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The Nigerian state, political assassination and democratic consolidation: A historical exploration

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Given the current harvest of political assassinations that characterized the Nigerian political landscape and its worrisome nature, this paper, using a retrospective analysis of events, accepts the thesis that "the emergence of the Nigerian Colonial State is a by - product of a 'fraudulent social contract' and not of a 'negotiated will' of the wielded parts" (Ajetumobi, 1991). As a result of this, the colonial state, in order to be able to protect the commercial interests of the colonialists, imposed a patrimonial system of administration by enlisting the dominant group in their services as co-conspirators. Nigerian post colonial state inherited this mode of administration and its vices from their colonial master, Britain. Thus, the relationship between the political leaders and the led masses was that of domination and exploitation. Governance deviated from a call to service, but avenue for corruption and accumulation of wealth. A system of patronage in public offices and the practice of political intolerance became the order of the day. This actually led to political assassinations because professional, economic and political elites sought political power as a condition to fulfilling and furthering their economic interests. The control of instrument of the state gave them access to a share in the profitable opportunities offered by the Neo-colonial economy. It is against these matrices of historical deformities amidst the seeming privatization of political power by few in both the colonial and post colonial state that shape the nature and character of our Nigerian Political Elites, actors and office holders in the current democratic dispensation, their implications on democratic good governance as well as the way out, can be understood. The prevalent 'loot and warfare' approach to politics, the opposition phobia, the pre-occupation with interests of politics of survival and personal security (African leadership forum, 1990) and political killing/assassinations due to sit-tightism seek expression in this paradigm and our leaders keep drawing inspirations from Machiavelli political thought, with emphasis on his slogan, the end justifies the means.

Key words: Political assassinations, fraudulent social contract, colonial state, patrimonial system of administration, co-conspirator, democratic governance, system of patronage, neo-colonial economy, sit-tightism, Machiavelli political thought.

INTRODUCTION

The profile of the post-colonial state in Nigeria as indeed with most underdeveloped nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America is characterized by political disequilibria (Adejumobi, 1991). Specifically, the political environment in Nigeria is a theatre of violence, conflict and war for primitive accumulation through the power process, amongst dominant forces with the inevitable consequence of political crises identifiable within the spate of the various recently experienced assassinations galore.

The devastating effect of colonial and military rule on third world nations is noticeable in all their undertakings, as dependency scholars have extensively analyzed. It is thro-ugh this same historical circumstances and configuration of social interests and classes, that the Nigerian political class emerged, which accounts largely for their apolitical behave-our. The logic is that being a creature of Western imperialism, the natural ten-

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dency for them is to make the country safe for their benefactors and their selfish interests.

In other words, there is a very high probability that they will exploit and marginalize the led. Nonetheless, our position is that the Nigerian political environment in the post-colonial era has the rare opportunity to guarantee political stability, produce dedicated political elites and, in turn, safeguard the nation's hard earned democracy. This is because the old images and structures were maintained. For example, the nature of leadership and their respective socio-economic and political policies remain unchanged. It is on this note that Ogunsanwo (1990), aptly referred to the Nigerian political elite as a hydra headed, incoherent group, who are a decisive factor in the exacerbating political crisis (a la collapse of civil rule, coups and counter-coups, political repression and violence, huge foreign debt, mass poverty etc) in Nigeria. It is in the light of this relationship that we seek to explain the nature of the Nigerian state, the nature of the political elites, its linkage with the various political crises explainable within the current suspected politically motivated assassinations and the implications on Nigerian democracy.

The nature of Nigerian state and political elites

The evolution and character of the Nigerian state is quite an essential input in understanding the nature and behaviour of Nigerians generally and, political leadership in particular (Adejumobi, 1991). The state, in its evolutionary process, particularly in the colonial era, shaped the outlook and provided the orientation of the indigenous political elites and citizens (Dudley, 1973).

The entity called Nigeria, born in 1914, after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, is a by-product of a 'fraudulent' social contract and not of a 'negotiated will' of the welded parts. The expediency of savage commercial interests and economic imperialism was the sole rationale. Lady Flora Shaw (1904) (later Mrs. Lugard) who coined the name 'Nigeria' comments:

> "As in India, so is in Nigeria, we meant to trade, but conquest was forced on us. Having conquered, we are obliged to administer and the hope that lies before us is to develop from small beginnings. Which have been made in Nigeria, such another great or prosperous dominion as our ancestors have created for us in India".

These coerced groupings of diverse peoples, with varied backgrounds and cultures, created both horizontal polarization and primordial loyalties which invariably make national integration difficult (Ajetumobi, 1991). This led to the current negative and warped state of development in Nigeria (Agagu, 2005). More so, the colonial politics of divide and rule, and its strategy of regionalism (introduced in 1946 via the Richard's constitution) effectively laid the foundation for ethnic chauvinism, sectional political parties, and parochialcum-disunited indigenous political elite. This essentially turns politics into warfare in the struggle for control and use of state power, a situation in which power is overvalued (Agagu, 2005).

The colonial state also imposed a patrimonial system of administration (in the ideological guise of indirect rule) on the country. This was targeted at enlisting the dominant status group in the service of colonial rule and to contain the political consequences of changes in class structure. In this case, the political relations that existed were vertical in nature. It was one of domination, control and dependence, with subordinate clients jostling for the favour of their patrons. The British resident became the Great White patron at the apex of the system (William, 1980). The whole governmental structure during this period was characterized by a military-like chain of responsibility extending from the Governor down to the village head (Oyediran, 1988). The local potentials (native chiefs) were judged only by their loyalty to and dependence upon the colonial friends. No room was given for opinion dissent; public institutions like the bureaucracy, police, army etc. only reify the state, and acted as its vehicles of domination and plunder. Succinctly, the colonial state was a police state (Ajetumobi, 1991).

It has been argued by Anam-Ndu (1998), that the commonest diagnosis of the Nigerian sickness is bad leadership and that the affliction seems to have developed indignant resistance for too long. The post colonial state and its leaders are products of the institutions of the colonial regime, and its vices. It inherited and nurtured the military chain like administration, which guarantees a relation of domination and control between the leaders and the led, a system of patronage of public offices, the practice of political intolerance, and the notion of political opposition being an anathema (Ajetumobi, 1991).

The Nigerian state at independence was therefore a disabled, underdeveloped and crises - ridden state in many senses. These disabilities as Ogunsanwo (1990) identifies, exist in the structural, economic, elite orientation and value areas. The first according to Ajetunmobi (1991) is in the structural imbalance of the country, in which one region in area terms is twice as big as the other two regions put together. This negates Wheare's (1947) concept of federalism which holds that the units should be equal, coordinate and independent, thus, makes the practice of cooperative federalism difficult.

The second disability of the Nigerian state is in the area of the economy. The nation inherited a totally peripheral dependent economy, which is outer-directed and cut off by and large from the economies of the neighbouring countries. A poor and dislocated economy could therefore not meet the revolution of rising expectations of the masses nor could it secure a good material base for the governing elite. The consequence of this is two fold, first political repression is used to suppress the masses and their numerous amongst the governing group is bound to be gruesome and violent.

The third disability is in the area of orientation and attitude of the newly created indigenous elites and citizens. The colonial government perfectly produced 'foreign' multidimensional elite, who are entirely British, save for their pigment, and were neither patriotic nor selfless. This was a viable means to protect the colonial structures and interests in a neo-colonial state.

The fourth disability of the Nigerian state is in the duality of values. Colonialism produced what Ekeh (1975), called the two publics. There is the primordial public which is socially moral, and the civil public that abhors morality. Unfortunately, it is the amoral civil public which dominates governance and public actions. As such, the tendency is to regard public property, assets, or resources as something that must be vandalized and misappropriated, and the state as something that must be assaulted and if possible privatized.

After independence, there emerged out of continual conflict with the colonial authority, political leaders whose interests were not to serve but to use the instrument of the state to enrich themselves, the goal that was difficult to prosecute under colonial rule. This orientation attitude of the elites according to Dudley (1973), was not accidental, nor was it self-generative, but was due to the hetero-geneous direction provided by the colonial predators who for their own convenience divided the country into three administrative areas grouped round the major ethnic gro-ups. This, according to him, later created political antagonism among the elites along the cultural divide.

The above situation was summarized by Ake (2001) when he posited that:

> "The nationalist movement was essentially a coalition of disparate groups united by their common grievances against colonial oppression. It was typically a network of nationalities, ethnic groups,… professional groups. But even though they operated against colonial regime, their rela-tionship was never free from tension and conflict. As the prospects for political independence im-proved, the solidarity of the movement grew wea-ker and competition between its component units became more intense".

It is against all these matrices of historical deformities of both the colonial and post-colonial states that the nature and character of the political elites, actors and office holders can be understood. The prevalent 'loot and warfare' mentality to politics, the 'opposition phobia', the pre-occupation with inte-rests of politics of survival and personal security, (African Lea-dership Forum, 1988), the sit-tight syndrome and political killings/assassinations within this class and the citizen, all seek expression in this paradigm and our leaders seem to seek explanation in Machiavelli political thought.

A retrospective analysis of political assassinations in Nigeria

Politics can be seen as activities associated with the governing of a country or an area. It is intrinsically tied to the practice of democracy, controlled by political parties. Those involved in these activities are known and called politicians. Partisan politics in any democratic setting entails the conduct of elections within the constitutionally stipulated periods. In pre-election period, politicians aspire from time to time to occupy their desired elective/political offices at various levels. Political parties perform their role in this regard by picking their flag bearers popularly known as candidates during the actual voting exercise.

During this period of electioneering, it is inevitable for aspirations to clash among the respective contestants. This could lead to aspirants doing all within their reach to outsmart one another. This always creates conflicts among contending individuals. Apart from everyday political con-flicts which make partisan politicking hot and tick, it also create crisis of confidence among some individual and gro-ups within political parties. Such conflicts do lead to con-troversies, confrontations, threats and show of might. In the process, politicians often embark on the bestial struggle of the jungle that can pose dangers to the lives of their oppo-nents. This situation has made some aspirants, key and notable politicians and their supporters to leave the political scene in circumstances that raise suspicion of being overtly or covertly connected with dirty political happenings. These types of killings have come to be named or tagged poli-tically motivated assassinations.

Political killings are prevalent in every political system across the globe, but the degree marks the difference. America has the most developed democracy in the world, yet it had its fair share of suspected politically motivated killings. On the list in this regard were John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. In India, Indra and Rajiv Ghandis had their lives snuffed out of them by assassin's bullets. There were also Awwal Sadat of Egypt, Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Acquino of Phillipine, Olympio of Togo to mention but few.

A thorough examination of the Nigeria political history has shown that the country up till today has witnessed three distinct administrations, none of which entered Nigeria poli-tical space peacefully. For instance, in order to success-fully to take off and effectively control the administration in Nigeria in 1903, the colonial government had to assassin-nate the then Sultan Tambari. When another Sultan was posing threat to their administration in 1931, he had to be forcefully removed. In other places like Benin and Opobo, the monarchs were sent into exile. In fact, of recent was the removal of Sultan Dasuki in April 20, 1996 by the military government of President Sani Abacha and replaced the following day with another Sultan Maccido. This is a very big slap on an important institution in Nigeria that did not only serve as intermediaries/ link and interpreters between the modern government and the larger masses of the people but most importantly the custodian and consultants on matters of cultural or traditional values.

As leaders of government business between 1951 and 1960, the bourgeoning national politicians equally perfected the strategy of colonial government in pushing traditional rulers

out of governance and soon turned on themselves after the independence. The debut of the military in government and administration of Nigeria was the bloodiest one that eventually led to civil war. All these set the tone for violent politics in Nigeria.

In Nigeria's first republic, the first politician whose death raised suspicion of political undertone in its chequered political history was Chief Adegoke Adelabu, opposition leader, from western Nigeria, popularly known as PENKELEMESI (No peculiar mess) in 1958. The popular Ibadan politician had died in a motor accident in circumstances that raised so many questions. This was followed by the death of Olusegun Awolowo in a suspected ghastly motor accident on the way to Lagos to defend his father, Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was facing a treasonable felony charge. Next to this were the massive killings in the western region in an unprecedented political violence tagged "operation wetie", which erupted following the alleged rigging of the 1964/1965 general elections in the region. This regrettable but avoidable wasting of human lives just to settle political scores gave the region the unenviable appellation of Wild Wild West. The crisis, which spread to other region in varied proportions, claimed the lives of first republic and most of its key players like Sir Ahmadu Bello, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Chief S. L. Akintola and Chief Festus okotie-Eboh among others.

In the second republic, the controversies that trailed the 1983 gubernatorial polls in the old Ondo and Oyo States sparked off civil unrest, arson and assassinations of some politicians, their supporters and even sympathizers in bestial manners. That was also the undoing of that democratic experiment.

Hired killings of key national figures - popularly referred to as state organized murders - believed to have serious political undertone became pronounced during the regime of the late dictator, General Sanni Abacha. That was the era when Pa Alfred Rewane, Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, Alhaja Suliat Adedeji, Architect Layi Balogun, and Major General Musa Yar'dua, to mention just a few, were killed. There were also series of assassination attempts during this period; prominent among these were Afenifere leader and NADECO's (National Democratic Convention) central figure, Pa Abraham Adesanya and the publisher of The Guardian newspaper, Mr. Alex Ibru. Another globally suspected political killing was the death in prison custody of Chief M. K. O. Abiola in 1998. In addition to these killings were the souls wasted in military coups in the various struggles for political power and control of the affairs of the nation by officers, and men of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

This spilling of the blood of fellow human beings regret-ttably served as the lubricant oil for the wheel of Nigeria's march to the fourth republic with the strong belief that Nigerians would never again travel on the dangerous path that brought so much pains, sorrows, weeping and gna-shing of teeth due to the dastardly killings of beloved ones. History, they say, has a way of repeating itself. The current fledging democratic dispensation seems to have witnessed more systematic assassinnations of politicians, lawyers and activists, which many

believed are overtly or covertly related to political happenings. The killing of Odunayo Olagbaju in December 2001 in front of Moore police station at Ile-Ife set the tone for the unfortunate development. Coming on the trail of Olagbaju's death was the gruesome murder of the then Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige at his residence in Bodija, Ibadan.

Since then, it has been killings upon killings with impunity across the federation. The long list of casualities include the former Chairman of Onitsha branch of N.B.A. (Nigerian Bar Association), Barrnabas Igwe and his wife in 2002, Principal Secretary to the Imo State governor, Theodore Agwata, a leader of A.N.P.P. (All Nigerian Peoples Party) in the south-south, Dr. Harry Marshal, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Chief Ajibola Olanipekun, P.D.P. (Peoples Democratic Party) Vice Chairman in the South-South, Aminosari Dikibo, a member of P.D.P. Board of Trustees, Adrew Agom, Kogi State Electoral Commissioner, Chief Philip Olorunnipa, Alhaja Sa'adatu Abubakar Rimi. The most worrisome dimension is the killing of Mr. Jesse Arukwu, Engineer Funso Williams and the latest being that of Dr. Ayo Daramola, who were all gubernatorial aspirants in their respective states. This raises doubts of the likelihood of their being eliminated to clear the political coast for others in the race.

We are of the opinion that Nigerians and lovers of the country's democracy globally should be concerned about the spate of suspected politically motivated killings that have been the hallmark of Nigeria's body polity since the return to democratic rule in 1999 beyond emotional outbursts and impulsive empathies.

The above historical antecedents of political assassinations not withstanding, it is not uncommon to hear people referring to the political thought of Niccolo Machiaveli as an explanation to legitimize their ruthless actions. One then wonders why this is so. This is the subject matter of our discussion below.

Influence of Niccolo Machiavelli political thought on Nigerian political elites

It has been a common view among political philosophers that there exists a special relationship between moral goodness and legitimate authority. Many authors (especially those who composed mirror-of-princes books or royal advice books during the middle age and renaissance) believed that the use of political power was only rightful if it was exercised by a ruler whose personal moral character was strictly virtuous.

Thus, rulers were counseled that if they wanted to succeed, that is, if they desired a long and peaceful reign and aimed to pass their office down to their offspring-they must be sure to behave in accordance with conventional standards of ethical goodness. In a sense, it was thought that rulers did well when they did well; they earned the right to be obeyed and respected inasmuch as they showed themselves to be virtuous and morally upright. It is precisely this moralistic view of authority that Machiavelli criticizes at

length in his best-known treatise. The Prince:

"Machiavelli contributed to a large number of important discourses in Western thought-political theory most notably, but also history and historiography, Italian literature, the principles of warfare, and diplomacy. For him, there is no moral basis on which to judge the difference between legitimate and illegitimate uses of power. Rather, authority and power are essentially coequal: whoever has power has the right to command; but goodness does not ensure power and the good person has no more authority by virtue of being good".

Thus, in direct opposition to a moralistic theory of politics, Machiavelli says that the only real concern of the political ruler is the acquisition and maintenance of power (although he talks less about power *per se* than about "maintaining the state"). In this sense, Machiavelli presents a trenchant criticism of the concept of authority by arguing that the notion of legitimate rights of ruler ship adds nothing to the actual possession of power. The Prince purports to reflect the self-conscious political realism of an author who is fully aware on the basis of direct experience with the Florentine government, that goodness and right are not sufficient to win and maintain political office. Machiavelli thus seeks to learn and teach the rules of political power.

For Machiavelli, power characteristically defines political activity and hence it is necessary for any successful ruler to know how power is to be used. Only by means of the proper application of power, Machiavelli believes, can individuals be brought to obey and will the ruler be able to maintain the state in safety and security. The ideas in the Prince was aptly summarised by the Wikipedia, the encyclopedia that:

"Machiavelli, in The Prince, describes the arts by which a Prince can retain control of his kingdom. He focuses primarily on what he calls the principle nuovo or "new prince," under the assumption that a hereditary prince has an easier task since the people are accustomed to him. All a hereditary prince need do is carefully maintain the institutions that the people are used to; a new prince has a much more difficult task since he must stabilize his newfound power and build a structure that will endure. This task requires the Prince to be publicly above reproach but privately may require him to do things that are evil in order to achieve the greater good".

A careless interpretation of The Prince could easily lead one to believe that its central argument is "the ends justify the means," that any evil action can be justified if it is done for a good purpose. This is a limited interpretation. Machiavelli, however, placed a number of restrictions on evil actions. First, he specified that the only acceptable end was the stabilization and health of the state; individual power for its own sake is not an acceptable end and does not justify evil actions. Second, Machiavelli does not dispense entirely with morality nor advocate wholesale selfishness or degeneracy. Instead he clearly lays out his definition of, for example, the criteria for acceptable cruel actions (it must be swift, effective, and short-lived).

The term "Machiavellian" was adopted by some of Machiavelli's contemporaries, often used in the introductions of political tracts of the sixteenth century that offered more 'just' reasons of state, most notably those of Jean Bodin and Giovanni Botero. However, while reference to Machiavelli is not bad, we subscribe to the idea and opinion that the pejorative term "Machiavellian" as it is used today is a misnomer, as it describes one who deceives and manipulates others for gain; whether the gain is personal or not is of no relevance, only that any actions taken are important insofar as they affect the results. It fails to include some of the more moderating themes found in Machiavelli's works and the name is now associated with the extreme viewpoint.

Machiavelli's observation that "one can say this in general of men: they are ungrateful, disloyal, insincere and deceitful, timid of danger and avid of profit…. Love is a bond of obligation which these miserable creatures break whenever it suits them to do so; but fear holds them fast by a dread of punishment that never passes" (Machiavelli, 1965) has been misinterpreted and misunderstood by many including the politicians in Nigeria in particular. This has been the basis of their immorality and illegal termination of lives of their supposed opponents.

Implication of Nigerian political elites' recourse to Machiavelli political thought on Nigeria's democracy and democratic consolidation

Few years before the 21st century, there was some inexplicable concern of many statesmen and important world bodies for all nations to adopt democracy as a form of government. Although, in most countries inequality is entrenched in the socio-political system, yet the spokesmen insist that life of men on earth will be greatly improved morally, physically and mentally if all people came to live under democratic government (Awa, 1997 as cited by Akindele, 2002)

This statement is incontrovertible because, the issue of good governance which, according to Akindele (1995), remains historically deep-seated, is explicitly decipherable from it, as being anchored on the concept of democracy as does the centrality of the combination of both (that is, democracy and governance) to the multidimensional systemic existence of all political animals[1] within the universe. And, from it, one could infer that the issue can hardly be taken for-granted without severe consequences for mankind relative to the "universal applicability of certain standards, namely legitimate rule, pluralism, rule of law, accountability and fair representation of societal interest" (Schmitz, 1997 quoted in Akindele, 2002).

It is against this backdrop that Nyerere (1999), posited that "an essential ingredient of democracy is based on the equality of all the people within a nation's boundary", most polities particularly the world powers in the western nations within the global political community have consistently striven through democracy or democratic process for the attainment of good governance for effective citizenship (Akindele, 2002). Such polities have gone through committed reliance on holistic approach that properly weaves together the asymmetrical aspirations and goals of the various groups and interests that form the core of their pluralistic pillars in ways conducive to positive nation building (Akindele, 2002). All these among others have made democracy attractive and desirable as a form of government that need to be consolidated.

Democratic consolidation assumes two things. The first being that there is already in existence a state of democracy characterized by all democratic features via periodic election, security of life and property, fundamental human rights and freedom, constitutional stability as a fulcrum of society and governmental stability and also opportunities for equality, justice and fair play (Kolawole, 2005). On the other hand, it assumes that there is a need to consolidate the base of the existing democracy (Kolawole, 2005). This implies making firmer, more solid and more resilient the base of the existing democracy (Kolawole, 2005). From this, it could be inferred that given the current situation, Nigeria can be said to have instituted and institutionalized democracy and democratic rule. Following from here is that one thing is to be able to democratize another thing is to be able to consolidate it.

The sustenance of democracy requires the existence of certain conditions, which may be social, economic or political in nature. Of these, the focus of this present paper is on those political factors in terms of the political activities and behaviour of the political elites or class as essential for the continuance of democracy. In the case of developed countries though the economic and social conditions helped in the consolidation of democracy, these factors are not free from criticisms (Kaur, 2002), it was primarily the political institutions, which had evolved over a period of time that democracy was a success. It was as a result of this success in the West that a number of developing countries that attained liberation in the mid 20th century opted for it. The primary reason for imitating this model of government was: The primary reason for imitating this model of government was:

i.) That it was linked to development.
ii.) It was regarded as a form where values like freedom; liberty and equality could be realized (Kaur, 2002).

The model was therefore adopted without taking into consideration the contextual differences in terms of political maturity. The result was that in the case of some, where favourable social, economic or political conditions existed that the experiment was a success while in the case of others

it collapsed (Kaur, 2002). This paper while recognizing the impact of social and economic conditions on democracy and democratic consolidation focuses on the issue of political assassinations as aftermath of political parties' activities that weaken the political institutions in Nigeria. This has a high propensity to impede the consolidation of democracy in the country. The reason for this is that, the political institutions prevailing in the society provide viable channels through which people can express their dissatisfaction mainly through resorting to non-violent means. The political system is protected from any direct attack by the political institutions. These institutions therefore serve as shock absorbers and hence protect the system from crumbling down (Kaur, 2002).

However, in Nigeria, the conceptualization of democracy and democratic government seem to coincide with the view of Laski (1980) that "Democratic government is doubtless a final form of political organization in the sense that men who have once tasted power will not, without conflict, surrender it". Thus, while there have been several attempts at consolidating democracy in Nigeria (1960 - 66; 1979 - 83; 1999 till date), some indicators have shown that the task is faced with a lot of difficulties. Fifteen of these are identified by Kolawole (2005) as historical limitation, military intervention in politics, leadership problem, apathy on the part of the citizens, poverty, gender inequality, politics of godfatherism, ineffective civil society, weakened legislature, state of the economy, unemployment, corruption, incessant executive-legislative conflicts, tendency towards democratic despotism and failure to accept electoral defeat.

In addition to all the aforementioned is the question of the place of our traditional rulers in Nigeria government and administration which has become a very serious recurrent national issue. Some have argued that the institution had outlived its usefulness and should be abolished. The reasons they adduced were that the assumption of the position is undemocratic and as a result and in some cases allow incompetent persons to be appointed. Most importantly are the occupants of these positions unethical involvement in partisan politics which has resulted in their being corrupt and disrespected by their subjects. This notwithstanding, it has equally been argued that the institution is still relevant in today's governance particularly in their role as a unifying force in many societies in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Consequent on this therefore, in order to accommodate them in governance, the 1979, 1989 Constitutions and the Draft constitution of 1995 carved constitutional role for this institution while creating local, state and national institutions for them. In fact, just as we have 774 local governments, so do we have 774 traditional councils. At the state level, as we have 36 state governments so do we have 36 states Council of Chiefs. At the National level, with the existence of one federal government is the existence of one National Traditional Rulers Forum.

Surprisingly, the 1999 constitution expunged all these from its contents. In fact, it refused to recognize them at all causing another round of debate over their relevance in

modern governance. An attempt at bringing them to the limelight again by current governments is found in most state governors' extravagant spending and lavishing of state resources on the institution. This in itself has caused a lot of problem in many states of the federation.

While one cannot ignore any of the factors above, worse still is the attitude of our political elites not to easily accept the verdict of election when they are not favoured. This culminated into resorting to the use of all means to achieve this interest particularly by assassinating their political opponents. The reason for this behaviour can be found in the historical analysis of the nature of the Nigerian state which has made the professional, economic and political elites to seek political power as a condition to fulfilling and furthering their economic and political interests as earlier explained in this paper. This emerging scenario of political assassinations is very dangerous and destructive for our democracy.

Many patriotic political elites have worked relentlessly to achieve independence on behalf of all Nigerians. For what-ever their individual intensions, these patriots were bent on making Nigeria truly independent and not a human abattoir. It is now the year 2006, our politics is still immature and our politicians are still selfish contrary to the principles and philosophies of those that wrestle the country away from the British. Instead of maintaining the infrastructures we inherited from the British, all are left decimated. The railway system has reached the crescendo of dilapidation, the inhe-rited educational system are empty shell of their formal self.

Nigerian liberal democracy presents the leaders as lords and masters, and not servants accountable to the elec-torates. Our democracy is not deeply-rooted in rural area, where those local communities that nurtured, observed and familiar with the characters of those running for office can attest to the characters of their prospective leaders and politicians. Leaders are being forced on the masses and even on members of political parties by political godfathers that have taken over the party machineries and the electorates. This is why the country has not been free from various political crises, among those arising from the installation of political actors as puppets of their various godfathers. This manifested in the case of the likes of Chris Uba (godfather)/Ngige (godson) in Anambra and Adedibu (godfather)/Ladoja (godson) in Oyo states respectively. Thus, any conflict between the political actor (the god-fathers and the godson, contestants and so on) results into violent confrontation between the two and their apologists. Nigerian politicians have not imbibed the African culture of benevolence and kindness into our body politics. Politics should be a mere competition for those who can serve the nation best and not those who are better killers among us. In true politics, a leader should be able to see the plight of the governed and take steps to relieve the suffering of the masses, but not in Nigeria. Our leaders live in opulence, spend lavishly while failing to neither help the poor move up the eco-nomic ladder nor do our leaders see the suffering masses and show concerns. In Peru, for example, President Alan Garcia cut government salaries, including his own, three

days after announcing a long list of austerity measures in his inaugural address. In Venezuela, President Chavez, like him or not, is challenging the great America and fighting for his people, building infrastructures, creating jobs, and align with other countries that can help him achieve his goals and objectives, even in the face of many assassination attempts. Our leaders in Nigeria instead of doing this are more preoccupied with the ways in which life can be taken out of their political opponents.

Politics is a vocation in which participants are required to volunteer all their energies for service to their fatherland (Nigeria Tribune, 2006). This could be said to be the ideal. But it is an ideal that represents the irreducible minimum. Any departure from this ideal, that is, the principle of service, compromised the essence of politics. However in Nigeria, the ideal of service does not drive political participation by all political actors. This is attested to by the failure of different systems of government (such as the Britain-inherited first republic parliamentary system and the second republic up till date's American-style presidential democracy) that have been experimented in the country since independence up to date. This obviously shows that the fault is not with the systems but with the people operating them. Thus, the net effect and tragic irony, according to the Nigeria Tribune (2006), is that every succ-essive government has left the scene worse than it met it. Hence, for Nigerian politicians, it has been service to selves rather than to the people (Nigeria Tribune, 2006). This is contrary to the view of Machiavelli, that behaviors and ac-tion must be directed at satisfying the interests of the state.

Politics is the most lucrative endeavour in Nigeria to the extent that the contest for political office is fierce and the method is brutal. Political post is seen as a job to our poli-tical leaders rather than a service to humanity and their fatherland. Leadership is about creating and establishing enabling and enduring socio-political and economic political environment conducive for development and not about killing to stay in power.

It is an incontrovertible fact that this attitudinal behaviour of our politicians and political class portend danger for the survival of democracy in the country particularly as the frequency increases with the approach of 2007 general elections. This trend in the current political terrain illustrates the extent of desperation that characterizes political contest and activities in Nigeria. This will result in what Akindele (2002) described as bad governance characterized by the followings:

(i) Failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain.
(ii) Failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behaviour in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws.
(iii) Excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements etc, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking.

(iv) Priorities that is inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources.

(v) Excessively narrow base for, or non-transparence, decision-making (World Bank, 1992 as cited in Akindele, 2002).

In addition, the situation may also scare credible and interested candidates away from partisan politics; it equally portrays and affirms the misconception of politics as a dirty game characterized by mutual distrust, suspicion and deceit. In this circumstance, no credible candidate will be willing to contest any election for fear of being assassinated. When this happens, the political activities will be left opened for low esteem recalcitrant politicians who use the country as experimental lab for their ill-conceived manifestos and for building their battered self-esteem through force, maiming and killing of political opponents. The tendency is for the situation to get out of hand to such an extent to turn the whole country to Hobbesian state of affairs where each party was in war with the other party and was ready to employ any means to achieve political power. Such a state of affairs therefore created obstacles in the smooth functioning of the democratic process.

This is particularly so in that, those people involved are the hoodlums who dropped out of primary and secondary schools. They are our frustrated jobless secondary school graduates, who are garage touts. They are the university graduates that are not employed even after four years of hard labor. They are those that have natural propensity for mischief, and they are the sycophants of all shapes and sizes. These people plodded along the periphery of power because they see themselves as people that have been sentenced to the eternity of poverty and deprivation. They think the only way to circumvent poverty is to wield influence and political power by all means in order to use the state as a means of enriching themselves.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Since the activities and behaviour of our political elites and actors is seen to be capable of thwarting democracy and efforts at consolidating it, serious steps should be taken to stop the trend that has already dressed Nigeria's political climate in flowing murderous robe.

The first step should be for Nigerians to learn from the mistake of the past and experience. History has it that the nature of the state inherited by the political elites is responsible for their crude and cruel political behaviour. In this respect, it is important for our political actors to change their orientation from seeing the state as an instrument through which they can accumulate wealth and exploit others. Thus, any individual or group of individuals who is found or is in the habit of hanging unto power for this purpose should be prosecuted.

There is also the need to unmask and bring to book those behind all the killings since 2001. It is our conviction that the failure to apprehend those behind successive past assassinations has been the force propelling the perpetra-

tors to continue the devilish acts. We also suggest that all agencies of government saddled with the responsibility of maintaining internal security in the country should be better equipped and re-oriented to confront the fast growing crime as a way of rekindling the hope and confidence of Nigerians not just in the political process but also in the ability of the government to protect their lives.

The political class must do internal critical re-appraisal. Political aspirants must be given code of conduct to guide their campaign and mobilization strategies. Desperate individuals with do or die political aspirations should be exposed before perpetrating murderous acts while aspirants or candidates should be held responsible for violence and other criminal activities orchestrated by their supporters and sympathizers. The argument, according to the Nigerian Tribune (2006) that a fat pay packet will banish the thought of stealing from the mind of political office holders has failed to hold water. Political position should be made less attractive. This will reduce the stakes and check the influx of desperate power seekers with murderous instincts into the political arena (Nigerian Tribune 2006). It is after the system must have been thoroughly sanitized that the current state of terror would be checked for Nigeria's democracy to be steered away from the bestial struggles of the jungles to ensure its survival and sustenance.

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