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Political Elites, Governance by Voodoo and the Crisis of Constitutional Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria's democratic polity has been a theatre of absurdities since 1999 when the military disengaged from governance. Nigeria's absurdities typified by impunity and arbitrariness of the political elites, infrastructural deficits, wealth inequality and low standard of living are products of governance based on authority derived from indeterminate African witch craft practiced by majority of its ruling class. Nigeria's democratic failures defy explanations. While liberal scholars problematise these failures in terms of the absence of a Weberian rational-legal authority, critical analysts trace their origins to the unsalutary effects of grafting modern institutions and administrative machinery on traditional socio-political structures. These competing explanations are rebutted in this paper which begins with a note on post-colonial Nigeria and proceeds to interrogate the relevance of existing literature on political elites and democracy in section two. Findings from the author's field research on electoral processes and interactions with traditional religious priests provide the contents of section three which suggests that governance by voodoo practiced by Nigeria's ruling class has engendered social exclusion, rejection, and political alienation – all of which have forced the citizenry to engage in anti-social behaviours characterised by banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, political assassinations and the emergence of rival ethno-religious groups challenging the authority of the Nigerian state. The concluding section four peeps into Nigeria's future to suggest the likelihood of disintegration in the light of the floundering steps to democratic governance.

Keywords: Governance, Govern, Voodoo, Crisis, Democracy

Introduction: Some Historical Notes on Post-colonial Nigeria.

It is unusual in the advanced liberal democracies of Europe and North America to think of elites' voodooism in governance because the experiences of those relatively stable democracies, together with their accompanying capitalism, are considered important and exemplary enough for developing countries to emulate. Post-colonial states of Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, as well as those of Latin America and Southeast Asia are encouraged by aid donors to embrace the doctrine of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" which an ideal democracy symbolizes, and which also provides the framework for liberty, equality, justice and peace in a rule-based, politically organized modern society. Curiously enough, it is not uncommon for many European and North American political analysts, economic historians and development experts of international organizations to consider anything Africa, or anything Nigeria as products of "demonic black magic", "traditionalism" and "backwardness".

From the 1970s onward, these derisive appellations featured in many scholarly writings about post-colonial Africa (of which the most populous Nigeria is a prominent member), prompting Young (1986, 25) to observe that "impasse, crisis, decline – a grim vocabulary has come to dominate discourse on African development", noting further that "the character of the African state has been determined by its colonial origins. The colonial state legacy in turn has been altered in crucial and often negative ways since political independence was achieved."

The agitations of African nationalist movements engendered political independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Nigeria gained political independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. The decolonization process itself was an interesting phenomenon but the institutions and processes of governance it engendered and, indeed, the operationalisation of most of the political ideas imparted by the British colonizers – democracy, rule of law, constitutional separation of power, accountability etc. – have been problematic for successive Nigerian governments dominated by both the military and civilian elites. The notion of elites' governance by voodoo adopted in this paper provides an analytical framework through which we seek to offer some plausible explanations for the seeming inability of Nigeria's post-military

political elites to come to terms with the notions of "modern" political culture and institutions left behind by the British.[1]

Following this introduction, the next section provides a critique of some of the existing theoretical and analytical perspectives on the concepts of political elites and governance, to provide in section three a framework for our critical interrogation of the Nigerian State. The fourth section beefs up the arguments of section three with empirical analysis of the elites' voodooism in governance since 1999 when "democratic government" emerged. The concluding section five is prognostic by peeping into Nigeria's political future in the light of contemporary political development.

A Critique of Orthodox Perspectives on the Concepts of Political Elites and Governance.

The term "political elites" or "elites in politics", as Parry (1969, 13) would call them, is not limited to cover only the politicians competing for state power but it also includes "all minority groups, each group with its inner group of leaders which attempt to exert some influence, legitimate or otherwise, over allocation of values in a society." Conceptualised in that broad sense and following Parry (1969, 13), the Nigerian political elites as used here would include the "business interests, unions, the military, the bureaucrats" as well as paramount traditional rulers (e.g. the Emirs, Obas, the Obis, or the kings), and leaders of various religious and animistic organizations (e.g the bishops, imams, the oluwos, and apenas of the osugbo cults as well as the Babalawos of Ifá, the Yoruba god of divinity).[2]

The Nigerian political elites inherited a politically fragile state at independence in 1960 but they constitute a powerful minority group which controls a large chunk of the nation's wealth used in exerting enormous influence over public policies aimed at allocating resources for the provision

[1] For more on this, see Adefulu, R. A. 2003b. "Reflections on Politics, Democratic Governance and Development in Post-colonial Nigeria." *Faculty Lecture Series*, No. 1, FSMS, Babcock University, Ilishan, Remo, Nigeria; Clapham, Christopher. 1985. *Third World Politics: An Introduction*. London: Croom Helm.

[2] For more on "Traditional Religion among the Yorubas" see Wikipedia the free encyclopedia (2012), *Religion in Nigeria*. http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria. Page last modified and accessed on September 20, 2012.

of public goods and services. The literature on the elites' role in democratic polity is wide but the competing conclusions gleaned from it deserve close scrutiny when attempting to analyse the role of the Nigerian political elites in the process of democratic governance.

While pluralist elite theorists like Dahl (1963), Sartori (1962) and Schumpeter (1956) would argue that political elites, particularly those of emerging nations, are compatible with democratic governance because they are the carriers of national integration philosophy and the custodians of societal values, classical analysts of elitism (Mosca 1939; Meisel 1958; and Michels 1978) would consider governance by the political elites as a negation of the very concept of majoritarian democracy.[3] We find the proposition of classical elitist theorists suitable for our subsequent analyses here since the central argument of the paper is that voodooism in governance championed by the Nigerian political elites has fostered what social psychologists would describe as 'social exclusion' and 'social rejection' of the lower and middle classes in Nigeria who are forced to adopt self-help survival strategies characterised by banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, and vandalisation of public properties.[4] These social vices are to be expected in a supposedly democratic country like Nigeria where political elites wielding state power are inclined to take arbitrary actions without accepting responsibilities for the unsalutary effects of such actions on majority of the citizenry.

The familiar definition of governance simply as the "act or manner of governing" has been expanded and given different connotations in comparative studies of advanced democratic states. The European version of governance, for example, is defined by political scientists in terms of the "involvement of society in the process of governing" while in the United States of America (USA), the term has retained its traditional meaning of a

[3] The interesting debate between classical elitist theorists and the pluralist theorists has been examined extensively in Adefulu, R. A. 1999. "Leadership Crisis and Nigeria's Problems of Transition to Political Democracy." *Nigerian Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, *2.1*. A succinct summary of that debate is also in Parry, Geraint. 1969. *Political Elites,* chapters II, III & VI. London: George Allen & Unwin; and in Ayoade, J. A. A. 1989. "The Satanic Elite." Presidential Address to the 16th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association, Calabar (26th June).

[4] For more on this, see, Catanese, Kathleen R., and Dianne M. Tice. 2005. "The Effect of Rejection on Anti-Social Behaviours." In *The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection and Bullying,* edited by Kipling D. Williams, Joseph P. Forgas, and William Von Hippel. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

government steering the ship of a modern state (Pierre and Peters 2000, 7). These competing definitions have been useful in comparative studies of governance in democratic countries of Europe and North America. It is however doubtful whether any of these competing definitions of governance can be useful in empirical analysis of participatory democracy in Nigeria where large segments of its burgeoning population – the artisans, the uneducated peasants, farmers, the illiterate rural dwellers and market women – can hardly claim to be actively involved in the governing process because of the elites' manipulation of the electoral process, official secrecy, misinformation and outright propaganda.[5]

A Critique of the Nigerian State

The Athenian conception of democracy practiced in ancient Greece is that of a system of government by a whole population through elected representatives. A compound Greek word comprising demo (that is, people) and Kratos (which means rule), democracy in its original conception is a descriptive term which simply means "peoples' rule". Scholarly attempts to produce a "grand theory of democracy" that will specify the role of political elites and the functions of the citizenry in it have been unsuccessful because of the unending debate on whether or not the citizens' political activities in any form are desirable for the functioning and sustenance of what some analysts describe as "participatory democracy", and also because of the polemics on the issue of whether or not elite rule is even compatible with majoritarian democracy.[6] An instructive conclusion to be drawn from these competing analyses of elitism and democracy is that the term democracy itself has become a honorific concept used in a prescriptive sense to describe an ideal form of social and political organization. Used in its prescriptive sense, as

[5] Osagie, Eghosa (1991, 24) once argued that "the wealthy are able to "purchase" political power and the acquisition of political power further enhances the opportunity of the political class to enrich itself…"

[6] See Parry (1969:141-158) for a succinct discussion of this debate. On p. 141, Parry raises on instructive question thus: "Is the existence of elites compatible with the existence of democracy?"; he provides an illuminating answer: "Classical elitists such as Mosca and Pareto declared that a prime aim of their work was to demolish the myths of democracy. They set out to show that the notion that the people or a majority of the people ruled was a chimera, and that, whatever the form of government, the effective rulers constitute a narrow elite."

Benn and Peters (1959, 304) have aptly noted, democracy has become a "term of approval" simply because to "call an institution, a state, a decision, a political regime or an administration 'democratic' is simply to commend it." Further, the term democracy has been used in a variety of contexts and this is why we find, in comparative politics, appellations such as "liberal democracy", "social democracy", "constitutional democracy", "totalitarian democracy", and "industrial democracy" – all in competing attempts to express favourable attitude towards a political system/regime or to highlight certain features of that regime which are to be considered virtuous (Barry 1981, 208).

From a purely legalistic perspective the Nigerian Fourth Republic deserves the honorific appellation of a "constitutional democracy" for the simple reason that its presidential form of government is anchored by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria promulgated by Decree No. 24 of 5th May, 1999 signed into law by the military administration of (retired) General Abdulsalam Abubakar. The 1999 Constitution upon which post-military democracy in Nigeria is premised guarantees individual liberty while at the same time specifying the powers and limitations of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Theoretically, Nigeria is presently a "democratic state" not just because it has fulfilled the internationally recognized requirements of Statehood enumerated in Article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on "Rights of State", but also because it has met the requirements of constitutional democracy.[7] Indeed, Nwabueze, (1993, 130 citing Hayek) supports the legal argument that:

> The conception of a constitution thus becomes closely connected with the conception of representative government in which the powers of the representative body were strictly circumscribed by the document that conferred upon it particular powers. The formula that all power derives from the people referred not so much to the recurrent election of representatives as to the fact that the people, organized as a constitution-making body, had the exclusive rights to determine the powers of the representative legislature. The constitution was thus conceived as a protection of the people

[7] Details of the implications, in International Law, of the criteria of statehood enumerated in Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on "Rights of States" signed on 26th December, 1933 are to be found in Brownlie, Ian (1979, 74), *Principles of Public International Law*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

> against all arbitrary actions on the part of the legislature as well as the other branches of government.

Western liberal political theory accepts Hayek's legal prescription for an ideal constitutional democracy by generally equating it with open election of representatives, freedom of speech and association, widespread habit of tolerance and compromise among community members, provision of opportunities for individual's development, suitable education enabling citizens to perform their civic duties and, more importantly, the organization, competence, and accountability of the political leadership. Once these requirements are met, liberal scholars would argue that constitutional democracy provides the platform for "good government" (Adefulu 2003b, 2; Ward 1965, 63).

The collapse of "totalitarian democracy" in all the federating states of the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kirgistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, etc, and in the satellite one-party communist states of Bulgaria, former Czechoslovakia, and Romania prompted a new thinking about governance which de-emphasized state hegemony in economic affairs, and emphasized accountability and transparency of the political leadership together with the competence and efficiency of the bureaucracy in the process of democratic governance.

The new thinking about governance affected post-colonial Africa in the 1990s where one-party or acclaimed socialist states – Mozambique, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, etc. – were compelled externally by Western aid donors, and internally by restive civil society already impoverished by elites' corruption and the misgovernance of tyrannical rulers, to embark on multi-party democratization based on constitutional instruments that guaranteed liberty, the rule of law and mass participation in government through elected representatives. These political developments were warmly welcomed by liberal analysts who proclaimed the triumph of constitutional democracy over totalitarian democracy, and the victory of capitalism over socialism.

Curiously enough, these ideals of constitutional democracy were considered virtuous and recommended for postmilitary Nigeria where liberal analysts assume that Nigeria's political elites are governing in the interest of the citizens and in furtherance of the "general will" of the society. Minor deviations from these virtuous principles of democracy are to be palliated with "engineered constitution" that would guarantee citizens' rights, devolution of power, extensive/inclusive participation in the political process, etc. all of

which would promote "good governance" and sustainable economic development aimed at eradicating poverty. The works of Diamond (1988), Hayek (1944), and Nwabueze (1993) represent this liberal tradition. Nwabueze (1993) sums up the beliefs of liberal analysts when he contends that:

> A government of the people by the people is not fully democratic unless the instrument constituting it also guarantees and protects the basic rights of the individual.
>
> Constitutional protection of individual liberty satisfies the democratic ideals of individual participation in government by enabling the individual to intervene personally where the protection is being violated. Since they are determined by a majority, popular elections too do not effectively assure individual participation. If the size and complexity of modern society make it inexpedient for every individual to participate personally in every decision which affects him, then he must be enabled to seek redress personally by an action in court against any violation by government of the constitutional protection of his fundamental rights and freedoms. (130)

A constitutional lawyer, and strong critic of successive military regimes, Professor Nwabueze's prescription for democratic governance in Nigeria, though admirable, is certainly utopic simply because the assumptions underlying his thesis are contestable at the theoretical and empirical levels of analysis.

Nwabueze wrote his *Democratisation* in 1993, some six years before the military elites relinquished power to the Nigerian political elites in 1999. In a prescriptive fashion and from a legal viewpoint, he identified and recommended twelve virtues of democratization for a postmilitary Nigeria. Seven out of his twelve democratic virtues are particularly instructive viz. multi-partyism under a democratic constitution having the force of a supreme, overriding law; exclusion of certain categories of persons from participation in democratic politics and government; a genuine and meaningful popular participation in politics and government; a free society; a just society; equal treatment of all citizens by the state; and the rule of law. The remaining five requirements – a virile civil society; a democratic society; an ordered and stable society; a society infused with the spirit of liberty, democracy and justice; and an independent, self-reliant, prosperous market economy – are

rather cryptic, and are less relevant for our discussion of elites' voodoism and governance. Some of Nwabueze's concepts are ambiguous and they pose methodological problems for empirical analysis of democratic governance. It is, for example, unclear what the learned professor of law meant by a "virile civil society", a "democratic society" and "an ordered and stable society". Orderliness and stability in a society are not easily susceptible to empirical investigation, and it is a herculean task to empirically gauge the extent to which a society is imbued with the spirit of liberty, justice and democracy.

Apart from the ambiguities of some of these keywords, Nwabueze's blueprint for Nigeria's democratization is flawed at the theoretical and empirical levels for its failure to consider the political framework within which all the identified virtues of democracy are to be operationalised. That political framework is, of course, the Nigerian state and the many actors that must be involved in its democratization project.[8] The nature of the post-colonial state, the structure of power within it, and the degree to which the political activities of its diverse peoples affect public policies are critical elements in determining whether or not the postmilitary constitutional democracy is working or is in crisis in Nigeria. An inappropriate conceptualization of the state is, in itself, a barrier to any cerebral attempt to explain its role in the democratization process. Lack of knowledge about the distribution of power within a society also vitiates any meaningful attempt to provide an innocuous analysis of the role of the rulers and the governed in a constitutional democracy.

[8] A liberal conception of the state which follows the Weberian tradition has been suggested by Little and Mckinlay (1978, 212) who regard the state as a "social system" where a system is identified as a set of units interacting on the basis of organizing principles such as economic principle involving the idea of economic development and the notion of growth; social principle involving the promotion of welfare in areas of education, health, income stability; and the political principle involving the idea of mass participation in politics, maintenance of law and order through exclusive use of force. This conception of state recognizes different types of "actors" which must be involved in the process of democratic governance. Contemporary "governance theory" as Pierre and Peters (2000, 7) suggest, also focuses on expanded definition of actors in a democratic setting that includes "real actors such as presidents, prime ministers and bureaucrats; in other instances, 'actors' is more amorphous. That is, they may be structures, interests, international regimes or policy networks."

To start with the analysis of the state, we find Nwabueze's thesis theoretically defective for failing to acknowledge the competing conceptualizations of the modern state proffered in existing literature on politics, governance and economic development. Indeed, it has been shown that there are well over 145 definitions of the state and Young (1986, 26) has succinctly summarized some of these competing definitions when he instructively suggested that:

> Classical political theory defines the state in terms of territoriality, sovereignty, institutions of rule, nationality and law. Contemporary schools of analysis view the state in terms of the forces and interests it presumed to serve: for liberal pluralists, these are competing interest groups; for Marxists, the ruling class; and for dependency theorists, the "international capitalist system".

In his analysis of "Africa's colonial Legacy", Young (1986) provides his own working definition by stating that:

> … the state is viewed as autonomous actor in the political and economic realms, and the prime determinants of state behaviour can be summarized as hegemony, security, autonomy, legitimation, and revenue. Whereas these different imperatives often push the state in contradictory directions, they help illuminate patterns of state behaviour over time. (26)

As we have argued elsewhere (Adefulu 2003b, 10), the competing definitions of the state (particularly the post-colonial African state) offered by the classical, the liberal, the Marxian, and the neo-Marxian dependency perspectives are inadequate to explain the actual characteristics of the modern African state, the nature of its contemporary politics, and the brand of "democratic governance" practised by its political elites.

While it may be convenient for Nwabueze (as a legal expert) to exclude the state in his democratization thesis, it is clearly unhelpful to adopt Young's definition of the state and apply his determinants of state behavior (e.g. hegemony, security, autonomy, legitimation and revenue) to our interrogation of constitutional democracy in postmilitary Nigeria. For a start, Young's definition of the state, apart from being representative of the Euro-centric definition, ignores the very fact that Nigeria (and its counterparts in Africa) is a "juridical state" and, certainly, not a state that evolved organically from an

aggregated consensus of its diverse ethnic nationalities estimated to be over 500.[9] The Nigerian state is weak but it has endured largely because of the international legal recognition conferred on it by virtue of the Montevideo Convention on Statehood noted earlier. An implication of the weakness of a juridical Nigerian state is "the absence of effective national government"; another implication is "political instability" as instructively noted by Jackson and Rosberg (1982, 1). The unacknowledged but apparent absence of "national government" in it may be attributed to the fact that the Nigerian state is an "imported", alien state, haphazardly created in 1914 by the British imperial power and foisted on a heterogeneous population now reckoned to be over a hundred and fifty million people.[10]

The inhabitants of post-colonial democratic Nigeria are still communities with differing cultures, kinship relations, demography and mode of livelihood – all of which influenced the various types of pre-European democratic political organizations that existed before the 1914 amalgamation. Although these pre-colonial political organizations were different (in terms of authority structure, modes of using power and enforcing compliance), communities within each political organization were nevertheless integrated, culturally homogeneous, and relatively stable because they rested on common norms and values (Adefulu, 2003b, 6).

The pre-colonial Nigerian political organizations had their various democratic governments whose decisions, pronouncements, commands etc. were obeyed simply because the form of authority that existed then was similar to the Weberian rational-legal type of authority by which those in authority to issue commands, pronouncements and make decisions did so in accordance with specified rules, and those affected by such commands, decisions, etc. were also obliged to comply in accordance with such specified rules. There was room for dissent, but the expression of such dissent must follow agreed procedures recognized and accepted by members of the political organization (Adefulu 2003b, 6; Radcliffe-Brown 1940, xiv-xviii).

To be sure, the term 'authority' is derived from the concepts of 'auctor' and 'autoritas' both of which simply mean producer or originator of opinion,

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[9] The number of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has been variously estimated simply because the country's population figure estimated in 2010 to be 152,217,341 is also disputed. See http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria for more.

[10] Ibid.

decision, command, etc. as aptly pointed out by Benn and Peters (1959, 18). The rightness or correctness of decisions or commands given by 'auctores' or authorities in Nigeria's pre-colonial political organizations were hardly queried just because the right to produce such decisions, commands, etc, and the obligation to conform rested on agreed system of rules which determined "who shall be the auctor and about what" (Benn and Peters 1959, 19). In other words, governments of pre-colonial political organizations in Nigeria exercised *de jure* authority which implied the existence of a "system of rules authorizing an agent to issue commands, or pronouncements, or to make proposals, etc., and placing on others an obligation to obey or accept them" (Benn and Peters 1959, 298).

Secondly, the *de jure* authority exercised in pre-colonial Nigeria was legitimate and with its attendant political obligation was firmly rooted in traditional customs and highly esteemed moral standards. In contrast, the supposedly *de jure* authority being exercised by the imported post-colonial Nigerian state and its principal organ – the government – has been grounded on disputable federal constitution(s) engineered by successive ruling civilian (and military) elites since independence and foisted on multi-ethnic Nigerians. It is, therefore, not surprising that the legitimacy of the Nigerian state and its government is being challenged by various groups within the polity on the grounds of their right to self-determination and political independence from Nigeria. The demand for independence took a violent dimension in May 1967 when the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria seceded to form the independent state of Biafra, culminating in the Nigeria–Biafra Civil War of 1967 to 1970.

Although the Nigerian State won the civil war, the demands for self determination have not abated as evidenced recently by the rise of MASSOB (the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) in the South-east, the OPC (Oodua Peoples Congress) in the South-west, and MOSOP (The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People) in the South-South of post-colonial Nigeria. Arguably, all these demands by centrifugal forces are indicative of the loss of *de jure* authority by the Nigerian State and, by implication, a loss of its legitimacy.

Admitting the significant influence of values, beliefs and cultural traditions on political behaviour in a democratic system, proponents of constitutional liberal democracy for post-military Nigerian state still insist on "further institutional innovations" (e.g. the development of political party system, the judiciary, legislature, the executive, pluralistic press, etc) and a "reduction in state control over the economy" in order to enhance "the

democratic prospect" (Diamond 1988, 70-75). This is fine. But empirical evidence has shown that this type of prescription has not worked simply because the underlying assumptions are spurious and, also, because the legitimacy of the post-colonial Nigerian state and government was not derived from integrated political societies with common norms and values. It was derived, as already noted, from its international legal status as a "juridical state" recognized by international society "composed solely of states and international organizations formed by states." Like its counterparts elsewhere in Africa the Nigerian state, as Jackson and Rosberg (1982) have instructively noted, "is a novel and arbitrary political unit; the territorial boundaries, legal identities, and even the name --- are contrivances of colonial rule" (14). Empirical evidences support this observation.

To be sure, the twenty-first century Nigeria can accurately be described as a conglomeration of several traditional societies, each of which had its pre-colonial political organization founded on, and influenced by, its own peculiar culture, kinship system, modes of livelihood and environmental conditions which determined dominant values, constitutional checks and balances, judicial machinery, and a body of interconnected moral and traditional legal norms that regulated conflicts between private/sectional interests and the common interest (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940, 6-22; Vaughan 2003, xiii-xvii). Undoubtedly, the pre-colonial Nigerian societies had territorial structures which provided the framework for the establishment and functionality of political and economic organizations, the maintenance of social order, through a cautious exercise of organized coercive authority, and the establishment and functionality of indigenous judicial systems that recognized certain persons (e.g. the Obas, Emirs and Chiefs) as having the authority to act as arbitrators who can give judgements on the rights and wrongs of disputes submitted to them for adjudication. (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, xiv-xviii).

The traditional rulers and other representatives presiding over the affairs of pre-colonial Nigerian political societies may well be regarded as the modern version of a small group of governing elites who had authority to make decisions. But at the same time there were other groups within those societies who had different points of view on, for example, what their government should do, which local projects should be done to enhance their living standards. These differing viewpoints, expectedly derived from different ideas, interests, social purposes and different conceptions of societal goals, are an indication of a simple definition of politics as a *process* by which members of an integrated political society expound their positions on varied

issues, reconcile differences and arrive at *binding* decision(s). The use of power must necessarily come into play in this process because those with particularist interests on certain issues would want their views reflected in the final decision(s) to be taken, while those with little or insignificant interest on such issues may want to checkmate the former, if only for the fun of it. The attendant use of power in this political process generates conflict(s) which must be settled and peace made between feuding parties (Adefulu 2003b, 11-12).

Seen in that light, politics in pre-colonial Nigeria (and in other pre-colonial African states) is not entirely different from politics elsewhere in the world, and neither is democracy as a universal concept alien to pre-European Nigeria and, indeed, pre-colonial Africa. In recent years however, we find that politics and democratic governance in post-colonial Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa) are peculiarly depressing but still fascinating for a number of reasons bordering *inter alia* on: (a) the colonial origin of the "modern" Nigerian State; (b) the misapplication of its federal constitutions; (c) unresolved ethnic tensions; (d) pervasive poverty; and (e) misappropriation of its vast resources by a few ruling political elites (Adefulu 2003b, 12).

In colonial years, Nigeria's vast resources were carefully harnessed for purposeful and profitable use by the British imperial power which also created what Graf (1983, 190) aptly described as "colonial statism" administered on the principle of indirect rule. Politics and the political process in the colonial statism of pre-independence Nigeria were not really about democratic principle of reconciling divergent views within the society and arriving at binding decision; neither was "democracy" of colonial years about citizens' participation. This was because the British imperial power with its clear economic and political objectives did not need to consult with or take permission from Nigerians before taking policy decisions in pursuit of its objectives. The established institutions and the colonial administrative processes were such that suited the achievement of the colonialist objectives.

Politics in colonial Nigeria was simply a "one-man" show, and governance at the time (and arguably at present) was authoritarian and, thus, undemocratic. The hurried departure of the colonialists due to nationalists' agitation and the support of the United States of America (USA) after World War II in 1945 prompted the emergence of a seemingly powerful, juridical post-colonial Nigerian state which simply does not belong to its diverse peoples but rather to a minority ruling class which inherited it from the British colonizers in 1960. Colonial statism also prevented the formation of political

elites with national outlook, and it encouraged the creation of "a series of regionalized and tribalized bourgeoisies who could be managed (by the former colonizers) according to the strategy of indirect rule" (Graf 1983, 193; Adefulu 2003b, 13).

Politics in post-colonial Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa) is unique and quite different from the politics of relatively developed countries simply because it is based on poverty which some Marxian analysts have rightly attributed to historical and contemporary exploitation of the country by the developed capitalist countries of Europe and North America.[11] The factionalized ruling elites representing certain economic interests have succeeded the British colonizers only to deepen and thrive on the pervasive poverty in the society by monetizing politics and embarking on what has rightly been described as "gross national mismanagement" characterized by "stinking corruption, fiscal indiscipline, distorted priorities as well as culpable and outright waste of national resources" (Onimode 1995, 6; Barongo 1983, 143).

State's hegemony, promoted and defended by Nigeria's political class, has become an antithesis of democratic governance in post-military Nigeria simply because of the wide gulf between the state's values and those values cherished by majority of Nigerians. Critical decisions on how to deploy national resources for the improvement of living standards in the impoverished post-colonial Nigeria are often made by small groups of political elites who ensure that such decisions reflect their narrow interests while a large number of productive elements in the society (particularly women) are alienated and "have absolutely no say in anything" (Adefulu 2003b, 15).

To the advocates of Western liberal democracy good governance is to be identified with "the attitude and conduct of those responsible for public administration," and should be practically expressed in terms of respect for the rights of the individual, mutual trust between those in government and the governed, accountability of the rulers, transparency in decision making process, freedom of expression, adherence to the rule of law, political pluralism with free and fair elections, avoidance of graft and nepotism, less

[11] Ake, Claude. 1981. "The Post-colonial Economy." In *A Political Economy of Africa*. Harlow, Essex: Longman Group Ltd.

expenditure on military hardware, and more financial commitment to education and hearthcare.[12]

Unfortunately, these ideals of good governance have been difficult to achieve in post-colonial and post-military Nigeria for a number of reasons, four of which may be identified. First, there is the lack of countervailing power because of fiscal and budgetary policies adopted during the military era to strengthen the power of the federal government, weaken the semi-autonomous power centers in the state and local communities, and the adoption of repressive law at various times during successive military regimes.[13] All these have made it possible for elected and non-elected state officials (particularly at the federal level) to serve their own parochial interest without the fear of being called to account. Second, there is personalized politics and patronage which have been essential to maintain the dominant political class in power since 1999 when constitutional democracy re-emerged. Third, there is the absence of leadership consensus on many national issues. And fourth, there is the tendency of successive political leaders to assume and use broad discretionary authority in post-military Nigeria without the fear of losing the legitimacy to govern as witnessed by the introduction of unpopular economic reform programmes exemplified by the unilateral decisions of the Fourth Republic Administration of supposedly democratic Nigeria to:

(i) increase the prices of petroleum products by 54 percent in June, 2003; by 80 percent in 2007; and by 49.2 per cent in January, 2012.

(ii) cancel the local government elections which were scheduled for June, 2003;

[12] Politicians and scholars of liberal democratic Western world insist on these tenets of democracy and "good governance" as the conditions for offering economic aid as articulated for example by the former British Minister for Overseas Aid, Lady Lynda Chalker in a speech at Edinburgh in June, 1993. For details, see Mick Moore. 1993. "Good Government." *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 24, No. 1: 3.

[13] For more on this see Adefulu, R. A. (2003a: 14) "The Military and Civil Society in Nigeria's Democracy Processes: Some Theoretical and Policy Issues." *International Review of Politics and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

(iii) grant political asylum to the embattled former Liberian President Charles Taylor who allegedly killed two Nigerian journalists during the civil war in his country.

Successive republics, founded on imported liberal democracy halfheartedly practiced by politicians in post-colonial Nigeria, have collapsed partly because of intra-elite feuds, and mainly because of the failure of the factionalized political leadership to adhere to the tenets of good governance. Parliamentary democracy and the notion of good governance practiced during the Tafawa Balewa-led First Republic crumbled under the "military revolution" of 15 January, 1966 because of certain remote causes (e.g. denial of the right to peaceful assembly from 1962-1966, muzzling of public opinion through the Newspaper Bill of 1964, etc) instructively identified by the late Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe (1974, 10).[14]

History repeated itself in post-military Nigeria when the Shehu Shagari-led Second Republic also collapsed on December 31, 1983 partly because of the reasons identified by Azikiwe, and also because of the "failure to alter the relationship between the State and Society" which, as we have noted elsewhere, has been conflictual (Adefulu 2003b, 15; Diamond 1988, 65).

The Third Republic was truncated by the military annulment of the June 1993 presidential election. The death of Nigeria's first military despot, Gen. Sanni Abacha, the hurried departure of the military from the political scene, and the advent of a democratically elected civilian Administration on May 29, 1999 had raised Nigerians' hope for "good governance" defined in Conable's (1989, xii) terms as "a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to the public." That hope

[14] Other remote causes of the 15th January, 1966 "military revolution" identified by the Late Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's ceremonial President of the First Republic are: the clumsy handling of the census in 1962 and 1963; the vindictive manner in which the Tiv riots were suppressed by the use of the armed and security forces; the sophomoric behaviour in handling the findings and recommendations of the Morgan Wages Commission and its attendant strikes; … the proscription of newspapers from being circulated in certain Regions; the intensification of tribalism as an instrument of government; the use of thugs as a means of political warfare; the perversion of the customary courts; the ineptitude of the Parliament as the watchdog of the nation. See Azikiwe, Nnamidi (1974:10), *Democracy with Military Vigilance*. Nsukka: African Books Co. Ltd.

has been evidently dashed in the post-military Fourth Republic rocked by all patterns of political instability exemplified in recent years by:

(i) High incidence of political violence in the form of political assassinations (e.g. of Mr. Barnabas Igwe, the chairman of the Onitsha branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and his wife Abigail Igwe on September 1, 2002; Chief Ogbonnaya Uche, the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), Senatorial candidate for Orlu Zone (February 10, 2003); and Dr. Marshall Sokari Harry, the ANPP's presidential campaign coordinator for the South-South zone on March 5, 2003);[15]

(ii) violent ethno-religious riots/revolts in many parts of the country (e.g. in Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Kaduna, Kogi and Plateau States); and

(iii) recent bombings of churches by violent Islamic sect, the Boko Haram, in nearly all parts of Northern Nigeria.

It is common knowledge that post-military Nigeria is currently experiencing a multidimensional crisis. One dimension of this crisis as we have argued elsewhere (Adefulu 1999, 81) relates to the leadership crisis within the political class; a crisis which has stultified the military-inspired constitutional liberal democracy since 1999. Nigeria's constitutional democracy is at the crossroads not just because of persistent elite feud but also because of elites' voodoism in the governance process as we shall argue in the next section.

Governance by Voodoo and the Crisis of Constitutional Democracy in Nigeria[16]

[15] Violent expressions of conflict of interest have been demonstrated in almost all institutions and organizations in post-military Nigeria as noticed during the 2003 general election year. For details, see Idowu Ajanaku. "2003: An Election Year and the colour of Political Violence." *Guardian* (Lagos), September 2, 2002: 8 and Adefulu, R. A. (2003a:18-19).

[16] Bulk of the issues discussed in this section reflect the author's findings in his field research and independent monitoring of the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria as well as his interactive session with Ifa priests at Ago-Iwoye, Ilishan, Ikenne and Ogere Remo in Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. The author acknowledges the insightful comments of Pa Sholanke, the "Ejubonna" (head priest) of Ifa, Ogere Remo, on African voodoo, who died sadly on November 10, 2012 as this essay was being drafted.

The literature on Nigeria's floundering steps to ideal constitutional liberal democracy is large and growing (Ndem 1984; Okadigbo 1987; Diamond 1989; Ake 1991; Ake 1993; Amuwo 1992; Adefulu 2003a). While some scholarly works on Nigeria's post-military democratization have identified corruption, graft, nepotism, abuse of power by undisciplined political elites, and incompetent bureaucratic elites as the main causes of Nigeria's democratic failures, others have attributed it to debilitating features of "transitional societies", while still others have located Nigeria's "democracy drama" in the context of political alienation of a vast majority of its teeming population. While the views expressed in extant analyses are instructive, the point of departure of this paper centres on a critique of the presumed "modernizing role" often ascribed to political elites in emerging nations (of which Nigeria is obviously one); and also on a critical interrogation of the "mixed government" thesis vigorously advanced by Professor Richard Sklar in his various scholarly works synthesized in his essay, "The Premise of Mixed Government in African Political Studies" published in 2003. Our conception of "governance by voodoo" and the role of Nigeria's political elites in it is a theoretical and empirical rebuttal of the underlying assumptions of Sklar's mixed government thesis, and a critique of the modernising role ascribed to Nigeria's political elites in the democratization project.

The phrase "governance by voodoo" is not commonly used in contemporary governance literature or in "proto theory" of government as Pierre and Peters (2000) would call it. The phrase is used in this paper to describe a trend in governmental process of post-military Nigeria where political elites exercising state power do so on the basis of strong belief in the efficacy of de facto authority derived from indeterminate religious witchcraft and not on the basis of de jure authority that must originate from the people in an ideal democratic state.[17]

[17] See Adefulu, R. A. (2003b:6); and Clapham, Christopher (1985:44) where it is instructively noted that "Both the organisation and the legimacy of the modern state rest, in principle at least, on what Weber described as rational – legal authority. The basis of that authority is that individuals in public positions, possessing power over their fellow citizens, exercise that power in accordance with a legally defined structure directed towards a publicly acknowledged goal. What provides the element of 'authority' or morally accepted or justified power, is that goals themselves are widely accepted, and that the structures are likewise accepted as the most efficient means of achieving these goals."

Secrecy in governance is akin to the practice of African traditional occultism which, in itself, thrives on voodooism signified by animism, iconolatry and a strong belief in religious witchcraft, all of which have emboldened the post-military political class to arrogate to itself the exclusive authority to rule and control the affairs of the Nigerian state. Public policies are decided, usually at odd hours of the night, by a clique of political elites whose main interest is not democratic governance but the preservation of the Nigerian state itself since the state provides a veritable platform for achieving their particularist goals (Adefulu 2003b, 4; Clapham 1985, 40).

The demise of colonialism and the attainment of political independence by formerly dependent territories of Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, etc. prompted competing analyses seeking to explain how political and economic developments occur. The immediate post-colonial years witnessed scholarly investigations attempting to explain the so-called "revolution of modernization" brought about by the demise of colonialism. In the social sciences we find liberal economists concerning themselves with the issue of how developing countries might attain self-sustaining growth defined simply in terms of increased Gross National Product (GNP). At the same time, sociologists sought to highlight methods by which citizens of new states seek to rise above the traditional family bond of village or of ethnic group, while political scientists were pre-occupied with analyses of the politics of nation building in the non-western emerging states. The economic, social and political changes occurring in the newly independent states were studied from multidisciplinary approach in an attempt to explain the "revolution of modernization" taking place in those states.

Social scientists (mostly of Europe and North America) analysed the socio-economic and political changes in these states in the context of "modernization" broadly conceptualized as "a process based upon the rational utilization of resources and aimed at the establishment of a 'modern' society." A modern society itself is considered to be characterised by: (a) the application of technology exemplified by wide-ranging control of the environment and the utilization of inanimate sources of energy; (b) extensive social interdependence; and (c) urbanization, literacy, social mobilization, etc. (Welch 1971, 2).

The post-colonial "revolution of modernization" that took place in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific states was readily compartmentalized by Western social scientists to explain economic development (in terms of the growth of GNP), and political development in terms of the adoption and

practice of constitutional liberal democracy in those states. The political elites, as we have already noted (see Section 1 above), were expected to play significant role in the modernization process by providing leadership in those states and this idea prompted Pye (1971) to consider the political elites as "modernizers" in developing countries. The "mixed government" thesis advanced by Sklar (2003) is also part of the Western social science tradition which accepts the Nigerian political elites as modernizers.

We find Sklar's mixed government thesis unsuitable for our analysis of democratic failure in post-military Nigeria – first, because the underlying assumptions are contestable; and second, because of the modernity premise on which it is based. To be sure, Sklar's mixed government thesis identifies a dualistic political space everywhere in Africa (with the exceptions of Lesotho and Swaziland) where the political elites as the "architects of government are building new structures on political foundations that are traditional as well as modern." To him, these elites "appear to be constructing a new form of government, one that conserves traditional authority as a political resource without diminishing the authority of the sovereign state" (Sklar 2003, 6). Borrowing the concept of "mixed government" from the history of European political thought, Professor Sklar observes:

> In Africa today, it is normal for traditional political jurisdiction to occupy a second dimension of political space – a dimension that lies behind the sovereign state. Like the Roman god of Janus, these two faces of government are positioned back-to-back, each one behind the other and facing in opposite directions. The political officials of these "second states" are known as traditional authorities; they hold positions of public trust in accordance with customary rules, although their appointments and functions are normally regulated by statutory law as well. (Sklar 2003, 6)

Drawing on his many years of experience in Nigeria which began in 1957 as a doctoral candidate working on "Nigerian political parties" at the University of Ibadan (formerly a University College affiliated with the University of London), Sklar contends that in the past the concept of mixed government which he advocates "does not appear to have been used in connection with dualistic forms of political authority"; rather, it was "conceived as a type of representative government in unified states" (Sklar 2003, 7). However, Sklar's observations of Nigeria's transition from military

dictatorship to democratic government prompted his new thinking about the existence of mixed government in post-colonial Africa where he observes:

> In our day, sovereign states in Africa are governed by unified, central or national authorities, usually in the form of a republic with executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. What I term the second, or traditional, dimension of government almost always consists of several, or many, separate and distinct traditional polities. The two exceptions are the kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland where the two dimensions are virtually symmetrical. Rarely, if ever, do traditional polities aspire to sovereignty in the world of nations. Yet they are sources of immense moral authority in everyday life. Increasingly, that authority is reckoned in Africa to be a political resource of potentially great value. Wisely used, it can help to maintain civic morale and social order during the current era of extremely difficult transitions to modern forms of economy and society. A separate source of authority, embedded in tradition, could be used to reinforce social stability without abandonment of democratic reforms. Traditional governments would then prove themselves to be superior shock absorbers for the African ships of state during the stormy passages of turbulent times. (Sklar 2003, 7-8)

To be sure, Sklar's second dimension of mixed government – the traditional government – had existed long before the advent of British colonial administration and leaders of those distinct traditional governments of pre-colonial Nigeria exercised de jure authority as we have noted in section three above. The pre-colonial indigenous political organizations of Nigeria were "sovereigns" in their respective domains until the colonial intrusion which introduced the European version of "sovereignty" that came into vogue after the 1648 Treaty of Westaphalia.[18] It is therefore incorrect and certainly unhistorical to suggest that traditional polities in Nigeria and, indeed, Africa rarely "aspire to sovereignty". It must be recalled that it was colonialism which forcefully "established within each (colonized) territory a political order and the administrative hierarchy to run it" as Clapham (1985, 18) has instructively observed, noting further that:

[18] For details of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, see Gros, Leo (1971:35-36). "The Treaty of Westphalia, 1648-1948." In *The Process of International Organisation*, edited by R. S. Wood. New York: Random House.

> The administrative structure established to run the colonial territory was necessarily both centralized and authoritarian. Authority came from overseas, from governments and ministries in London or Paris, and was channeled at local level through the governor, then distributed all the way down through the provisional commissioner to the district commissioner or *commandant le cercle* and thence to the local auxiliaries of the administration, the chief or village headman. (Clapham 1985, 19)

Although the administrative structures imposed by the colonizers have been variously "indigenized, adapted and much extended" at independence as Clapham (1985, 19) has correctly noted, the point to raise is that the first dimension of Sklar's mixed government, that is, the "modern government" with its legislative, executive and judicial branches, is simply alien to Nigerian political elites who inherited it as we have noted in section three. This, then, leads us to doubt the correctness of Sklar's assumption that Nigeria's post-colonial political elites are really the "architects of government" building "new structures" on the old traditional structures to which, from all indications, those elites still hold allegiance.

To be sure, it is not unusual to find post-colonial Nigerian ruling elites relying on either the wisdom of their traditional rulers, or of the leaders of their religious institutions and the ethics of their ethnic groups while formulating public policies. Indeed, a Nigerian elected president, elected and appointed state officials will, as a matter of routine, consult with curators of his/her traditional deities, prominent members of his/her clan, leaders of his/her religious organizations, etc. for advice on public policies. And this is precisely where the process of governance by voodoo begins since the exercise of a Weberian rational-legal authority is hindered by the actions of political elites, with primordial interests, who feel more comfortable seeking authority to govern from leaders of their preferred religious organizations or from the spirits of their primogenitors.

Some of the post-military elected presidents and state governors are august visitors to Pentecostal miracle churches where they seek special spiritual blessings of the priests before taking oath of office; others are frequent guests in traditional shrines where occultist oaths are taken not to serve the general public but their political "godfathers" whose interests are at variance with the public interest. That type of absurd scenario was played out in the aftermath of the 2003 general elections when, before the elections, the

Anambra state governorship aspirant, Dr. Chris Ngige, was reportedly taken to Ikija shrine in Southeast Nigeria to swear an oath to disburse state funds to his political godfathers.

Ngige won the 2003 Anambra state governorship election and was duly sworn in. Barely a year after his assumption of office as an elected governor, Ngige was kidnapped in 2004 by agents of his political godfathers for allegedly reneging on the secret oath taken at the Ikija occultist grove. It took a combined team of soldiers and anti-riot police to get him rescued and whisked away to the presidential villa at Abuja where, at a televised press conference, he confessed taking a voodoo oath but had to renege because his conscience dictated him to do so as a devout Roman Catholic. While his supporters applauded him, agents of his political godfathers went on a rampage at Awka, the Anambra state capital, where government properties were destroyed and the Governor's lodge burnt – a classic example of the unsalutory social effect of governance by voodoo practiced by some post-military Nigerian political elites.

Elsewhere in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, southwest Nigeria, the elected state governor, Chief Rasheed Ladoja was impeached, barely two years in office, by factional members of the State's House of Assembly loyal to the former strong man of Ibadan politics, the late octogenarian Chief Lamidi Adedibu to whom Ladoja had pledged under secret occultist oath to disburse large chunk of the state's funds but failed to do so. The impeachment saga took place at odd hours of the night under the watchful eyes of armed policemen and security agents who simply could not stop the carnage perpetrated by rival political thugs at the state House of Assembly complex where charms and dangerous weapons were freely used, and at the state civil service secretariat where fetish objects were placed at the entrance to prevent bureaucrats from functioning. Indeed, government functions were paralysed for many weeks at Ibadan during the Ladoja impeachment saga and the Oyo State electorate simply could not do anything about it.

In Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria where the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) had dislodged the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) from governance after the April 2011 elections, lawmakers simply could not sit in the state House of Assembly for many weeks after their swearing in because of the fear of fetish objects placed inside the House of Assembly building. Prior to the 2011 elections, the factionalised PDP political elites controlling the executive and legislative branches of government engaged in a war of attrition which culminated in the emergence of two rival Speakers in the House of Assembly

that was eventually shut for more than one year before the PDP ruling elites were eventually dislodged from governance of the state. While the fracas lasted, factionalised members of the House of Assembly reportedly used various fetish objects aimed at harming each other, and there were also many reported cases of political assassinations. Governmental activities of the executive were paralysed, the state lawmakers failed to perform any legislative functions and yet all the feuding political elites, emboldened by voodoo, continued to draw their salaries from the state treasury. The state council of traditional rulers – the second dimension of Sklar's mixed government – was divided along the pro-and anti-government lines, and the "democratic" Ogun state government of the Fourth Republic could not govern until the frustrated electorate in the state voted out the feuding political elites of the PDP at the 2011 general elections.

In Bayelsa state, South-South Nigeria, the former governor and his deputy using voodoo and armed political thugs engaged in a "sack-me-I-sack-you" conflict which culminated in kidnappings of foreign oil workers, banditry, armed robbery, vandalisation of oil pipelines all of which made the state ungovernable for many months until the deputy governor was eventually impeached shortly before the 2011 elections. As the 2011 elections approached, the ruling PDP political elites became factionalised and the former incumbent governor Timipre Silva was denied the party ticket to stand for a second term. Seriake Dickson, a member of the House of Representative, was chosen as the PDP candidate for the Bayelsan governorship election after a controversial primary election fraught with political intrigues, manipulation of party delegates and litigations which culminated in a court ruling urging the PDP National Working Committee (NWC) to maintain the *status quo ante* pending the determination of the suit filed by Silvia challenging his disqualification from the party primary. The NWC, allegedly backed by the presidency, simply disobeyed the court ruling and conducted the primary election that produced Seriake Dickson who eventually won the governorship election in Bayelsa state. Voodoism apart, the political intrigues, manipulations and monetization which characterised the electoral process that produced Seriake Dickson as the governor of Bayelsa state are instructive indicators of the failure of participatory liberal democracy which political elites are expected to champion in post-military Nigeria.

While the 2011 general elections in Nigeria were adjudged by internal and external observers to be free, fair, and credible it is doubtful whether the elected political elites can rightly claim to be true representatives of the people because of the imposition of those elites on Nigerians by major political

parties of Nigeria as evidenced by the imposition of Malam Nuhu Ribadu of the ACN party on the electorate; the unchallenged presidential candidacy of former military dictator, retired General Mohammed Buhari, who was nominated simply by the chieftains of his Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) party; and, of course, the electoral monetization, manipulations at the PDP national primary which produced president Goodluck Jonathan. Emboldened by the efficacy of African voodoo, post-military Nigerian political elites pursuing their particularist objective of wealth accumulation do not feel accountable to the teeming Nigerian electorate wallowing in abject poverty characterised by inaccessibility to good healthcare, education, drinkable water and electricity all of which have engendered mass disillusion with Nigeria's brand of constitutional liberal democracy. Nigerians are cynical of a post-military democracy that has fostered poverty and this explains why Kukah (2003,1) has lamented that:

> If one were to conduct a survey on what ordinary Nigerians imagine democracy means to them, there are many chances that the researchers will be met with great derision… Thus, in responding to a question like, what is democracy, most Nigerians would simply shoot back, Na democracy we go chop? (can democracy feed us?) or wetin be dat? (What does that mean?)
>
> On the other hand, some other respondents might just find the acerbic Fela Anikulapo Kuti's definition of democracy as dem-all-crazy (they, i.e. the elites, are all crazy) to be much more befitting summary than any preoccupation with Platonian, Aristotelian or Athenian conceptions.

Sklar's argument that traditional authority, if wisely used, "can help to maintain civic morale and social order" is plausible; we also agree that traditional authority "could be used to reinforce social stability without abandonment of democratic reforms" (Sklar's 2003:8). We must quickly recall, however, that the colonialist-inspired "political development" which emphasized administrative/legal development and the building of democracy in post-colonial Nigeria was based on the logic of European political thought which suggests, as Pye (1971, 46) rightly observed, that "every territory should fall under some sovereignty, and (that) all people in the same geographic location should have a common loyalty and the same legal obligations." That logic effectively destroyed the "sovereignty" of traditional authority by failing to accommodate such authority in successive post-colonial constitutions on which Nigeria's liberal democracy is anchored. Expectedly,

traditional authority, ignored in Nigeria's constitution, simply could not function symmetrically with the "modern" authority inherited by Nigeria's political elites and this is precisely why traditional authority could not be used to "reinforce social stability" and support "democratic reforms" in post-military era.

More importantly, traditional authority in post-military Nigeria tends to subvert democracy by giving support to visionless political elites and, in some instances (like in Southwest Nigeria), by providing native medicines such as charms, amulets, etc. to such elites before, during and after elections. Indeed, unconfirmed/unverified media reports have shown that in Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria, for example, political elites competing for state power must be initiated into occultism at the palaces of the Obas, and the groves of Ifa priests to ensure questionable (usually manipulated) election victory. In return, the Obas, Ifa priests etc are rewarded with largesse, funded with treasury money stolen by the political elites.

Up North in Bauchi, Jigawa and Taraba states sitting governors provided and continued to maintain expensive limousine cars of Emirs, Ulammas who had recited special "koranic verses" at campaign rallies to ensure victory of the governors during supposedly democratic elections of post-military Nigeria. The socio-economic and political implications of all these are issues for further empirical research but the point has to be made that spiritually emboldened political elites running Nigeria's "democratic government" do not necessarily believe that they are accountable to the electorate, and neither do the electorate have the effrontery to challenge their misgovernance.

Behind the façade of constitutional liberal democracy in post-military Nigeria are the undocumented but subversive activities of wielders of traditional authority of Sklar's "mixed government" who are simply uninterested in freedom, equality and justice usually guaranteed by constitutional liberal democracy of the type practised in Europe and North America. The absurdities frequently noticed in Nigeria's democratic polity are arguably engendered by voodooism, prompting a radical Prophet Hephzibah (2012, 3) to declare that:

> These days, you hear of some men of God attending night vigil in governors' house. But this, to me is nonsense… You know very well that the President, governors and commissioners go to some pastors and prophets. But

> unfortunately, these pastors and prophets will rather praise them instead of telling them the truth or admonishing them.
>
> Many of our leaders are evil; they don't know God. So it is surprising that some men of God allow these people into the house of God…
>
> You see, prophets and other men of God are supposed to be the rulers in this country; and it is only on this basis that we can put our trust in God. But this is not the situation in the country (Nigeria) today. What we have is a situation whereby people who don't know anything about God and who are idol worshippers are in power. I dare them to swear publicly that they don't have any other thing they serve apart from God.

Hephziba's observation is instructive but it portends dangers for political stability and democratic governance in post-military Nigeria.

Conclusion: The Future of Post-military Democracy in Nigeria.

The post-military Nigerian polity, inspite of its claim to constitutional democracy, has been a theatre of absurdities engendered by the misgovernance of the political elites who, more often than not, are emboldened by the powers of African voodoo, witchcraft and evil spirits to govern arbitrarily. A methodological objection to this proposition would probably be that it can not be empirically verified. But a quick response to such an objection would also be that not all social or political issues are susceptible to empirical observations. An empirical political science research is clearly different from a non-empirical one simply because the former must necessarily rely on regular "observations" to justify its conclusions while the latter relies on "revelation", "intuition", "introspection", appeals to credible authority etc in order to provide justification(s) for its conclusions (Adefulu 2000, 532). The rise of behavioural analysis anchored on quantitative research method has led to the misconception that all social or political inquiries must necessarily be empirical. This, certainly, cannot be the case simply because moral questions, as Bernstein and Dyer (1979, 2) remind us, are often concerned with how people ought to behave and not about how they do actually behave. In other words, inquiries about moral issues which aim to determine what is considered good or bad will be inconclusive (and sometime speculative) simply because they cannot be verified through empirical observations (Adefulu 2000, 533).

We have argued in section three above that the term "democracy" (however defined), is an honorific concept which has become a term of

approval or disapproval to commend or condemn a particular form of social and political organization. Accordingly, all features of democracy – popular participation in the political process, freedom, equality, justice, good governance, etc. – do raise moral/ethical issues about what is virtuous, good or bad. But all the moral issues thrown up by constitutional democracy in Nigeria are also not susceptible to empirical observations. For example, the story was told some years ago of a murderous "pastor" Clifford Orji in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, who specialized in ritual killings of women. Orji was caught by the security agencies and charged to court for murder. The court proceedings were stalled for lack of evidence to prosecute and, also, because of the alleged intervention of people in high places, the political elites in government etc who were reported to be Orji's customers to whom mutilated human body parts were sold for ritual purposes.

It is a biblical injunction that "thou shall not kill"; it is a moral and ethical issue for a researcher to empirically determine whether or not killings (done at odd hours of the night) have actually occurred in order to analyse the social and political implications of such a dastardly act. It is in the light of methodological difficulties of this nature that we must admit that the explanatory utility and the premises of our analysis of governance by voodoo in post-military Nigeria may be disputed or even faulted. At the same time, it can hardly be denied that the brand of constitutional democracy practiced in Nigeria since 1999 is such that it has fostered arbitrariness of the political elites, frustrations of the citizenry and inexplicable, sometimes mysterious, social disorders all of which cannot be explained simply in terms of contestable theoretical propositions of "mixed government" and "neo-patrimonialism" (Adefulu 2007,116).

It is illogical to conclude that all the Nigerian political elites involved in governance are engaged in voodooism. It has to be admitted that some of them still run governmental affairs conscientiously with the fear of God, while there are still others who provide selfless services to the Nigerian state. Yet it is instructive to note that in a "patrimonial" situation of post-military Nigeria wherein "authority is ascribed to a person rather office holder" and wherein state authority has been extensively personalized to enable political elites govern a socio-political system that is "held together by oath of loyalty or by kingship ties (often symbolic and fictitious) rather than by a hierarchy of administrative grades and functions" as Clapham (1985, 47-48) would argue, it is not unreasonable to expect the practice of African voodooism to hold sway in the governance process. While the connection between elites' engagement in African voodooism and democratic governance may be

difficult to empirically establish, it is certain that misgovernance, perceived injustice and the widening space between the affluent political elites and the largely poor Nigerian citizenry may incur violent social revolution that is likely to herald Nigeria's disintegration.

We have noted that the Nigerian state is both powerful and fragile. Its coercive powers are exercised by agents of the state acting arbitrarily in a constitutional democracy as evidenced by the extra-judicial killings by the police; the military bombardment and massive destruction of Odi community, South-South Nigeria, in post military democratic era for alleged killing of police officers on duty in that community. Its judicial powers are also arbitrarily exercised by conspiratory elites in the Nigerian judiciary who often misapply the concept of "locus standi" to dismiss cases of human rights abuses brought against the Nigerian state by aggrieved citizens whose rights are supposed to be protected and freedom guaranteed in the 1999 Constitution that forms the bedrock of Nigeria's liberal democracy proposed by Nwabueze (1993).

Recurrent official impunities and misuse of state powers by political elites are suggestive of a constitutional liberal democracy that is fragile and at the crossroads in post military Nigeria whose corporate existence is threatened not only by the restiveness of its ostracized citizenry, but principally by the misgovernance of the political elites and the inefficiency of the conspiratory civil servants who are often emboldened by animistic African voodoo to mismanage national resources.

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