can undo the votes and upturn the choice of the electorate and they have been doing so must skilfully and professionally, since 2003. Electoral Tribunals in Nigeria have not promoted democracy but further deepen the crisis of electoral politics in Nigeria. Some judges need to be disrobed and punished publicly, to serve as deterrent to others. Although we talk about democracy and democratisation, the law is one arm of government that has not been purged, yet it

was one major agency used by the military since 1984-the judiciary was both politicised and corrupted. These two traits have not still left the Nigerian judiciary. If the judiciary is to stand the crucial test of a fair umpire and check on the excess of either the parliament or the executive, then it needs fundamental overhaul.

I have no confidence in the role of the current calibre of politicians to build democracy in Nigeria. Many of them do not even believe in democracy neither have they internalised the values and nuances of democracy. Hence if we want democracy in Nigeria, it is activists, social movements, progressive forces that can reflate the political parties, political and electoral process and construct democracy. We need to rescue the politicians from their opportunism, greed and selfishness, in the same way in which Frantz Fanon talks about the therapeutical impact of *decolonising violence* in “rehumanising the coloniser”. Many of the politicians around today, are merely interested in how to win elections or get access to power, by whatever means possible. They do not believe in defeat, or losing. It is victory at all cost. They lack the spirit of the sportsman. They are not interested in building democracy. A democratic political culture can only be conducted through a mass popular struggle that is external to the political parties and that will get political parties and electoral agencies to make them alive to their responsibilities.

A new mode of politics must take politics back into the hands of the people, it must mobilise social categories, professional, groups, interest groups, déclassé elements, it must go to various sites of politics and various social residues, including schools, churches, mosques, market associations, farmers’ cooperatives, progressive student Unions it must explore the sports arena as a public space and drive politics into it. The only experience and credential that Barack Obama used to run the Presidential primaries in the Democratic Party was that he was a “community organiser in south-south Chicago”. A new participatory methodology of political work is needed. Progressive politicians must work like community organisers and penetrate and take politics to the neighbourhoods and communities. We must begin to take our neighbourhoods as *the new sites of politics*, no matter how small they may be, just like the shopfloor is to *workerist politics*. The electorate, voters, party thugs, everybody come from specific neighbourhoods. Many of these neighbourhoods are penetrated by hegemonic political parties for their survival, opportunistic and anti-democratic electoral advantage. The new community organisers must not only take the new message to the people but also make the people own the message and do political evangelism on it, by popularising it. This is how to build a *democratic and popular alternative*. *A new message, a new popular coalition and new sites of political work are required*. Popular forces cannot wait until INEC blows the whistle for elections before they become keen about politics and political education. Electoral politics is a limited and narrow context for mobilising the people.

Popular and democratic ownership of political parties rather than personal ownership, political education rather than disinformation, collective financial membership rather than money bags control, party ideology and precepts rather than personality traits and charisma should drive the new mode of politics in Nigeria. Critical-criticism, and ruthless debate anchored on the spirit of tolerance,

sportsmanship and the Common Good are what can promote democracy in Nigeria. This is not difficult to do. We should think big, but start small. We must not flip-flop but stay and be consistent on the message. This is the only way to enthrone and build democracy in Nigeria. Every thing about our current political parties is wrong. And this has negatively affected the electoral process and the polity. Democracy and the rectificatory process in the public space can only start with the enthronement of genuine political parties. Genuine democracy can not kick-start with political parties that are not worth their names.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated how liberal democracy has been subverted by the political elite in Nigeria, and I made a case for politics of empowerment for vulnerable and marginalised social groups. I suggested that the entrance of these new social forces will change the political landscape in Nigeria. To be sure, I have not made a case for emancipative politics, which is an entirely different project. I also contended that we are currently consolidating authoritarianism rather than building liberal democracy, in the process, dominant political actors are frustrated and angered because the votes do not count, and vulnerable groups are marginalised and alienated, because their voice does not matter in the polity.

I have argued that the claim about “dividends of democracy” is mere rhetoric and an attempt to instrumentalise democracy. I further contended that INEC is institutionally and structurally defective and needs fundamental overhaul rather than mere reform, otherwise not much should be expected from one individual at INEC. The challenge of Attahiru Jega poses both the potentials and limitations of an individual in a decaying institution. Indeed, Jega’s morality and integrity is not enough assurance to guarantee free, fair and credible elections. We need credible INEC, credible citizens, credible Electoral Tribunal members, credible voters and credible party Agents. How can we ensure this? I also admonished that political parties should not abdicate their responsibilities and that their weakness is the basis for the current lapses in our democracy and the rise of authoritarian tendencies such as lack of internal party democracy and godfathers. The weakness of the party system also accounts for the excessive monetisation of the polity.

INEC must have the political will to flush out and prosecute its staff who have been indicted by judicial panels and Election Tribunals. All its officials who have proven cases of corruption and unethical conduct must be flushed out of the system. Unless INEC does so, many of such permanent and Ad-hoc staff will believe that it is business as usual. Corrupt judges must also be arraigned before the National Judicial Council to be prosecuted. Any politician who is involved in rigging, violence, use of thugs, or any other malpractices stated or outlined in the Electoral Act should not only be prosecuted but jailed without any option of fine. If such a politician was the purported winner of the election, he/she should vacate the post for the runner up at the election.

Incumbents must be prevented from using privileges and paraphernalia of office to intimidate opponents. No incumbent shall use state resources to run for elections. And his/her retinue of staff who followed him/her during campaigns, or to rallies should not have their expenditure paid from state resources. Security votes should be accounted for and campaign funds should be monitored by a team of INEC and the press, most scrupulously. All campaign finances and asset and liabilities of all candidates must be published or posted on the website of INEC for all to see, verify or ascertain. This was what the Electoral Commission of Liberia did when Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson ran against other candidates. This is the true spirit of transparency and that is how to build an open system and a move towards making people to know. Our democracy is too close-ended, with so much institutional censorship. We do not know much of our candidates at elections. The media does not scrutinise them enough and expose their past. We rely to excessively on State Security Service (SSS) report on them, without any verification by journalists. Candidates hurriedly file their papers without cross check, we are not privy to SSS check on them, all this suggest closure and not openness, insensitivity rather than accountability. The FOI Bill and the struggle for it are commendable. But the greatest censorship on the press is coming from the press itself, due to personal, political, pecuniary and opportunistic considerations, the press have chosen not to publish and be damned.

We need a vibrant and virile press that will publish the truth and be damned, courageous and pro-active journalists, we need a vibrant civil society, vibrant social movements, trade unions and vibrant opposition political parties to build democracy, We need idealistic youth, principled and consistent trade unionists, a democratic and highly competent and motivated civil service and a vigilant citizenry to build democracy. Building democracy is not the exclusive privilege and prerogative of the political elite or political parties. Rather it is a collective project; credible elections can only come out of a credible society and credible people. No credible citizens should fold his/her and allow a few politicians to destroy our nascent democracy.

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About the Author

Abubakar Momoh holds a Ph.D. in Political Theory. He has taught at the Lagos State University since 1988. He was appointed Professor in 2006. He currently has over seventy (70) publications, including 5 books.

Dr. Momoh was National Treasurer, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), (1991-1996); Chairman, Academic Staff Union of Universities, Lagos State University (LASU) Branch (1996-1998); Chairman, National ASUU Human Rights Committee; Vice President, African Association of Political Science (1999-2009). Chairman, Political Committee of National ASUU (2010-to date)

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Dr. Momoh was a member Vision 20:20 and the Coordinator of its Foreign Policy Sub-Committee (2008); Member, Committee to design a "National Policy on Peace Support Operation" for Federal Ministry of Defence (2010); and Member, Committee of Experts of Nigeria @50 Compendium (2010).

Above all, Momoh is a public intellectual, a scholar- activist who has been involved in popular struggles and the political education of the working people of Nigeria.