

## Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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**Abstract**—The-quarters of about 187 independent nation states of the world lay claim to practicing one form of democracy or the other. Yet the defining features of the bulk of these nation-states are turbulence and political instability, which are in the main explained in terms of the yawning democratic deficits of the regimes that hold forth therein. Beyond doubt, Nigeria falls under the category of states that assume stupendous cost and great pains in her spirited efforts to present an immaculate façade of democratic cultural while in reality anti-democratic forces bestride her political landscape like colossus. This paper takes a hard look at the democratic experiments thus far in Nigeria. It dismisses the illusion that the democratic culture is already a defining feature of our nationhood. Hence it is somewhat a misnomer to speak of consolidating democracy. Marshalling historical and contemporary facts and figures, the paper argues that the primary task before the country is to entrench the values of democracy and through some sustaining measures, advance towards the consolidation of the democratic ethos. By the same token, the paper doubts the possibility that an already indulged political class could be a willing instrument for achieving this illustrious objective. By and large, the paper envisages the prospects of democracy consolidation if the will and commitment to achieve this are exercised for the umpteenth time by the civil society.

**Keyword:** Colonial, State, Democratization, Nigeria, Performance

### Introduction

Nation building, economic development, self-determination and political stability are glowing values which post colonial Nigeria was expected to savour in the immediate aftermath of national independence from the British Colonial rule. Needless to not that as was the case with the bulk of post-colonial states in Africa, Nigerians were woefully disappointed on almost all these counts.

Within a relatively short span of 46 years, Nigeria has had four (4) Republics, three (3) Civilian regimes and eight (8) Military administrations and a 30 month civil war which came barely six years of independence. This indicates crystally that post-colonial Nigerian state has been anything but stable.

The central explanatory variable for the enduring instability of the Nigerian political system is the dismal failure on the part of leading stakeholders to 'fix' the democracy question: "Who" governs and 'How' controlling the reins of power amongst and within nation-state has been at the root of costly military and non-military skirmishes across spatial and temporal dimensions of the world system.

If we agree that 'democracy' translates in simple English language to 'people's rule' (Egwu, 2007) than the structures and processes which have dominated Nigeria's democratic experiment since independence are anything but a movement in this direction. Accordingly, an assortment of sociopolitical and economic vicissitudes have visited the

country in direct proportion to the amount of lip service paid to issues of democracy. But the fact that this is the prevailing situation in spite of the ideological basis for nationalist struggle for independence needs a more critical reflection to unravel its roots. Hence this paper intends to first explore the colonial connotation of the democracy deficit. With this as backdrop, the paper would proceed in the following order:

- a. Examination of the character of the colonial state which was inherited by the nationalist statement;
- b. The role of military interregnum;
- c. The inadequacy of constitution making;
- d. The crises of nation-building, itself partially related to the nature of the post-colonial state;

And the second segment which explores the institutional and structural condition for entrenching the democratic culture in Nigeria. They may be outlined as follows;

- a. Building and reinvigorating the capacity of institutional guards of democracy—the police, election management organizations, legislature, judiciary and the constitution;
- b. Evolving a culture of virile civil society, and
- c. Bolstering the organizational and institutional pedestal of the press-print and electronic media,

The paper posits ultimately that the task before the Nigerian nation-state is primarily the entrenchment of democratic ethos rather consolidation, since our immediate political problem relates to non-existence of the essentials of democratic process.

### The Colonial State and Democratization in Nigeria

The current Nigerian has colonial foundation. As elsewhere in Africa, the colonial state was primarily predatory. It is now a trite to explain that the political interest of Western European imperialism became a consideration for maximizing the perceived economic potentials of the geo-social entity that was latter accorded the appellation 'Nigeria'. For the history sage late Kenneth Dike had aptly summed up this linkage thus; 'if one society develops huge interest in the economy of another society it would not be long before the former gets implicated in the politics of the latter' (Dike 1934). Accordingly, the political structures and institutions of the British colonial regime were well-knit intended for the social and economic exploitation of one race (the black Nigerians) by another race (the white Europeans)

(Onyishi 2003). It was illogical to expect the colonial politico-administrative processes to proceed along the ethos of democracy.

Thus, the idea of government of the people by the people and for the people was out of the question. Similarly in the apt observation of Claude Ake (1985;10), the colonial state was a crude tool of colonial capital. It was used to coerce Africans into commodity to change their pattern of production to prevent the emergence of competitive African bourgeoisie. Thus, the colonial state had a definite historical role to play; to facilitate the process of economic exploitation of socio-cultural formations that later came to be known as Nigeria. Hence political historians are wont to refer to the colonial regime as predatory. Conversely, at home, that is in Western Europe, the state played an entirely different role—it merely mediated the intercourse among competing socio-economic and political forces in society. In the words of political economists, the state in Western society was autonomous; in other words the state here was able to rise above these competing forces to effectively play the role of an umpire. This condition permitted the supervening of conditions conducive to the prevalence of liberal democratic ethos—regular credible elections, rule of law, fundamental human rights, voters' sovereignty and accountability of the government officials to the government, etc.

But in the colonial arena, predation means that significant political and administrative processes would be exclusively handled by white Europeans and native cronies, since you do not need one's consent to exploit him/her socially and economically. There was, to be sure, selective and often expedient co-optation of certain native elements (particularly the Christian converts and native authority Nigerian recruits), which in any case was intended to strengthen the colonial state's control of socio-economic and political conditions (Onyishi, 2003). This democratic 'tokenism' provides the context in which one would appreciate the franchise bestowed on Calabar and Lagos under the Clifford Constitution of 1922.

Democratization refers to the sum of processes entailed in the entrenchment of the ethos and culture of democracy—liberalizing the political space, institution among plural groups, argumentation and persuasion, associational life, respect for human rights, etc. But all these elements would have contradicted the *raison d'être* of colonialism. So, administration by no means pretended to be democratic. Hence the major ideological planks of nationalist movement were constructed with such attractive democracy taunts as no taxation without representation, participation in decisions affecting oneself and fundamental human rights of liberty, association, expression and above all the natural right of self-determination by human races. With these appealing sloganeering, nationalist leaders achieved nominal independence for Nigeria in 1960. It will however be interesting to see how the Nigeria state was reconstructed upon attainment of independence to usher in the much cherished ideals of a democratic culture.

### **The Post-Colonial State and Democracy in Nigeria**

In fathoming the productivity of the emergent statement to which state power was bequeathed it is useful to note that they were so to speak, apprenticed under the departing colonial administrators. Which implies that they would have also acquired certain antidemocratic traits: arrogance,

disdain for popular debate of public issues, exclusively, elitism and executive high-handedness. In sum, "they were infected by the arrogance, venality and condescending outlook of the white minority rulers, rather than waging a permanent war against than for a genuinely democratic future Nigeria' (Onyishi, 2003). Thus it was easily lost on them that the discriminatory social order foisted by colonialism was central to the character of a predatory mercenary regime which came to conquer, exploit and leave. The autocratic style of the colonial regime was among other goals, intended to justify the claim of European supremacy which partially rationalized to.

There is now a rough agreement among scholars of African politics that most post-colonial states here are like empty shells—they were transferred and received by the emergent state in their prime crucial issue of transformation of the state. Thus John Morn (2005:55-56) notes that:

The various nationalist movements took over the vestiges of colonial legacies rather than embark on establishing democratic institutions and productive economic development aimed at cementing a deeply divided society eventually by a culture of divide and rule introduced by the colonialist for the purpose of administrative convenience... In Nigeria, the nationalist turned political leaders merely stepped into the shoes of the departing colonialist by first taking over the Government Reservation Area (GRAs) and unbending elite privileges administrative and societal environments; sustained the instrumental role of the state by pursuing a self-serving goal of state pervasive intervention in the economy. To this extent, they presented, as an "ideological blind" the urgency of state driven development at the expense of reconstructing the state system to make it more organic. Thus the post colonial state never became a reflection of the contending social forces within society. This inorganic character of the emergent Nigerian state meant that it would, for all intents and purposes, not encapsulate a "social contract" between the citizens and the executive committee (apologies to Karl Marx), that is the government. The doctrine of Social Contract prescribes not only that the government exists at the behest of the governed but also that institutional measures should be pre-existing which would ensure that the personnel of government are accountable to the citizens. This is the kernel of the democratic ethos.

Although post independence politics was characterized by multi-partism<sup>1</sup>; two authoritarian features of recalcitrance and intolerance of opposition in a context of socio-cultural diversity were unabashedly demonstrated by the dominant party in the fledging coalition government of NPC/NCNC. This invariably made mockery of the 'electoral democracy' that existed immediately upon attainment of independence that is between 1960 and 1966.

The combination of multi-party, electoral democratic system was a logical follow-up from West-ministerial system bequeathed by colonial Britain. But the failure to reconstruct the political system to entrench genuine democracy was indicative of the autocratic proclivity of the erstwhile nationalists. Already deeply divided along ethno-linguistic lines, they were more preoccupied with grabbing power from the colonialists. As Ake (1996:4-5) aptly observes:

While agitating to overthrow the colonial regime, the constituent elements of the coalition were also trying to block one another from appropriating it. Increasingly, their attention turned from the colonial regime to one another, and eventually the competition among groups came to dominate life, while the colonial power, resigned to the demise of colonialism, became a referee rather than the opponent.

The resultant situation was the ascendancy of the quest for raw political power on behalf of oneself and one's ethno-cultural constituency rather than the pursuit of the basic tenets of democracy: citizens' freedom, liberty, equity, equality, social justice, rule of law, fundamental human right of all irrespective of tribe, language and geography. Intended, in the observation of Stoddard quoted in Morn (2005:56), 'majority of the public shifted their political identity from citizen of the state of member of the ethnic or religious nation-a self-interest switch of allegiance, now that the state is no longer ensuring their security or their economic opportunity', we shall see on the subsequent section of the paper how this sub-national identity has impacted negatively on the democratic process in Nigeria.

### **The Personal Performance of Political Power and Democracy in Nigeria**

As mentioned above, in a quintessential liberal democratic polity such as Britain, France, Germany, Canada, USA etc. The state authorized. That is the state pretends to be neutral to the struggles among groups and social classes for social, political and economic advantages. In contrast, the state in Nigeria, state power is instrumental to achievement of 'personal socio-economic and political goals'. This partially explains the extreme desperation on the part of politicians to capture state power. Odofin (2005:102) thus noted that "in were attempt to capture state power all kinds of sentiments were invoked; such regional, ethnic, tribal and religious. State power is not only crucial but lucrative. Accordingly, the struggle for compromised". And because of this premium on "power" those who already hold it deploy the organizational resources of the state in the all out struggle to retain it. Hence they try to "block every democratic tendency that could affect power holders, and those out of power continue to use all kinds of means to capture state powering order to protect themselves against the vagaries of politics" (pg.103). The implication of this desperate obsession with political power entails for democracy in Nigeria can be copiously demonstrated by examining historically the tragedy which has attended the electoral processes in the country since her independence. Although election as an institutional process ought to be governed by universally accepted rules, regulations and procedures elections in Nigeria since the exit of the British colonialists have been marred by sundry irregularities - manipulation of voting lists, candidates list, constituency manipulation (gerrymandering), snatching of ballot boxes and paper, alteration of records or result sheets, violence, and long-drawn legal battles. In fact there have been very few elections in the country in which the losers have willingly accepted the verdict of the electoral umpire as fair. The 1964 General Elections was marked by deep-seated

disagreement amongst competing political parties like NPC, NCNC, AG, NEPU, and UMBC. The coalition of the last four rejected the outcome of the election, resulting in a deadlock occasioning the refusal of the then president, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to call on the declared winner of the election, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa to form the next government. This resulted in a major constitutional Logjam resolved only by the intervention of the military hierarchy who indicated primary loyalty to the Prime Minister. But, the rogue character of the electoral exercise that season played out much more destructively in the Western Region. Here, the rigging machinery of Premier Akintola threw the area into sustained socio-political commotion culminating in the military seizure of the reins of power in the country in January, 1966. With the military in the saddle, the country ceased to cherish the illusion of democracy until 1979 when General Bosanko's regime conducted another general election. In this election, the brazenness with which state officials manipulated the process was reduced considering that the outgoing military regime pretended to be neutral umpire for what was considered a civilian affair. Nevertheless the incidence of rigging was witnessed but there seemed to be a "level rigging ground" so to speak. But the second term election of the NPN which controlled the Federal Government, in 1983 showed clearly how political power functions on behalf of its holder in Nigeria. The deployment of all electoral resources, including the police and other armed forces on behalf of the goal of re-election and capture of other states by the NPN was culminated in military takeover on 31st December, 1983. There already exist copious accounts of this electoral misadventure in literature on Nigerian Government and Politics. Let us further examine the nature of two other general elections involving change from one civilian regime to another. This was in 2003 and 2007.

### **The 2003 Elections**

The 2003 Elections supercedes previous elections in the country in terms of the blatant usage of power leverage to miscarry the consent of the electorate in the choice of who governed them-the electoral machinery (INCE), the police, the army, the bureaucracy, power of resource allocation, government-owned media-all these unabashedly used by the party that controlled the Federal and some state governments to shortchange opponents in the elections. Domestic and Foreign Election Observers were unanimous in their condemnation of the 2003 elections as ones that were seriously flawed. The EUEOM concluded that in a good number of states "the minimum standards for democratic election were not met" (EUROM, 2003, cited in Mohammed 2005:204) while the International Republic Institute (IRI) noted "direct evidence of ballot box stuffing and gross falsification of result forms and incidences of ballot boxes being forcibly stolen from polling stations in the midst of the voting process" (IRI, 2003, cited in Mohammed, Ibid). On its own part the National Democratic Institute observed that the numerous irregularities noticed "seriously compromised the integrity of the electoral process particularly in areas where they occurred". The implication according to the body is that "if not testified, public confidence in the country's overall political process will likely erode" (NDI, 2003, in Mohammed, 2005, Ibid). The

major opposition party in those elections, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) lamented the 'extreme use of violence intimidation and manipulation by the ruling party; and that the electoral commission colluded with the ruling party'. It therefore came to the logical conclusion that the election were 'not transparent, credible, free or fair, nor reflect the true will of the people' (Hamma, 2003, cited in Mohammed, 2005:204).

In the bulk of the South East geo-political zone what passed for elections were a sham-forceful snatching of ballot boxes and papers, mass thumb-printing of ballot papers by party agents, electoral officials and security agents. The judicial victory by the All Progressive Grand Alliance Party in Anambra State bears out this incidence, which prevailed throughout the zone but which could not suffer repudiation in other states due to the blockade mounted by the ruling PDP. After the 2003 elections dubbed "madness" by Rev. Fr. John Odey, little hope existed for the continued existence of Nigeria as a united sovereign entity. Yet the historic resilience of the nation-state, Nigeria redirected national attention and hope to 2007 elections which was deemed to be not too-far away.

### The 2007 Elections

The 2007 General Elections in Nigeria more than provided empirical illustration of the thesis that due to the prebendal character of the Nigerian state successive elections would progressively deteriorate. Okey Ndibe, the trenchant guest columnist of The Sun Newspaper has aptly described the April General Elections in Nigeria as 'the Triumph of Barbarism'.

Reports of the brazen rape of electoral process throughout the Federation are daily released in the national and international dailies, including magazines. Time and space cannot afford in this forum for me to marshal detailed accounts of the 'roguery' called 2007 elections. The central lesson from it, however, is that the ruling elite have no regard for the feeling of the electorate, to say nothing of their right to democratic determination of who governs them. In the apt care is not taken, Nigerians would wake up one day to read a list of elected representatives well before the day of election, as published by the election management body. In its editorial of April 29, 2007, captioned "This Election is a Travesty", The Sun Newspaper lamented on the 2007 General Elections thus:

In their censuring bid to arrive at a predetermined outcome, INCE and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) - led government have debased, raped, and assaulted our fledgling hardily stand democratic scrutiny. While Nigerian expected elections, what they got was an imposition.

The 2007 election testifies eloquently to the desperation of the political elite in hanging on to power. So power has functioned to perpetuate power in their hands.

### Sit-Tight Mentality and Democracy in Nigeria

One other crucial area that demonstrates the alluring performance of political power in Nigeria is the tendency on the part of incumbents of executive positions, especially

the national one, to manipulate the transition process in a spirited, even if surreptitious, efforts to perpetuate themselves in office. In reference to Africa, Sam Egwu (2007:7):

As experience of post independence Africa has shown, the proclivity of elected leaders to stay beyond their terms of office and to consolidate their stay in power through constitutional amendments and deployment of extra-legal means, has brought many a democratic experiment to grief.

Before President Olusegun Obasanjo (a military head of state) embarked upon a grand scheme to elongate his tenure, three other military dictators had attempted one way or the other to elongate their tenure. After the Nigerian Civil War, presided over by General Gowon, he had rolled out a transition programme including a handover date of 1974. The use of the attractive personal function of state power made him and his political co-travelers to renege on the promise to return power to the civilian politicians. He paid the price dearly through a coup d'état on July, 1975. Babangida also attempted to overstay -having been in office for over eight years. He is notorious programme, including the annulment of an internationally acclaimed free and fair June 12, 1993 election. Internal and external pressure forced him to step aside. According to Egwu (2007), 'General Sani Abacha after five years of a brutal dictatorship embarked on a programme of self-transmutation to a civilian president. Again his military cronies who by and large were real beneficiaries of his governmental malfeasance, including potential beneficiaries driven by rabble-rousing instinct urged him on until his sudden demise on June 8, 1998. Before his death, he had been adopted by all the political parties as a consensus candidate for the presidency of Nigeria. As in the Third Term Scheme of Obasanjo, Abacha had employed open coercion and subtle political and administrative strategies to extract the consensus of the hierarchy of the five political parties in existence' (see Egwu, 2007:7).

The character of the Nigerian state has made its positions taste like the forbidden fruit' which when tasted is difficult to let go. Having seen the almighty performance of power, Nigerian politicians, military and civilian, tend to stick to the position with little or no regard for its negative consequences to the citizenry. In this psychological circumstance, democracy becomes a weeping child.

### Military Dictatorship and Democracy in Nigeria

Due largely to the predatory character of the post colonial state, encapsulating an avalanche of multi-democratic features, it was not long before corruption, authoritarianism, intolerance for opposition and minorities and down right personalization of public positions spawned an orgy of social crises particularly as they characterized elections. The officer corps having perceived correctly its strategic role sustaining civilian hold on state power decided to act upon, to paraphrase Eric Nordlinger, "a preexisting disposition to intervene" in the politics of the country. This otherwise forbidden fruit was first tasted in January, 1966, following the seeming state of anarchy which was rapidly

eclipsing the land. Thenceforth, the logic of mis-governance resulted in a plethora of military coups so that after 39 years of independence, Nigeria had witnessed seven (7) military twenty-nine years of military dictatorship and only ten (10) years of civilian government.

Although the military had seized upon the political scene with claim of corrective mission, records and experience show that they had committed more horrendous crimes of mega-corruption, nepotism and official malfeasance. International attention to Nigeria as a corruption giant accentuated during the oil boom days when our military leaders boasted that the problem of Nigeria was how to spend the surplus foreign reserves accruing from oil sales abroad. More significantly, the long and sustained military pressure of our body politic entrenched authoritarian psychology in our political segment of the society. Its hierarchical structure provided the mechanism for self-censorship and not beyond. The worst form of civilian dictatorship is suffered by Nigerians today under the leadership of an ex-Military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. This is number one enemy of democracy in Nigeria.

### **Prospects for Entrenching Democracy in Nigeria**

As you may have gleaned, I am resistant in using the term "consolidate democracy". The reason is obvious: if election is the most crucial harbinger of the democratic process in a modern society, have we yet witnessed the rudiments of democracy when election, which is already a formal feature of democracy elsewhere in the world, is but a sham in Nigeria; when political parties cannot respect their own constitution regarding primary election and membership when government organizations cannot obey court orders, etc? As I am of the considered opinion that what Nigeria needs urgently is to first entrench the institutional features of democracy before proceeding to consolidate same. The latter is but returns on the former.

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

- a. Election Management Organization
- b. The Legislature
- c. The Judiciary
- d. The Police
- e. The Constitution
- f. The Civil Society

### **The Election Management Body**

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

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

### **The Judiciary**

The pillar of democracy the judiciary, for it is has the power of adjustment of disputes, arising from the relationship among citizens and between citizens and government. It also adjudicates relationship amongst tiers of government in a Federal System typified by Nigeria.

Of recent, the Nigerian judiciary seems to have wakened up from its slumber to assert its autonomy from the executive arm of government. During the early part of this administration, Nigerians were scandalized by the level of pliability exhibited by the judiciary as exemplified by its dishonourable outing in most of the election tribunal cases with some openly showed bias for the ruling PDP. The same was the case with some judges who connived with the Federal Government to mastermind the illegal removal of State Governors who were selfishly targeted by the latter. One critical area that crises for immediate amendment of the constitution is the power of the Governor and the State House of Assembly over the ratification of the appointment of a State Chief Judge. As judicial matters are delicate and highly technical, matters of appointment and condition of service of judges should be the prerogative of the Nigerian Judicial Council. This way the Chief Judge of the State should be in a position to dispense justice without fear of the face of the State Governors. If this obtained perhaps our State Governors would have behaved less like emperors in the last eight (8) years.

### **The Police**

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

### **The Constitution**

Urgent review of the present Nigerian Constitution to change from a self-serving document to a people's ground rule. The process should be truly bottom-up. That is from the grassroots, so that it could reflect truly the yearnings; Aspirations and long term interest of all social, political and economic components of the federation. Constitutional review has been one outstanding feature of the enviable

processes of consolidating democracy in the United State of America.

### The Civil Society

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

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

The activities of such labour, professional and human right bodies such as the NLC, NUC, NBA, NMA, ASUU, Civil Liberty Organizations, NANS, United action for Democracy, Campaign for Democracy including other international non-governmental human right organizations fall within the purview of civil society engagements. Genuine democracy is watered with the sweat the blood of citizens who engage in pitched struggles with the state officials over democratic reforms.

### Concluding Remarks

Democracy does not consist exclusively in the periodic ritual of election. But this primary activity in the democratic process has become a mirage in Nigeria. Which raises the primary question of whether we are in fact democratizing? Does the fact that civilians are in positions of public governance mean ipso facto that we are in democracy, considering that the process of electing our political leaders is horrendously flawed? A situation where eligible citizens of the country come out periodically and enthusiastically to vote for candidates of their choice, but the government in power, use the power of incumbency and limitless public resources, to choose whoever that wants, can hardly pass for a democratic system. So if we vote without 'choosing', are we democratizing? This is why we need first to combat the institutional road blocks to democracy, entrench the system before we improve gradually on the system. Then we can comfortably speak of consolidating democracy.

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