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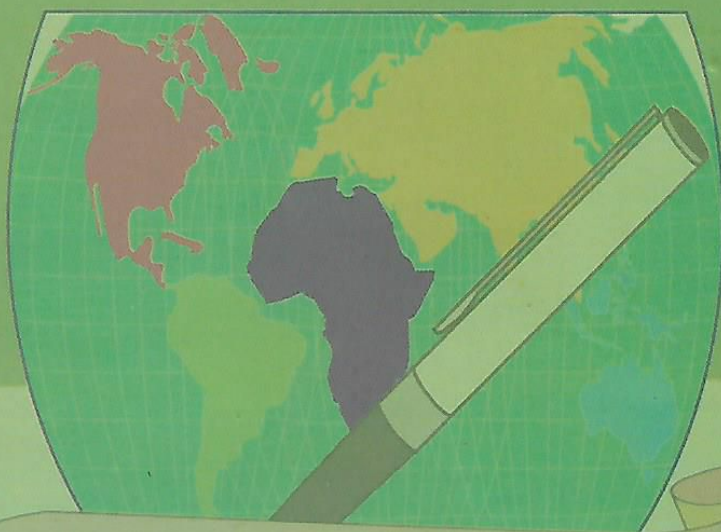
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# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA FROM 2010 – 2014

By

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## ABSTRACT

*The current democratic dispensation in Nigeria was launched again in 1999 leading to the emergency of the fourth republic. This came after a long time of despotic military rule in the country. Democracy was highly embraced by all with expected hope that it will deliver good dividends and socio economic development. Democracy was equally welcomed in Nigeria with high expectation and enthusiasm since it has the capacity of ensuring political stability and socio-economic development. But this was soon dashed as the political landscape of the nation was turn to a "battle ground" not for national survival but for extending self centric and elitist agenda. The system today lacks an agenda for the masses and their rights terribly suppressed. Instead of peace, stability, development and an egalitarian society, the nation is now characterized and marred by insecurity and political instability. In other words, not far into the fourth republic, the body polity became overheated by lots of challenges ranging from electoral malpractice, inter and intra-ethnic rivalry, religious crises and insecurity (Boko Haram) and weak democratic institutions in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to examine the various challenges and prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria from 2010 – 2014. The paper uses secondary sources of data gathering and qualitative mode of analysis. The paper find out that ethno-religion factor, absence of a true federalism, poverty, insecurity, corruptions among others were the major challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The paper conclude that democratic consolidation can only be achieved in Nigeria when citizens freely and fairly elect their leaders such that those so elected owe their election to the people and not a cabal who stays in hidden place to write election results. Not only that, Citizens will be willing and perhaps eager to support democracy if the political elites rise above class self-seeking, corruption and give primacy to citizens needs. The paper recommended that only by discipline and subduing the dictatorial tendencies of Nigerian leaders and the encouragement of uninterested, skeptical and unconvinced, politically apathetic citizens to embrace constitutional democracy. In other words, the nation will be able to consolidate her democracy.*



## **Introduction**

Democracy was welcomed in Nigeria with high expectation and enthusiasm since it has the capacity of ensuring political stability and socio-economic development. But this was soon dashed as the political landscape of the nation was turn to a “battle ground” not for national survival but for extending self centric and elitist agenda. The system today lacks an agenda for the masses and their rights terrible suppressed. Instead of peace, stability, development and an egalitarian society, the nation is now characterized and marred by political instability. A democratic system is one where rulers are held accountable to the ruled by means of a variety of political arrangements. Such arrangements include but are not necessarily conterminous with competitive multi-party elections held at regular intervals (Oransanye, 1995:1). Democracy is a collective system which tries to maximize the welfare of the people (Amao, 2007:1).

However, the main attribute of democracy is that, those holding political office do not have automatic security of tenure but can be challenged and even displaced in accordance with the will of the people through a wide range of institutional mechanism. Thus, the core ideas and ingredient defining democracy are participation and accountability, that those who govern give account of their stewardship through periodic-election is one of the most important mechanisms for the realization of the objectives of democratization. It is important to note that, elections are not only meant to ensure confirm or re-affirm the legitimacy of the governor through a regular consent, but also to provide a fertile ground for democracy to thrive (Ogundiya and Baba T.K. 2007:4). It has been observed that issues like corruption, mediocrity, thieving, election rigging, ill-preparedness, etc have become the major hallmarks of socio-economic transformation in Nigeria under the Goodluck Jonathan’s administration.

Today, our dream and struggle for democratization is fading away. Instead of free and fair election, we have sham elections and scientific rigging, instead of true federalism, we now have creeping unilateralism; Instead of an independent judiciary, we have executive impunity. Tambuwal, A. (The Nations, Tuesday, June 2013 vol. 7 No. 215431) Vintage, Lagos.

This paper addresses the challenges and prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria with key emphasis on the President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Administration from 2010 – 2014. This paper is divided into six sections; introduction, conceptual clarification; challenges of



democratic consolidation in Nigeria; prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria; recommendations and conclusion.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **(A) Democracy**

The term democracy connotes a global concern. The concept of democracy is particularly sensitive to the current socioeconomic and political circumstances of nations striving for international identity and development posture as well as liberality and good governance. As an over-flogged concept, the idea as enunciated by the ancient Greeks means “*demoscratos*” which is literally translates into “people’s power or rule” (Sarabjit, 2002:2). That goes to show that democracy has its root in Greek where individuals in a polis have an opportunity of taken part in decision making. The position explains democracy as a universal principle of governance that uphold high moral imperatives, accord the citizenry the rights to participate in decision making that adheres to their collective will and interest.

As opined by-Nzongola Ntalaja (2002:2) the concept can therefore, be regarded “as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through elections or through the administration of the accepted policies”. It is a government founded on the principle of rule of law which is against arbitrariness, high handedness, dictatorship and also antithesis to military regime.

Democracy has been described as government by persons, freely chosen by the governed, who also hold them accountable and responsible for their actions, while in government. (Gana, 1996:12). A democratic system is one where rulers are held accountable to the ruled by means of a variety of political arrangements. Such arrangements includes: but are not necessarily conterminous with, competitive multi-party elections, held at regular intervals (Oransanye, 1995:1). However, the main attribute of democracy is that those holding political office do not have automatic security of tenure of office but can be challenged and even displaced in accordance with the will of the people through a wide range of institutional mechanisms (Honwell, 1991:3).

Thus, the two core ideas and ingredients defining democracy are participation and accountability, and that the people determine who governs them, and also that those who govern give account of their stewardship through periodic submission to the people to assess their performance.



Representative democracy is a legitimate government, freely and fairly elected on competitive political party platforms at a regular interval by the people, it is necessary to note that those saddled with power are supposed to be accountable and responsible (Shievely, 2001; Gana 1996, Oransanye, 1995). Thus democracy has been defined as:

*Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force, a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded and a level of civil and political liberties – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form/join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competitions and participation. (emphasis in original) Diamond et'al, 1988: XVI).*

Crowthers (2000:3), defines democracy as a system of government by all the people of a country, usually through representatives whom they elect. Democracy embodies fundamental human rights such as freedom of expressions, right to life, right to dignity of human person, right to personal liberty, right to fair hearing, right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, press, peaceful assembly and association, movement, political participation, etc.

In another sense, democracy is seen as the control of an organization by its members who take part in the making of decisions. In other words, democracy implies majority rule and respect for fundamental rights of the people. Similarly, Nwoye, (2001:3) maintains that democracy signifies political system dominated by representatives either directly or indirectly chosen by the people. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2000:14) succinctly explained democracy as

*A continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental rights. According to him, democracy cannot be negotiated as a new bargain to developing nations, rather, it has to be richer than the liberal model, and should be capable of leading to a developing strategy that is homegrown, people-centered and oriented towards eradicating poverty.*

Baker (1995:3) is of the view that democracy is a political system that operates based on popularly elected or appointed representative to run the affairs of the state. Yet, Appadorai (1975:137) as cited in Okafor (2003:4)



describes democracy as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them.

For Oddih (1996:6) democracy is a form of government as well as a way of life, goal, ideal and philosophy, which guarantees freedom of the majority and rights of the majority. The world book (200:5) maintains that democracy has certain tenants, which includes: free elections, majority rule, participation of political parties unimpeachable judiciary and parliament. Ake (1996:7) argued that the real democratic culture that can bring about real development in Africa, is the one sustained by economic and political development based on decentralization of power, and reliance on indigenous communities to provide some refuge from the centralized state.

Writing on consolidation democracy, Lijphant (1977:3) believes that a prerequisite for durable and stable democracy rests on the ability of elites in plural societies to cooperate and achieve social homogeneity and political consensus. By so doing, according to him, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in plural societies are mitigated and counteracted.

Gwinn and Peters (1992:7) give a lucid summary on definitions of democracy and what democracy entails along with the history of the concept. According to these scholars, the term democracy originated from Greek city states now (Greece). It was coined from a Greek word “demokratos” “Demos” means “people” and “kratos” means “rule” They posit that the term has several, different contemporary usages such as:

- i. A form of government in which the rights to make political decisions is exercised directly by the whole body of citizens, acting under procedures of majority rule, usually known as direct democracy.
- ii. A form of government in which the citizen exercise the same right nor in person but through representatives chosen by and responsible to them, known as representative democracy.
- iii. A form of government, usually a representative democracy, in which the powers of the majority are exercised within a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee all citizens the enjoyment of certain individual or collective rights such as freedom of speech and religion known as liberal or constitutional democracy. Perhaps, the most insightful clarification on the concept of democracy was provided by Obasi (1988:3) posits that the ultimate goal of democracy is to minimize arbitrary and tyrannical rule and to maximize a pattern of



civility rooted in respect and justice for each man to achieve a human polity.

Generally, democracy is “a form of government in which citizens in a state has political investments of political participation and trust” (Ayoade, 1998:1). Democracy is “a collective system which attempt or tries to maximizes the welfare of the people (Amao, 2007:1). It is essentially has to do with the ability of the people to control decision making (Zack-Williams, 2001:213) this which explains why Osaghae (1994:6) asserts that the central thing about democracy is to ensure that power actually belong to the people. Democracy emphasizes freedom of the individuals in various aspect of political life, equality among citizens, justice in relations between the people and the government and the participation of the people in choosing those in government (Nnoli, 2003:143).

What these conceptions suggest is that democracy as a system of government, stresses the sovereignty of the people (see Zack-Williams, 2001:213 – 214, Oshagae, 1994:6). It is also reminiscent of Robert Dahls “two dimension of democracy” Dahl, 2006: 35-40). The first dimension sees democracy as “an ideal goal, aims, or standard, one that is perhaps unachievable but nonetheless highly relevant not only for classifying and judging political systems but also for fashioning strategies of democratization designing appropriate political institutions, and so on “An ideal democracy is therefore coterminous with” a political system that might be designed for members of an association who were willing to treat one another for political purpose, as “political equals (Dahl, 2000: 37) such a system require certain criteria for effective functioning. These criteria include a set of fundamental human right of citizen, democratic political institution to boost citizen’s participation in electing representatives, to freedom of expression, inquiry, discussion, and so on. One important thing is that those rights and opportunities must not just exist as merely abstract moral obligations but must be “enforceable and enforced by law and practice” (Dahl, 1989:106).

#### **(B) Democratic Consolidation**

Diamond (1999:3) sees democratic consolidation as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation such that all significant political actors at both the elite and masses level believe that popular rule is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. It also connects the act of reducing the probability of the breakdown of the system to the point where democracy can be said that it will persist. Amao



(2013:9) view it as regime maintenance and about regarding the key political institution as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. It manifest under enhanced economic development developed democratic culture, stable party system,. Suffice to assert that this cannot be attained in Nigeria until stability is attained. This therefore shows that though under democratic regime Nigeria is striving for consolidation (Zayyan 2002:210). From a different but somewhat related perspective, Linz and Stephen (2002:210) provide a tri-dimensional perspective to the question of democratic consolidation: the behavioural, the attitudinal, and the constitutional perspectives. Let us quote them in extensor: Linz and Stephen (2002:210).

*Behaviourally democracy become the only game in town when no significant political opposition seriously attempt to overthrows the democratic regime or to promote domestic or international violence in order to secede from the state.....Attitudinally, democracy become the only game in town when, even in the face of several political and economic crisis, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic procedures. Constitutionally, democracy become 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.*

Linz and Stephen (2002:210) concluded that with consolidation, democracy become regularized and deeply internalized in social, institutional and even psychological life as well as in political calculations for achieving goals. This suggests that consolidation on the one hand, emphasizes that democracy must “make sense” to the generality of the people, and on the other hand, it suggests the non-existence of delegitimizing challenges, e.g. endemic and persistence socio political crises. Scheduler, (1998:8) in a related argument, describe democratic consolidation as the challenges of making new “democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against the eventual reverse waves”

Eziokivu (2004:17) in line with the report of the political bureau (1987), highlights some basic constituents and elements for sustaining democracy in Nigeria. These according to him, include:



- i. The institutions and process of effective electoral agencies, political parties and their formation; administration and funding.
- ii. Conduct of free and fair, periodic elections and electoral processes.
- iii. Broad based participation by the electorate
- iv. Observance of rule of law
- v. Protection of fundamental human rights.
- vi. A free and unfettered press
- vii. A healthy civil society; and
- viii. Government based on the consent of the people.

The term democratic consolidation can also be construed as a deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is "so broadly and profoundly legitimized among its citizens that is very unlikely to break down" (Quyang, H. 2009:11). It means a democratic system that cannot come to an end suddenly or abruptly through unconstitutional acts such as military coups or dictatorships. (Amao 2013:9) It means or implies established stability in governance. This consolidation of democracy involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty as differently put by (Amao 2013:11).

*Originally, the term " democratic consolidation "was meant to describe the challenges of making new democracy secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression. This normalization requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, the functioning of a mature civil society and political institutionalization.*

In fact, fifteen years into the present practice, some analysts posit strongly that it is hard to state that democracy has been consolidated in Nigeria or is likely to be consolidated in near future, if the available indices subsist.

## **The Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

### **(i) Democratic Consolidation**

Nigeria democracy started on a good platform in May 29th 1999 with the existence of democratic institutions, plural society, vibrant civil society organizations and critical mass media among others. These ingredients have the structure and capacity to make democracy thrive in Nigeria. But is germane to note that, Nigeria's democracy has remained grossly unstable since the return to this popular form of governance in 1999 (Amao & Obafaiye 2014).



One important way one can say the Jonathan Administration has consolidated democracy in Nigeria was the signing of the freedom of information (FOI) bill into law. It was a victory for democracy transparency, justice and development in Nigeria. With this law in place, Nigerians know finally have vital roots to uncover facts, fight corruption and hold officials and institutions accountable” (Ene Enonche 2012:20)

Under the new law, all institutions spending public funds will have to be open about their operations and expenditure while citizens will have the right to access information about their activities. Whistleblowers who report malfeasance by their employer or organization will be protected from reprisal. The new law will profoundly change how government works in Nigeria. Now we can use oxygen of information and knowledge to breathe life into governance. It will no longer be business as usual. (Maxwell Kadiri 2012:15).

Another area once can say the Jonathan administration has consolidated democracy was the executive and legislative relations. This has promoted smooth running and administration of the country. Unlike where the relationship was not cordial, issue of impeachment, would have been the major instrument of control.

## **(ii) Democratic Challenges**

Today our dream and struggle for democratization is fading away. Instead of free and fair elections, we have sham elections and scientific rigging instead of true federalism, we now have creeping unilateralism instead of an independent judiciary, we have executive impurity: (Tambuwal, A. The Nations; Tuesday June, 2012 vol 7 No. 215431) (Vintage, Lagos).

The political terrain has been very slippery and faced with lots of challenges precipitating against the genuine realization of the system. In fact, the impediments to the nations unending desire for a true democracy seem to assure a more perilous proportion by the day. These challenges are: Ethno-religions factor, the absence of true federalism; Abject poverty; Disjointed information; The incumbency factor; the politics of Godfatherism; institutionalized corruption; security question; multiple electoral challenges; weak democratic institutions. Let examine each of these in turn;



### **(iii) Ethno-Religious Factors**

These remain one of the forces that have contributed greatly to socio-political instability in the country. The latest sectarian turbulence in the country and the clamour for the presidency by the varied ethnic groups indicate that the society is still balkanized by tribal and religious sentiments, (Amao 2012:13, and Victor, 2002:33). Each ethnic nationality in Nigeria has its own faith, interest, culture, language and level of aspiration and these forces seem to affect the economic fate of each group. In addition, they made the creation of a common identity problematic; Thereby exacerbating the difficulty in attaining a true democracy in the society. The expression of these demands have resulted in the emergence of ethno-nationalist insurgencies such as the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta region, the renewed demand for Biafra spearheaded by the Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the increasing notoriety of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South-West. This has also resulted in incessant ethnic clashes in the Middle Belt region and other parts of the country such as the Ijaw-Itshekiri ethnic clashes in 2009. There have also been frequent inter-religious clashes and sharia-instigated riots in the Northern part of Nigeria as well as the emergence of Boko Haram Islamic Jihadists with well known preferences in religious belief and social practices (Eso, 2011:50).

Currently, Nigeria lacks the necessary democratic values (civil and human right abuse was/is rampant, freedom of speech and expression is hampered, lack of special security and distributive justice) hence the rampant social unrest in the polity (Amao 2012:14, Victor 2002:30). The attack of Boko Harams in the various churches/mosques in the northern Nigeria is the recent ethno-religious problems facing democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Amao, 2013:18)

### **(iv) The Absence of a True Federalism**

Lack of true federal structure in Nigeria is a stumbling block to the nation's ongoing democratic enterprise. The federal government is very overbearing as it controls about 80% of the country's resources leaving state and local government at its mercy. Where regions, states or geographical zones have the power to control their resources and to have access to the necessary funds for community development programmes, democracy thrives. In fact, it is only true federalism that can guarantee fairness, equity and justice in the society. More importantly, it enables each locality to progress according to the aspiration of the people. A durable and enforceable people's



constitution is an indispensable tool to make this feasible as the constitution protects the people and determines socio-political activities in a society. As noted in the philosophy of Aristotle, “we can decide the identity of a state only by examining the form (and contents) of its constitution”. In Nigeria, we lack the reality of such a federal Constitution and true federal state. (Awuudu, 2012:16).

#### **(v) Poverty**

Continued poverty, reinforced by mass unemployment is a barrier to Nigeria's quest for consolidating her democracy. A society of beggars, parasites and bandits cannot develop. It cannot know peace or stability and cannot be democratic (Ake, 1996:17). This shows that any individual deprived of the basic wherewithal cannot participate effectively in a democratic process. A poor person is therefore not a full pledge social individual, as he/she lacks the basic freedom to engage in the life he/she enjoys. One can safely argue that poverty is a hindrance to democratic consolidation since economic chaos can topple democratic institutions. The problem of poverty and injustice are good parts of Nigeria, and the citizens do not seem to understand what is in their culture preventing them from achieving a just, prosperous dignified life and true democracy. It is essential to note that about 70% of the Nigerian populations are estimated poor, is there any wonder why the society is chaotic? (Victor 2002:40, and Amao 2012:43). The consequence of the above estimation substantiates how the masses in Nigeria are easily brainwashed and their right of choice terribly manipulated making an objective choice seldom to consideration. And more often than not, various forms of inducements and gratification which provide very temporary relief from the scourge of poverty are given central attention in making democratic choices.

#### **(vi) Disjointed Information**

Mass media are watchdog of the public interest is very crucial to democratic consolidation. The media is democratically seen as vanguard for holding governments accountable and guarding against the abuse of power. This can be done by raising countervailing structures of surveillance to monitor government activities and stern an inherent disposition towards excess. But in Nigeria especially in this republic, there are constraints on press media resulting in suppression of information, provision of disjointed and haphazard information and thereby limiting the capacity of individuals to develop a reservoir of political knowledge to assist them in controlling authoritarian rule and participating adequately in political activities. Our media has been subsumed into the elite structure “the big man” syndrome



or upper body structure. This is actively inimical to the survival and deepening of democracy (Awuodu, 2012:16).

**(vii) The Incumbency Factor**

In political parlance, incumbency refers to holders of political office who enjoys certain privilege (such as wider media-coverage and security) which are not available to other contestants in the electoral contest. These privileges create some electoral margin for the incumbent running for re-election leading to an incumbency abuse factor. In Nigeria, this factor promotes appointment of corrupt and or compromised electoral officers, manipulation of the electoral law and the constitution, manipulation of the electoral tribunals to protest stolen mandates, use of state security forces and apparatus to intimidate opposition parties, denial of access to state owned media houses etc. to ensure they regain or elongate their tenure against popular will (Jega and Aumonal, 2011:125). This is purely anti-democracy.

**(viii) The Politics of Godfatherism**

Another great impediment to democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the phenomenon of godfatherism which has been dominating the political scene of the country. It is a game where political kingmakers and gladiator manipulate the political system to enthrone their crowned political stewards. Ogundiya (2010:237) asserts that godfatherism is both a symptom and a cause of the violence and corruption that together permeates the political process in Nigeria. Public officials who owe their positions to the efforts of a political god father incur a debt that they are expected to repay without end throughout their tenure in office. They control state resources and policies not minding the corporate existence of the state. In fact, their activities help to frustrate the basic democratic values in society and block the democratic process by obstructing selection of good and qualified candidates for elective posts thereby making the rise of true democracy a hard nut to crack.

**(ix) Corruption**

The political and institutionalized corruption constitutes one of the greatest challenges and threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria since the First Republic has long been established as evident in Joseph (1991:7), among other scholarly works. What is worrisome is the magnitude and degree of its manifestation in the fourth Republic. Specifically under the President Goodluck Jonathan administration 2010-2013. Tambuwal listed the oil subsidy and Security and Exchange Commission scandals, the Pension scam



as well as the Oduagbate, to buttress his allegation of Jonathan's perceived attitude of paying lip service to the war against graft. (Daily Independent 12th Dec., 2013) According to John Campbell, USA ambassador to Nigeria, corruption is a cog in the wheel of progress of any nation struggling for the enthronement and consolidation of democracy and good governance (Punch July, 7th 2005). This shows that democracy cannot be predicted on a fragile and unstable political base. Corruption as a devastator has greatly eroded the fundamental value of democracy and its essential principles (Amao 2013:2). Corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources, and power for "private" selfish gain. For instance, Dobel (1978:7) defined corruption as "the betrayer of public trust for individual or group gain". In a similar vein, Obayelu (2007:6) identifies it as "efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expenses or a misuse of public power for private benefit".

According to Ogundiya (2010:71) events in Nigeria since 1999, have shown that the tidal waves of reversal have been contending with Nigeria's democratic project. Consequently, democracy remains grossly unstable and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant bureaucratic and political corruption. Corruption has reached a high crescendo such that an average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with it. The consequences of political corruption are potently manifest: Cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and unemployment, and above all general democratic volatility. Corruption in this country is generally characterized by looting of funds and wealth kept secretly i.e. capital flight, misappropriation and mismanagement of public fund, money laundering, (acquiring money through fraudulent ways) drug and child trafficking, illegal arms deal, gratification which involves monetary materials and physical favour as a condition or reward for performing official duty. Official abuse of office in which an official suppresses and violates an oath of office and nepotism which is granting underserved favour to one's relations. The recent corruption scandal in the oil sector totaling ₦1.7 trillion from 1999 – 2011, police pension fund of ₦18 billion as well as the James Ibori ₦450 billion corrupt case of money laundering in London is just the tip of an iceberg as far as corruption is concerned in Nigeria.

#### **(x) Security Question or Insecurity**

According to Duruji (2010:92 – 93) the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 opened up the space for expression of suppressed ethnic demands



bottled up by years of repressive military rule. The expression of these demands have resulted in the emergence of ethno-nationalist insurgencies such as the Movement For Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta region, the renewed demand for Biafra spearheaded by Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the increasing notoriety of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South West. This has also resulted in incessant ethnic clashes in the middle Belt region and other parts of the country such as the Ijaw – Itshekiri Ethnic clashes in 2009.

From 1999 to date, the country has been home with lots of ethnic – religions crisis, sectarian mayhem, electoral violence etc. questioning and shaking the survival of democracy. Notable among them are the Yoruba and Hausa Fulani disturbance in Shagamu Lagos state (1999-2000), the Urohbo, Ijaw, Itshekiri ethnic clashes in 2009, Ife/Modakeke crisis 2000 – 2001. The Junkun/TIV conflict (2000), incessant turbulent in Jos, the erstwhile home of peace and tourism, the post election violence in the Northern part of Nigeria 2011 and constant sectarian turmoil exemplified by the activities of BokoHarram, the x-ray of the above upheavals will indicate that our democracy is surely under great challenge making Dauda and Avidline (2007:71) he argue that the current security situation in the country is a major obstacle to the consolidation of democracy. According to them:

*The tense security situation in all parts of the county makes nonsense of whatever efforts had been made to justify the sustenance of our democratic experiment since the environment is unconducive for foreign investments and endanger by bad governance and political instability.*

#### **(xi) Multiple Electoral Challenges**

Credible periodic elections are a crucial factor in the survival of any political system and the conduct of free and fair election is the beauty of a democratic structure. This because it makes electoral activities meaningful and the interest of the electorates represented. But in Nigeria especially in this forth republic, elections have become a tool for promoting the interest of the aristocrat rather than the electorates. The philosophical basis and fundamental ethos of democracy are being swept under the carpet making the Nigeria electorates to lose faith in the electoral process and the government. The current example, was the local government election in Offa local government area of Kwara State, which was clearly iron by the



APC but KWASIEC declare the PDP winner of the said election. (Amao 2013:25).

Analytically, the 2003, 2007, 2011 general election were adjudged to be worst elections in the history of forth republic. This is because the elections were characterized by massive rigging, monetization factor assassination, political thurgery, sentiments, corrupt practices of electoral officers, judicial injustice, deliberate disfranchisement of the populace, discountenancing of the electorates vote outright disregard for the rule of law etc. what the above implies is that the legitimacy of democracy as the best form of governance has been corroded (Amao, 2013:25).

#### **(xii) Weak Democratic Institutions**

By democratic institutions, we refer to the Executive, Judiciary, the Legislative and electoral agency such as: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In principle, each of those institutions is constitutionally empowered to maintain a certain degree of independence and autonomy while serving as checks on one another. In practice however, the tendency for the Executive to dominate and employing all manner of advantages on its side including the control of budgetary allocations remains a formidable reality. This dominance and over bearing characteristics of the Executive is located in the pattern and practice of dictatorship in Nigeria especially during the military era and current regime of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. (Amao, 2013:25) this legacy has fundamentally impacted on the power relations between the executive and other democratic institutions such as INEC and going by the popular saying that "whoever pays the piper dictates the tune". The consequences of this had been the existence of subdued judiciary, weak over sight capacity of the legislature and the dumbness of the electoral bodies both at the Federal and State levels. (Amao, 2013:18).

#### **Prospects of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

The prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria largely depends on when individual vote counts, where electorate freely decide who will govern them, an emergence of a corrupt free leader, a purposeful followership, strong democratic institutions manned by corrupt free leaders to mention but a few. (Amao, 2014:18).

To entrench democracy some basic institutional reforms are needed as a matter of urgency. The state of the following institutional guards of democracy needs to be tinkered with:



- i. Election Management Organization
- ii. The Legislature
- iii. The Judiciary
- iv. The Police
- v. The Constitution
- vi. The Civil Society
- vii. The Mass Media (FOL)

Let examine each of these in turn:

**The Election Management body:-** Election organization supervision, and management is a crucial process in the quest to ensure a free, fair and credible election at any level in the national political process. Since this is readily accepted the world over, even the colonial administration in Nigeria established a commission; Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) to conduct the 1959 General elections subsequently, four other electoral commissions namely: National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) in 1995 Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in 1979; National Electoral Commission (NECON), in 1993, and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in 1998 have been set up by various regimes to conduct elections in Nigeria since independence.

It is pertinent to note that the Chief Executive at the Federal level set up all these commissions. It is also interesting to note that up till 1999 the commissions conducted election at both Federal and State levels.

**The Judiciary:-** The pillar of democracy, the judiciary for it is has the power of adjustment of disputes, arising from the relationship among citizen and between citizens and government. It also adjudicates relationship amongst tiers of government in a Federal system typified by Nigeria. Of recent, the Nigerian judiciary seems to have wakened up from its slumber to assert its autonomy from the executive arm of government. During the early part of this administration, Nigerians were scandalized by the level of liability exhibited by the judiciary as exemplified by its dishonorable outing in most of the election tribunal cases with some openly showed bias for the ruling PDP. The same was the case with some judges who connived with the Federal government to master mind the illegal removal of state governors who were selfishly targeted by the latter. One critical area that crises for immediate amendment of the constitution is the power of the governor and the State House of Assembly over the ratification of the appointment of a state chief judge. As judicial matters are delicate and highly technical, matters of appointment and condition of



service of judges should be the prerogative of the Nigerian judicial council. This way the Chief Judge of the state should be in a position to dispense justice without fear of the face of the state governors. If this is obtained perhaps our state governors would have behaved less like emperors in the last fourteen years of civilian administration in Nigeria.

**The Police:-** Control of the coercive instrument of the state is one critical condition for sustaining the entity called a nation state. But for true democracy to exist, civilian security force like the police owes primary allegiance to the Nigerian state rather than to any regime. In the western hemisphere where democratic culture is already in the process of consolidation, the police exist to serve the state and not a regime or an individual for that matter. To be sure, for a Chief Executive to administer his territory effectively, he needs also to have overriding say in matters of security. Yet this privilege could be separated from the right to manipulate the force. If there are sufficient constitutional provisions which removes the power of appointment, supervision, condition of service, and financing from the private activities of the chief executive who is essentially partisan fellow when it comes to political contest.

**The Constitution:-** An urgent review of the present Nigerian constitution to change from a self serving document to a people's ground rule. The process should be truly bottom up. That from the grassroots, so that it could reflect truly the yearnings, aspirations and long term interest of all social, political and economic components of the federation. Constitutional review has been one outstanding feature of the enviable process of consolidating democracy in the United States of America. Therefore, Nigeria should not be an exemption, just as the President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has agreed for a constitutional conference in Nigeria now.

**The Civil Society:-** There is already plethora of the literature on the subject matter of civil society, particularly since the decade of the 1990s. We would like to offer only a working definition in this paper. Liberal philosophers define civil society as a means of defence against potential abuse of power by political leaders, especially given the unprecedented concentration of power at the apex of modern polity (Ibeano cited in Nwachukwu, 2005:556). Therefore, the best way, according to them, to counter corruption influences of power and wealth and to revive a sense of public spirit was to encourage the creation and strengthening of citizens associations. This is what we called citizen's vigilance.



Democracy requires external vigilance, the citizens, the process goes beyond periodic election, so beginning from monitoring the electoral process, voting, defending the votes to monitoring elected official, citizens have crucial role to play not only to entrench but also to consolidate the democratic process. Constitutional review can hardly take place if citizens, using their civil associations fail to push for their sundry interests. Indeed all the institutional reforms proposed above are subject to bottom-up mobilization by citizens through their voluntary associations, for a sustainable reform in the democratic process.

The activities of such labour, professional and human rights bodies such as the NLC, NUC, NBA NMA, ASUU, Civil Liberty Organizations (CLO), NANS, United Action for Democracy, (UAD) Campaign for Democracy (CD), including other international non-government human rights organization fall within the preview of civil society engagements. Genuine democracy is watered with the sweat the blood of citizens who engage in pitched struggles with the state officials over democratic reforms.

**The Mass Media:-** This was the only area where Nigerian government could be adjudged rights with the passage of the freedom of information bill into an act of penchant was a welcome development and only area one can say Nigeria is consolidating her democracy. The mass media, otherwise known as the fourth estate of the realm; includes all the followings; the print and electronic media, the radio and television stations magazines, newspapers, etc the journalist should be highly protected and safeguarded if Nigeria is to talk of democratic consolidations. The foremost challenge to democratic consolidation in Nigeria is probably the threat of political violence. The on-going violence in the northern parts of the country and the fact that democratization has done little to advance the rule of law, governmental accountability, effective institutions, or broad public welfare' (Lewis 2011:62) continue to pose a threat. While six Afro barometer surveys conducted between 2000 and 2008 have shown consistent popular support for a democratic political system, the level of satisfaction with democracy has been on the decline. Asked how satisfied they were with the way democracy works in Nigeria, 84% of respondents in 2000 said they were fairly/very satisfied but only 32% were in 2008. In the future of democracy in Nigeria, 42% in 2005 and 31% in 2007 said it was not likely to remain democratic country (Amao, 2008:17).

Overall, the survey showed that support for multi-party political systems is slowly climbing up and a rejection of military rule had been consistently



high. Against that backdrop, prospect for a return to military autocracy is limited. However, condition for democratic consolidation as identified by (Leftwich 1997:525) indicates that the country has a long way to go before democracy can become fully entrenched. Among the conditions are legitimacy, consensus about rules of the game, and policy restraint by winning parties. Poverty is considered to be an obstacle to democratic consolidation and ethnic, and cultural or religious cleavages also pose a threat.

**Legitimacy:-** like democratic consolidation, is a contested concept but Leftwich operationalises it into three components: geographical, constitutional and political legitimacy to simplify it.

**Geographical legitimacy:-** refers to a general acceptance by all who live within a state the 'territorial definition and the appropriateness of their place within it or, at least, they do not positively oppose it, except by constitutional means' (Leftwich 1997:525).

**Constitutional legitimacy:-** refers to the acceptance of the formal structure of rules whereby political power is competed for, organized and distribute' while political legitimacy "refers to the extent to which the electorate .... regard the government in power as being entitled, procedurally, to be there (Leftwich 1997:526). Based on these components, prospects for democratic consolidation in Nigeria are problematic. Geographic legitimacy is particular contentious as many Nigeria share the view that 'Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (Awolowo, as cited by Onwubu 1975,:399). Lack of consensus among the political elite on national issues, especially on the distribution of spoils of offices has bred a sense of exclusion. (Eluem Emeka Izeze, 2012:23). Editor-in-chief of the Guardian, observes that many Nigerians feel aggrieved and excluded and want to leave. But the trauma of thirty months of civil war that followed the attempt of the eastern region to secede, offers a certain level of restraint.

## **Conclusions**

It is apparent from the assessment of democratic development and its attendant challenges that this country had wobbled democratically since it had remained a mere civilian government and not a true democratic government. The political leaders are not altruistic and have a vision of self aggrandizement that run counter to the aspirations of the people. While Nigerians are languishing in poverty, their rulers are reveling in obscene affluence.