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## **THE SOCCER PITCH AND THE ARENA OF POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

*Matthew O. Ajayi*

# Public Lecture Series



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## **Introduction**

**T**he world we live is so passionate about football. Imagine for a moment the huge investments- material, financial, human, physical- often expended on the game of soccer. Cast your minds back to the beauty, the glamour, the friendship, the carnival-like atmosphere that characterizes every major soccer event. Look at the joy that often follow a glorious football outing, and the bitterness, weeping and at times bloodshed that losers sometimes unleash on winners. Remember the inhuman assassination of Escobar in Colombia following an own goal in the 1994 USA World Cup. Compare the ugly scenario to Godwin Odiye's own goal sixteen years before then in the crucial NigeriaTunisian derby that eventually cost Nigeria the 1978 world cup ticket. Recall also the January 30<sup>th</sup> 2007 bestial attack in Lagos, Nigeria on a Nigerian fan of Arsenal, Sodiq Folayan Afolayan, who was stabbed in the head by a fellow citizen and supporter of rival Bolton Wanderer football club, following a disagreement over a match involving the two English premierships teams. (Sunday Vanguard, February 11, 2007:27)

Soccer, another name for football has become a household name across the globe. It is a game that has defiled all linguistic, tribal, ethnic, cultural and religious barriers, as it has helped to unite the world centrifugal forces. Indeed the “god of soccer”, as has been

widely acknowledged, has taken over the souls of many nations. Consider for a moment the fanfares that usually follow Brazil to the pitch and the emotional attachment of the world to that country and indeed every great team on the field of play. No wonder, as studies have shown, periods of great soccer competitions are usually characterized by low crime rate as the streets are not only unusually empty of human traffic, but even unrepentant criminals take vacations to watch great soccer moments. Similarly, it has been discovered that periods of great games are moments of great conjugal bliss as spouses are temporarily united and hitherto absentee husbands create the elusive time at home for soccer.

Beyond the glamour, the thriller and the suspense, football is a well structured game. What with the omnibus presence of Federated International Football Association (FIFA), European Football Association (UEFA), Confederation of African Football (CAF) and other similar continental bodies that have dominated the football scene as its regulatory bodies at different levels. From the number of players, the colour and pattern of jerseys, the length and breadth of the stadium, the position of referees, the size and position of the goal post, the duration of tournament, and the general conduct of players, the coaching crew, the spectators and supporters, there are prescriptions and proscriptions guiding every football tournament.

How can we forget the nature of rewards and punishment for each team and the treatment of offenders as spelt out in the code guiding the game at every stage? Remember some great penalty kicks and the suspense that they often generate. What about great moments of yellow and red cards that have ruined the career of hitherto brilliant players on the pitch? These are periods in any soccer event a good follower of the game would hate to forget. But the question here is how relevant are these painted scenarios to our discussion and understanding of politics and especially the political arena in Nigeria?

Our objective in this paper is to look at politics from the perspective of a game every nation plays. In doing this we take our bearing from a position that the nature of politics in every nation is a reflection of three dominant issues: the character of the players, the nature of the rules governing the game and the configuration of the field of play. These three elements determine the content, context and dynamics of politics from one nation to another. The paper also analyses some critical factors considered as challenges to the ideal democratic polity in Nigeria, and ends with a set of prescriptions toward a sustainable democratic project in the country.



## **Politics as a Game**

John Spanier, in his epic once described international politics as “Game Nations Play.” But the games theory was propounded in the 1920s by Emil Borel, and was further developed by John Von Neumann to explain the behavior of the economic man or the rational actor. The theory as Jack Piano and Robert Riggs (1973:33) see it deals “with rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimizes losses.” The emphasis of the theory was the application of mathematical models to political studies, and it has its origin in those parlour games, like chess, chicken poker or bridge characterized by “elements of conflict, decision making and cooperation.” These are games between two or more players, where the decisions of each player “are contingent upon the decisions of others.” The central point here is the nature of inter-dependence of whatever decisions are made by the different players participating in the game. This is because it is not possible for any one player to make a choice without giving considerations to the choices made by the other players. Thus the task before each player is to ensure that decisions are based on expectations of what action the other players would take at any given time. The import of this is that the game entails elements of consistency and rationality among actors because such actors have partial control over the strategic

factors affecting their environment. The use of game theory in political studies is based on the following assumptions:

- That the game is usually well defined.
- That the game has an explicit set of rules.
- That the information available to the players is specified at every point.
- That the scoring system is complete. (Verma, 1975:342)

Central to the theory are two vital components, namely, the players and strategies or tactics. The players, also known as decision makers could be individuals or institutions are assumed to be rational with well defined objectives, and are endowed with resources to checkmate competing forces. To guide the deployment of these resources are rules. These are the *ground norm*, the prescription and proscription. For instance a law may be established on the deployment of nuclear powers by states in the international system or to regulate the activities of political parties during electioneering campaigns.

The strategies consist of the “overall programme of actions which a player, under adverse or conflict conditions, adopts in order to achieve a desired outcome or series of outcomes.”

The game theory further argues that “each player has a scale of utilities, according to which he prefers some outcomes, so long as he plays the game at all.” The player also has a range of options among different moves he can make, and there are particular

expectations of such moves. Even though their knowledge of outcome of their actions are uncertain, the theory further argues that if players must play well, “they must know what they know and what they do not know, and they must know what they can and what they cannot do.” (Deutsch, 1978). But the assumption of the theory that a player can strategise in a manner that takes care of all possible contingencies has little application to real life situation.

The outcome of whatever strategy is adopted gives rise to the different forms of game theory we know. Examples include (a) the zero-sum game, (b) the non zero-sum game, (c) the zero-sum npersons games and (d) the non-zero-sum n-person games. In the zero-sum game we have only two players, and the gains of one are always equal to the loss of the other. In b and c, two or more persons are involved, and the players may share the division of the award, and the gain of one need not be equal to the loss of the other. In d where there are three or more players, it is possible for two or more players to cooperate against the others by pooling resources and making collective decisions during the play. This is the idea behind coalition and realignment in politics or “ganging up “on the front runner in order to stop his chances of winning. (Verma 1975: 345)

No matter its inadequacies, game theory has found relevance in analyzing major issues of national and international politics. It is

used for, instance as analytical tool of strategic studies to explain the phenomenon of wars, diplomacy and bargaining, But it is in explaining the dynamics of national politics, especially issues of electoral politics, voters behavior, political alliances and elite conspiracy that this theory has been found useful as we have tried to do in this paper.

### **Soccer and Politics: The Synergy.**

Politics like soccer is about supremacy. Both entail the struggle for the control, use and retention of power even though the nature of such power differs from one context to another. Both phenomena involve the elements of conflict. A serious game of soccer is certainly not a tea party. That is why we have the leagues that separate the men from the boys. This is where the age-long view of politics as “the authoritative allocation of value” or “who gets what, how and why” is derived. What this means in essence is that the degree of power or privileges an individual or group is able to control is largely determined by his ability to subdue opposition in the contest for such power. Similarly the way and manner political conflicts are resolved differentiates one society from another. A fall out of this is the general notion of politics in many of the advanced nations as highly developed, well organized with highly differentiated institutional structures and procedures. Here, the institutions to regulate conflicts are not only in place, they are empowered to perform this role and their

decisions are legitimate to the extent that they are generally accepted by the people. This is in contrast with the picture of many developing countries, where the structures and institutions of government are underdeveloped, dysfunctional and in some cases comatose. And because of this, these institutions fail to inspire the confidence and loyalty of citizens, who are compelled to find extra-legal means of seeking redress.

Also, politics like soccer is a dynamic phenomenon. Both are not ends in themselves, but means to particular end. Politics connotes a process whose end or purpose is the good of society. Therefore like football the game of politics is to be celebrated and enjoyed. To achieve this, politics like every other game, is governed by set rules and regulations. Laws are put in place to guide the conduct of men on the field. The laws are known and acceptable to all parties in a contest. Along with these regulations are established patterns of reward and punishment for players. But unlike other sporting activities, politics is a tournament that must always produce a winner, especially in a final competition, no matter how slim the margin of victory. Where a winner does not emerge, the organisers of the game must schedule another contest. This has a biblical validation in the Holy Book which explains the significance of the race of life in this way “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.” (1 Corinthians 9: 24). Therefore like the final

game in any soccer event, political contests are never complete until a winner emerges. In Nigeria, it is simply a zero sum game where victory for one is a loss to another.

Also, politics, like every other game has its umpires. The referees in every political contest are expected to be impartial, owing no allegiance to any of the players. Similarly, the field of play must not only be level and green (like every modern stadium); it must be seen to be so. The goal posts are well known and they are not shifted in the middle of a game. In other words, strict adherence to established norm of every game becomes a precondition for the legitimacy of the outcome of any contest.

Similarly, soccer has grown from the amateurish form to its current professional status embedded with all the skills, commitment, organizational prowess and financial strength required to host a successful competition. The job of coaching a modern team, for instance, relies more on packages information technology has to offer. Thus, it is becoming increasingly clear that the game of politics is more of a serious business that cannot be left in the hands of amateurish political class. The alternative may not necessarily be the ideal Plato's "Philosopher King." But the realities of the ever increasingly complex globalising world, especially the myriads of domestic and international social, economic, security and political issues and challenges world leaders have to contend with today, indicate that to be a successful

political leader requires more than a basic education or an ability to read and write. But what exactly is the state of the soccer pitch the political arena in Nigeria has come to represent.

### **The Nigerian Political Arena.**

Nigeria as a country is a big paradox. It is a country the Almighty God Himself seemed to have developed an extra affection through a generous endowment of human and material capacity. The huge deposits of some of the best natural resources place the country in an enviable position in the comity of nations. As the world 12th largest producer of crude oil, Nigeria's earning from the sale of crude oil, even in the absence of accurate statistics, is put at trillions of United States Dollar. The country is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil imports to the United States, making it of "direct strategic importance to the US government" (Piombo, 2003). Oil accounts for about 20 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 95 percent of her foreign exchange earnings, and close to 80 percent of revenues. The solid mineral sector is equally bubbling with intense activities especially in the exploration of bitumen which is expected to be another moneyspinning sector in the days ahead. There are 65 sites in Nigeria where gold has been located, in addition to huge reserves of tin and iron ore that have been left unexploited. Even though the agricultural sector has long been neglected, Nigeria is equally

blessed with vast fertile, arable land for the cultivation of diverse cash and food crops, with the sector accounting for about 33 percent of GDP. All these are indications that in terms of the potential powers, Nigeria seems to have more than its fair share of world resources especially when compared with smaller economies of the world. We can corroborate this by taking a cursory look at revenue allocation to the different levels of government in recent past. The picture shows that more than ever before, the challenge before the present administration in the country is certainly not that of non availability of resources. For example, statistics shows that the total amount accruable to all tiers of government between 1999 and 2006 was over 11 trillion Naira. Of this amount, the Federal Government accounted for 5.6 trillion. Four states, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta and Akwa Ibom accounted for 12 percent of all the allocations. A typical allocation in the month of June 2006 gives us a picture of the nature of financial resources at the disposal of states of Nigeria.

Table 1: June 2006 Allocation to States

STATE	ALLO C ATION(billion)	STATE	ALLO C ATION(billion)
Rivers	23.24	Ogun	3.45
Bayelsa	18.16	Taraba	3.40
Delta	15.83	Yobe	3.39



Akwaibom	14.44	Enugu	3.30
Ondo	6.96	Osun	3.22
Kano	5.56	Gombe	3.15
Lagos	5.49	Kwara	3.12
Imo	4.36	Ekiti	3.08
Katsina	4.29	Plateau	3.05
Kaduna	4.28	Ebonyi	3.01
Edo	4.20	Nassarawa	3.00
Oyo	4.19		
Borno	4.11		
Bauchi	4.10		
CrossRiver	3.98		
Niger	3.96		
Abia	3.95		
Jigawa	3.91		
Benue	3.81		
Sokoto	3.72		

Anambra	3.60		
Kebbi	3.56		
Zamfara	3.55		
Adamawa	3.53		
Kogi	3.50		

Source: Vanguard August 13 2006, p.13

When these economic and political potentials are added to its demographic strength, particularly a population of over 140 million (Census, 2006), Nigeria certainly qualifies as a giant in Africa. We are told that one out of four Africans is a Nigerian. In the same vein, the country has remained a pillar at the sub regional level, with high visibility in the politics of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

But it is equally true that these resources have not translated to a stable political and economic system we witness even in those smaller and less endowed states earlier referred to. So what obtains is a paradox of political savagery in the midst of economic abundance. For instance in spite of oil wealth, unemployment has remained an albatross, with an estimated 60 million Nigerians unemployed. Forty-six years after political independence, the structures and institutions of government are still at a very low

stage of development. As a nation we keep on echoing the worn out tune of nascent democracy after five attempts at democratic government. While the country grows in age, its political structures, processes and institutions have remained at the level of toddlers. An adult that crawls for forty six years cannot but suffer some deformity and that is what seems to be the pathetic state of the nation as we look back to forty six years of wasted opportunities and dashed hopes.

As earlier mentioned, the game of soccer today has become more sophisticated both within and outside the field of play. Every aspect of the game- management, finance officiating etcetera- as earlier mentioned, has come under the influence of new approaches and technology. But not so with Nigerian politics, where the tactics, method, purpose and the dramatis personae have remained the crude, immobile and indolent class that has held the country hostage for decades. But how did the country get to this pathetic stage?

A study of contemporary developments in Nigeria cannot be done in isolation of an understanding of their historical dynamics. Even though it may appear trite to blame every deformity in the polity on colonialism, the impact of that singular epoch on the nation's social, economic and political formations cannot be over-emphasised. Colonialism with its exogenous character laid the foundation for the dislocations we find in trade, industrialization,

education, and political party activities (Ake 1980, Nnoli 1981, Onimode 1982). In particular, colonialism was instrumental to the emergence of a parasitic, unproductive bourgeois class, whose only credential to prominence was their appendage to the metropolitan powers. This same class of leaders who took control of political power after independence was economically irrelevant to the growth of the nation because they did not only lack the requisite economic and political ideology, their collective performance as leaders indicated that they were certainly not in charge of the development agenda. Hence, the country found itself romancing poorly conceived, half-baked, badly implemented and uncoordinated economic policies, ranging from mixed economy, indigenization, nationalization, to a so-called import substitution strategy. Nigeria became a theatre for testing spurious economic theories whose proponents or implementers hardly understand. No wonder the results of these worn out measures were large scale underdevelopment and decreasing standard of living of the people.

However, forty six years after colonialism, the question is why have successive rulers failed to change the tide? To be sure, Nigeria has always been unlucky with one set of leaders after another. Indeed those who have mounted the saddle of leadership have turned out to be our rulers and tormentors rather than our leaders, people who had little or no regard for our hopes, fears

and aspirations, and whose words indeed were considered sacrosanct and unchallengeable. These are men and women whose gods are their pockets and bellies, those who would rather sell the entire commonwealth than leave the political stage better than they met it. This was what prompted Chinua Achebe when he correctly noted that, “part of the hoax called independence is to give us leaders who do not understand what happened to us” (Vanguard, January 2006)

It is quite understandable for the men in uniform who use our guns not only to seize political power but to exploit our collective helplessness and fear of the bullets to steal the nation and our heritage blind. But it becomes more worrisome and pathetic to find the self styled democrats, those who ostensibly begged to serve us by soliciting our votes, to turn round to abuse our benevolence by inflicting the worst form of savagery on our joint treasures. Although the question may also correctly be asked whether we had actually had leaders who came to office by popular vote, given the manipulations and malfeasance that had been our experience with electoral politics in Nigeria since political independence.

While the military junta employed brute force and intimidation, and their monopolization of the instruments of violence to appropriate our natural resources, the civilians have exploited our collective docility, poverty and ignorance to corner and pillage

the nation's purse and resources. We have had men and women in positions of authority, who are largely insincere and uncommitted to any national cause. We have had persons who would rather exploit our tribal, ethnic, religious and other primordial differences to perpetuate their nefarious hold on political power and by extension the national economy. This is part of the dilemma of leadership Nigeria has had to grapple with since the white man vacated the political terrain in 1960.

Like in every game of soccer, political contest devoid of tested and competent players is akin to a rudderless ship on its way to sink. Imagine a football tournament without a captain, a defender, or a striker and the direction such a game would soon take. Or imagine further one with these aforementioned men but where the mission of every player on the field is to score at the same time for the team. Definitely such team is on its way to disaster. That unfortunately is the picture Nigerian politics eloquently depict. On the political terrain are actors, most of whom lack the requisite political skill and sagacity, who are unknowledgeable about the fundamental elements of governance and basic economic principles, lacking in any worthwhile leadership traits, but are in perpetual struggle to outdo one another in appropriating the entire democratic dividends for their personal aggrandizement. This in retrospect is the quagmire of that soccer arena the Nigerian

political scene has come to represent. What then are the basic issues, the challenges and the way forward on this soccer pitch?

## **The Issues**

A study of this nature may not adequately capture all the issues in Nigerian politics. But we shall attempt an exposition of the fundamental ones. Today the country appears to be sitting on a keg of gun powder with numerous centrifugal forces that appear to be tearing the body polity apart. Some of these include issues of resource allocation and control, power rotation among the geopolitical zones, respect for constitution and constitutionalism, inter-party competition and the tendency towards a one-party state, intra-party wrangling and the resort to the use of impeachment as a weapon to settle political scores, the numerous succession battles across the states and the centre, and the race towards the 2007 general elections. For our purpose here, we shall be looking at these issues from three major angles; the rule of the game, the player/actor, and the impact of the playing arena on the game.

## **The Rule of the Game**

Nigeria's transition to constitutional democracy particularly after sixteen un-interrupted military rule has been to say the least traumatic. It has been characterized by disappointments, squandering of money and time, insincerity and deceit. As a matter

of fact, Nigeria went through three major systems of government before the inauguration of the Fourth Republic, namely

A. Parliamentary form of government (bequeathed by British colonial regime at independence, which lasted for six years (1960-1966). Under this system, the legislative power was vested in the bicameral legislature both at federal and regional levels. While the Senate at the federal level and House of Chiefs in the Regions were appointed, the Houses of Representatives at both levels were elected. The Prime Minister exercised executive powers while the President of the Federation, ( the Head of State) performed ceremonial functions;

B. Presidential form of government. Here legislative and executive powers were separated. Adopted in the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983, the system was designed to accommodate the inadequacies of the parliamentary system, especially the conflict arising from the dual nature of powers of the president and the Prime Minister.

C. Absolute Military regime, first from 1966 to 1979 and later between 1983 and 1999;

Although attempts were made to democratize between 1985 and 1998, these efforts were aborted by the different military



regimes. On May 29, 1999, when the present civilian administration was finally inaugurated, another presidential constitution was bequeathed by the General Abubakar Abdusalam led military regime to regulate the system of government in Nigeria. It should be noted that except the 1960 Independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions, all the others namely, the 1979, 1989, draft 1995 and 1999 constitutions, were products of different military transition agenda. Under the general provisions of the 1999 constitution, the supremacy of the constitution in terms of its binding force on all authorities and persons, basis of governance and subjection of other laws under it, are clearly expressed. Section 1 to this effect stipulates that:

*This constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

*The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.*

*If any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall to that extent of the inconsistency be void (FGN, 1999).*

This provision is meant to serve not only as basis of governance in the country; it attempts to limit governmental power and ensures constitutionalism. Although the Constitution provided for separation of powers between the legislature (represented by the elected National Assembly- Senate and House of Representatives at the federal level, the House of Assembly in each state, and the local councils), the executive (represented by the elected President, Governors and Chairmen at the federal, state and local government level respectively) and the judiciary, there is an inseparable relationship between the legislature and the executive in virtually all areas of their responsibilities, including law making, investigation, oversight functions and policy implementation.

But disrespect for the norms and regulations governing the political process have engendered a new order of constitutional rascality unprecedented in Nigeria's political history. Today, political leaders choose which court judgment to obey or disobey. The rule of law is increasingly being subsumed under the whims and caprices of our rulers as the current political dispensation, more than any in the nation's past continues to witness a gross personalization of state power and utter disregard for the hallowed institution of the judiciary. A constitution, no matter how called is the soul of any sovereign state. Since the major purpose and functions of the state is the establishment of law and

order, protection of lives and property, provision of welfare and participation in the state system, the constitution is needed to define the structure and powers of various instrumentalities of the state required to perform these functions.

For the purpose of achieving the ends of the state, mechanisms are established to prevent the arbitrary use of these powers, and to ensure that rights and liberties of the citizens are guaranteed. These mechanisms vary from country to country and are usually subject to change from time to time. In a liberal democracy (or supposed) like ours, the constitution remains significant in matters relating to the conditions of life of the people, because the emphasis of the document is on the rule of law, a separation of powers and protection of liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property. This is why David Beetham (1994: 157-172) recognized the constitutional arrangement as one of the four cardinal factors that facilitate democratic consolidation in any country.

Constitutionalism excludes cases of absolute rulers, who combine unlimited power in all the three domains of government-the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, since it specifies the limits placed upon these three basic forms of government power. Constitutional limits can come in a variety of forms, but the major ones include:

*the scope of authority (e.g., in a federal system, provincial or state governments may have authority over health care and education while the federal government's jurisdiction extends to national defence and transportation); the mechanisms used in exercising the relevant power (e.g., procedural requirements governing the form and manner of legislation); and civil rights (in the form of a Charter or Bill of Rights) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). Most often, these are in form of individual or group rights against government, rights to things like free expression, association, equality and due process of law.*

In enthroning constitutionalism, the place of an independent judiciary cannot be over emphasized. This simply means that no one or organ can interfere in the work of any of the courts existing in a country, and it is necessary as a check against constitutional violations, which in Nigeria are very rampant.

Today, politicians and other powerful forces in the society blatantly abuse the powers of their offices to the utter dismay of even the courts. The judiciary, often called the last hope of the common man, is daily being undermined and harassed on both sides by legislative arrogance and executive lawlessness through the active connivance of some law enforcement agencies, especially the Police.

One area the image of the judiciary seems to have been utterly battered especially in the last two years is in the exercise of the legislative power of impeachment of public officers, especially the president, governors and chairmen of local governments. It must be pointed out that impeachment is one of the strongest weapons under the 1999 constitution given to the legislature to check the excesses of the executive. And like the 1979, those who drafted the 1999 constitution intended that the provision be applied as a last resort against criminal behaviours that are at variance with the high pedestal those offices are placed.

Basically, the grounds for impeachment in most of countries that provided for it in their constitution are offences that violate the constitutional provision(s). But the ambiguity lays in the fact that there is no precise meaning of impeachable offences as these vary from one country to another. For instance, in the United States, impeachable offenses are described in Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution, which defines executive powers. It states that “the President, Vice President and all civil officers of the United States shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and on conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.” Here, impeached officials are not only removed from office, they may be subjected to further criminal prosecution. In Nigeria, Section 143(2b) of the 1999 constitution expressly states what constitute impeachable offence as 'gross

misconduct', which is defined in subsection (11) as “a grave violation or breach of the provision of this Constitution or a misconduct of such nature as amounts in the opinion of the National Assembly to gross misconduct”. Similarly, impeachment proceedings not only vary across political system, they are complex and time consuming. I believe that this has been deliberately designed to ensure that the rigorous process satisfies the twin elements of justice and fairness, on the part of both the prosecutor and the accused.

The United States House of Representatives impeached both Presidents Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton in 1868 and 1998 respectively. But the beauty of democracy was vividly displayed, especially in the Clinton's case when the American Senate turned down the decision of the Representatives, thus effectively marking the end of the impeachment saga. Before then, President Richard Nixon had resigned in 1974 as impeachment proceedings were under way to remove him following the Watergate scandal. In November 2000, Joseph Estrada of the Philippines was impeached by the House of Representatives on grounds of corruption. Also, in April 2004, Rolandas Paksas was impeached by the Lithuania's parliament. Paksas was accused of unlawfully granting individual's Lithuanian citizenship in return for financial support, leaking classified information, and meddling in a privatization deal. And in March 2004, President Proh Moo Hyun of South Korea was

impeached by two-thirds vote in the National Assembly for allegedly violating the country's electoral laws (Encarta, 2006). Impeachment became more pronounced as a component of Nigeria's political vocabulary in the Second Republic when the Governor of Kaduna state, Balarabe Musa was removed by the state's House of Assembly. The Deputy Governor of Kano state was to suffer a similar fate under that dispensation. However, it was clear in both cases as corroborated in the Report of the Political Bureau set up by the Babangida military regime in 1986, that the removal of both officers were motivated more by political considerations than the watchdog role of the different legislatures. At that time, two major constitutional defects that facilitated the impeachment process were highlighted. These were the ouster clause which forbade the Courts from entertaining any action brought before it in respect of the impeachment proceedings, and second, the nebulous nature of offences that amounted to acts of gross misconduct. Unfortunately, in spite of the recommendations of the Political Bureau Report on the need to remedy these defects, the architects of the 1999 constitution completely ignored them. The result of this flaw is the impeachment gale that has swept the entire political landscape under the present dispensation because the legislatures are at the liberty to determine what in their estimation amount to gross misconduct. Today, impeachment has become one cheap instrument in the hands of some overzealous

legislatures at all levels to blackmail and intimidate uncooperative executives, who unfortunately have also failed to live above board by soiling their hands in filthy lucre.

At the federal level, President Olusegun Obasanjo was threatened with impeachment in August 2002 by the Ghali Umar N'aaba led House of Representatives. The intention was later jettisoned due to interventions of party machineries and notable Nigerians. At the state level, besides the Deputy Governors of Osun and Lagos States, Iyiola Omisore and Bucknor Akerele respectively, who were impeached in the first tenure of the present dispensation, six governors have been removed by their different state legislatures, all in controversial circumstances. In fact since the removal of the Governor of Bayelsa state, Diepreye Alaimaeyesigha late 2005, the threat of impeachment has assumed the dimension of a scourge. Examples include the controversial manner in which the Governor of Oyo state, Rasheed Ladoja was impeached by 18 of the 32 member state House of Assembly in January, 2006. In the latter part of the same year, the Anambra state Governor, Peter Obi was also impeached in similar circumstances by a faction of the state House of Assembly. Even though in Ekiti state, the Governor, Ayodele Fayose was removed in October, 2006 by overwhelming majority of the State Assembly, the procedure adopted was not without its attendant flaws. The most absurd of course was the political drama in Plateau state House where six out



of its twenty four legislators executed the removal of the governor, Joshua Dariye following his indictment by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for corruption. The Plateau scenario was more brazen than the episodes in other states, not only in terms of the insignificant numerical strength of those legislators that carried it out, but the overt support the group derived from the law enforcement agencies before, during and after the impeachment exercise.

To be sure corruption is a cankerworm and efforts to stamp it out must be commended. But it is our view that such efforts must conform to legitimate rules and regulations, especially as enshrined in the constitution. It is by so doing that the rule of law will not only be sustained, but the entire democratic project would be perfected. The relevant courts had indeed pronounced on the illegality of some of the cases, and that will not detain us here. Suffice it to note that at least, for once, the judiciary was able to wriggle out of the ouster clause that has hitherto constrained its interference in matters of impeachment. By reversing the removal of some of these governors (in Oyo and Anambra for now), the courts have merely justified the age old belief in the institution as the bastion of democracy and the pillar of freedom and justice. But aside from the legal platform, we cannot gloss over the political significance of this issue, especially the undue interference of external forces, especially the Presidency in the various

impeachment proceedings. Whether by coincidence or design, impeachment suddenly became a political weapon to deal with interests supposedly antagonistic to the presidency. Particularly, in the ruling Peoples Democratic Party, the measure became an instrument to coerce and whip into line recalcitrant party members opposed to party leaders. For instance, it is instructive to note that all impeached governors elected under the PDP platform (except probably in Ekiti state) belonged to the Vice President Abubakar Atiku wing of the party, which had waged an open battle for political supremacy with interests aligned with President Obasanjo. These intra-party squabbles within the PDP snowballed into the removal of these governors through forces loyal to their political opponents in their respective state houses of assembly. In Anambra state, the only non PDP state that has so far experienced the impeachment bug, it was purely the climax of a politically orchestrated drama between an uncooperative PDP dominated house of assembly and an uncompromising All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA) led minority executive. In prosecuting these battles, impeachment, even through extra legal-constitutional means, backed by unusual overt and massive deployment of the nation's security apparatuses, became a ready tool in the hands of the various houses of assembly operating under the guise of prosecuting an anti-corruption war.

## **The Players**

One particular feature of every game is the uniqueness of players involved, in this case the political actors. Without necessarily subscribing to the ideology of afro pessimism, it must be noted that the attitudinal disposition of the political class in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. The Nigerian way of doing things cannot but produce peculiar Nigerian results as the political terrain has suggested over the years. We believe that when Aristotle postulated his philosophy on man as a political animal, he did not reckon at the extent to which man's brutish instincts would be allowed to determine the political direction of countries like Nigeria. Whether within the leadership or followers, “the animal called man” (Obasanjo) in Nigeria has always exhibited his animalistic tendencies in a manner that compares favorably with the typical Hobbesian state of nature, where life is meaningless, short and brutish, where politics has become a do or die affair, and where winners not only appropriate the gains of politics, but further ensures that losers are permanently emasculated and incapacitated.

Like a decisive game of soccer, a winner must naturally emerge in every political contest as we earlier noted. But the point of departure is that while losers in a football tournament are at least entitled to some consolatory prizes (medals or even trophies), Nigerian politics has no place or provision for losers, and they are

hardly reckoned with. Even the few gains they are able to garner (whether as seats in parliament or even control of states) are further appropriated by the winning party. No wonder candidates elected on the platform of minority parties easily cross carpet to the majority party at the slightest opportunity. Under the current dispensation, at least three state governors have openly left their parties to join other political groupings. They are those of Sokoto, Abia and Jigawa states. The most absurd was that of Jigawa where the entire state cabinet and local government political office holders left the All Nigerian Peoples Party for the ruling PDP, and some of them are back to the ANPP after what seemed to be a futile search for political relevance in the PDP. The mother of all decamping, a culmination of long years of political intrigues in the presidency, was the decision of the Vice President of the federation, Atiku Abubakar to ditch the PDP for the newly formed Action Congress.

Cross carpeting has led to the emergence of some dubious and spurious alliances of complete strange bed fellows but bound together by a common adversity, namely denial of a space in the political arena by the government of the day. Taking solace in other associations has become an avenue to remain relevant in political circles by Nigerian politicians even where it is clear that such moves would not translate into victory at the polls. At intra-party level, manifestation of zero tolerance of opposition has

engendered the spate of parallel party executives at all levels, suspension and counter suspension of members, or as in the recent case of the PDP, deregistration of 'disloyal' party members witnessed across the land. Politics, we are told is a game of number. But Nigeria will perhaps qualify for the Guinness book as one arena where individuals literally beg for membership of political parties. And this is because politics in Nigeria is an investment which nobody is willing to lose, where competition is considered inimical to personal gains, and so hardly tolerated.

The massive investment into this enterprise even at great personal cost and discomfort to the actors can better be explained from the central role of the Nigerian state as a means of production. The control of the state has come to represent a major gateway to the appropriation of the resources of the state by the political class. Consequently the struggle for the seizure, use and retention of state power become fierce and at times brutal, as politicians deploy every resource at their disposal, legal and illegal to ensure victory in these electoral battles. This is what Richard Joseph (1990) popularized as “prebendalism,” a system of rule which equates public offices with personal fiefdoms.

To the players, politics thus becomes Machiavellian where the end justifies the means, where as Shakespeare also noted, “fair is foul and foul is fair.” This is why rigging of elections, snatching of ballot boxes, declaration of fictitious election results, financial

inducement of voters and electoral officers, among others, have become the norms rather than aberration to the political process in Nigeria. Politicians have elevated treachery and the ability to manipulate the system to an art of statecraft. Political fraudsters are celebrated and adored. They have become the modern godfathers of Nigerian politics, whose major credentials are their stranglehold over a pool of largely ignorant, poor, disenchanting, economically and politically marginalized and psychologically repressed set of people. Because these people constitute the dregs of society, the crumbs from the tables of these omnipotent godfathers become the lifeline they require for existence, and the means to domesticate and incorporate them, as they willingly sell their political heritage and that of incoming generations to the highest bidder. For instance, in Anambra state, the self acclaimed godfather once proclaimed himself "...the greatest godfather in Nigeria," because as he claimed, his would be "the first time an individual single-handedly put in position every politician in the state." The president of the republic at a time corroborated the claim of this godfather when he told a bewildered nation the alleged confession of the same godfather on the manipulation of the electoral process in the 2003 elections in Anambra state. The irony of the situation and by extension the tragedy of the Nigerian nation is that what in an ideal society should have earned the godfather at least a jail sentence led to his majestic rise into the

highly exclusive Board of Trustees of the ruling party. This phenomenon, according to Gambo (2006) fits into the predatory instincts theory that godfathers manipulate electoral process to have their anointed godsons in elective public offices in exchange for protection and the spoils of office. The Nigerian experience from Anambra to Kwara, Oyo and other states has demonstrated beyond doubts the negative effects of the godfather syndrome. It is antithetical to participatory democracy, as it does not only hinder genuine aspirations in the polity, but facilitates the personalization of state power and the decimation of its resources by forces loyal to the godfather.

Little wonder that the African Union recently declared that about 25 percent of Africa's official Gross Domestic Product was lost to corruption. As Nuhu Ribadu, the Chairman of the EFCC noted at the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) parley held at the University of Ibadan on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007, about 220 billion British pound or 550 billion American dollars of development assistance to Nigeria “has been stolen from Nigeria by Nigeria's past leaders.” The loot according to him is 600 percent of what was expended in actualizing Europe Marshall plan after World War 11. What this means as Ribadu put it is that the pillage of Nigeria by its past leaders “could have recreated the beauty and glory of western Europe six times all over in this country.” If 18 billion naira could be recovered from a former head of the

country's police and another 5 billion dollars of looted funds recovered across the globe by the EFCC, certainly the above submission could not possibly have been an overstatement.

As perfidious as these acts are, they pale into insignificance when compared with the dangerous dimension of politically motivated assassination of opponents which Nigerian politics has assumed especially in the most recent past, and which unfortunately, the Nigerian security agencies have not been able to unravel. These destructive elements hold sway largely because of the fatalistic disposition of the mass of people to issues of politics. For instance, it is only in Nigeria that glaring cases of injustice, perfidy and callousness wear the tag of divine ordination that most people would rather than question prefer to live with. Leaders who steal the people's votes are usually the first to lay claim to God as the source of their legitimacy. They also seek to legitimize their obnoxious policies through the same God, just as the citizenry willingly surrender to this dangerous propaganda. Some have elevated this art further by directly playing god. They have become the undisputable Lord of the manor, the sole repository of knowledge who must reason for the rest of society. This group possesses an obsession for power and a mental disposition that will render insignificant the Wisdom of Solomon. To them, divergence and criticisms, the cardinal principles of democracy, are aberrations that must be suppressed. They would



rather prefer a drift toward a one party state than allow opposition to flourish. That is why in spite the registration of over thirty political parties in Nigeria, the PDP has continued its dominance and occupation of the political space through deliberate suppression, oppression, domestication and incorporation of opposition elements. This attitudinal disposition is however inimical to the emergence and sustenance of an ideal democratic political culture.

### **Selection of Players**

Talking about players on the field will be incomplete without dwelling on their mode of selection. Today, one may safely argue that the days of the Ronaldos, David Beckams, and Roberto Carlos are numbered as far as competitive soccer on a global scale is concerned. The Real Madrid coach recently referred to Ronaldo, former world best football player, as a surplus to his team. That to me is symptomatic of the temporariness of power and all the glamour that surround it. It is in consonance with biblical injunction that indeed “to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” (Ecclesiastics 3: 1) But the beauty of the game of soccer is that each of these players knows when to quit and seek solace elsewhere. Those who hang on against all biological or physical barriers do so at their own peril. But in Nigeria, hardly do political actors want to quit the

arena, even where all the indices point toward doing that. That is why in spite the incessant cry for generational shift, politics in Nigeria has been a recurring circulation of the same elite that have ruled us since independence. Some in the face of biological limitations (age, incapacity) are being replaced by their offspring or so called godsons and daughters. Thus the same family names have remained the recurring decimal in political appointments and recruitment. Some of these have been in government since the emergence of the Nigerian state in 1960. They are the so called AGIP - “Any Government in Power,” to whom every political dispensation is at their beck and call. By this the political stage has been turned into a big barber shop, motion without movement, but merely gyrating on the same spot, or what Nnoli (1982) referred to as “musical chairs and the chairs of music.” But the tragedy of their adventure or misadventure is that more competent hands and sound minds are denied the opportunities of offering their skills for the advancement of society.

Ideally, worldwide footballers struggle to wear the national colours of their countries. But in Nigeria it is not so. Players who engage in rigorous camping exercise are hardly chosen on a typical match day. Rather positions are reserved for so called experienced players, the strong and mighty, the “big boys” in the team who as they say, have seen it all and would rather not train with the team, but often with disastrous consequence for the team

and the nation. Such indiscipline also resonates in the political arena. The quality of political recruitment is a function of the pattern of team selection. At the national level, Nigeria has been saddled with leaders who were not only ill prepared for the job but lack a programme of action. We have had presidents who were not only reluctant for the job but emerged merely to assuage some personal, group and class feelings. It is becoming a pattern in our democracy that those who actually struggle for power at this level never attained it. Let us look at some examples.

In the first republic was the late Tafawa Balewa who became the Prime Minister because the natural leader of the Northern Peoples Congress, Sir Ahmadu Bello, would rather oversee the northern region as its premier than assuming power at the centre. In 1966, even though the coup that toppled the Balewa government was led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, the ultimate beneficiary of power was General Aguyi Ironsi. We also recall the emergence of Shehu Shagari as president in 1979 against all political permutations and popular preferences in the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) for such candidates as Maitama Sule and Adamu Ciroma. Shagari himself had publicly declared then his ambition for a Senatorial seat. In the then rival Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was Obafemi Awolowo who was once described as “the best president Nigeria never had,” a description, I believe was borne out of the comprehensive manifesto, especially the welfare programme the

late sage drew for both his Action Group (AG) and the UPN under the first and second republic respectively.

In 1983, the Shagari administration was removed by another coup that temporarily brought General Mohamadu Buhari to power, until he was shoved aside in a palace coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida. Ten years later was the crisis that surrounded the late Moshood Abiola's hard earned victory in the 1993 presidential elections, and the annulment of the results of that election by General Babangida, even though it is on record that the late politician ran one of the best campaigns in the history of electoral politics in Nigeria. Again the mantle eluded a man who demonstrated a high degree of physical, mental and psychological preparedness for the job and fell on the gentleman technocrat, Ernest Shonekan, who many would rather prefer to see in Boardroom politics than in the murky waters of this soccer pitch called Nigerian politics. Again, the battle against the illegality that was the Shonekan's Interim National Government was spearheaded by civil society and various pro-democracy groups, but Genral Sani Abacha became the ultimate beneficiary of that struggle.

Similarly, President Obasanjo, fresh from prison was imposed on his party and the nation in 1999. Even though he initially appeared unwilling for the job, it was evident that some desperate forces- military, ethnic, economic- actually routed for his

ascendancy against such formidable and willing candidates as Alex Ekwueme and Olu Falae. The rest, as they say, is history. But it is very clear that the first tenure of the regime was merely experimental and lackluster with very insignificant results as it came into office without any known agenda. While some laudable feats might have been recorded in some sectors in the last four years, especially in areas of foreign policy, high external reserves and an institutional confrontation against corruption, a lot more could have been done. For instance the strings of successes recorded in these areas have not translated into a reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and deprivations in the power, education and health sectors, which reached alarming proportions in the eight years of the regime. In the ruling PDP, signs of the same order of leadership selection in 2007 are already in the offing. Those who mounted the soap box, campaigning “from the Atlantic to the Sahara,” soliciting for the party support as its presidential flag bearer in the 2007 elections, were jettisoned on the eve of the party selection exercise for a candidate who hitherto never sought to occupy that office or openly campaigned for the job.

What these tell us is that in the choice of political leaders, the best materials often find themselves shortchanged by a system that lays emphasis on mundane primordial considerations rather than competence and merit. But the point must be made that we cannot

over emphasize the need for a credible method and process of political recruitment in Nigeria because political leadership is not a game to be subjected to a trial and error process. It certainly requires thorough planning and execution. Similarly, just like the soccer pitch has no place for a spent force, position of leadership and authority is not a rehabilitation center for unwilling aspirants, failed entrepreneurs, school drop outs or jobless retired military men. Also political leadership is neither a novelty match, nor is the political arena designed for jesters, which appears to be the lot of many so-called presidential aspirants today. Choosing political leaders certainly goes beyond political comedy as many political parties in Nigeria have demonstrated in the choice of their candidates for various elective positions in the 2007 elections. Today many of these emergency gubernatorial and presidential candidates were candidates who failed nominations in their former parties. Some were actually victims of manipulations and denigration of the democratic process by cabals across the states and parties desperate to foist their choice on the nation. And these political shenanigans are not in short supply in all the political parties.

The political terrain is one that requires men and women that are physically, mentally and intellectually prepared for the job. Consequently, like the modern game of soccer, the training for political leadership must be rigorous, vigorous and consistent,

and not the present spontaneous and “fire-brigade” reactions to serious demands of the moment. Leadership is a serious enterprise that must attract the best for the society irrespective of tribal, ethnic, religious or other primordial considerations. This is why coaches traverse different parts of the world searching for the best materials for their team irrespective of colour barrier. Hence, a Samuel Eto could be making waves in Spain, and another Michael Essien dominating soccer in England in spite of the tantrums of so-called white supremacists. Incidentally, it seems to me that the Nigerian national football team (male and female) constitute one major arena where the issues of tribe, ethnic group, federal character or religion are not on the front burner. I therefore believe that even as the nation battles to satisfy the different geopolitical entities under a power shift arrangement, it is possible to pursue that without jeopardizing the principles of merit, ability and competence, in such a way that the best materials suitable for the job are produced from each zone of the country.

## **The Playing Arena**

The soccer arena especially in this golden age of football is sophisticated and splendid. Take a look at the well laid green grass, the grandeur in the stadium, the state of the art facilities and the deployment of information technology in virtually all

aspects of the game. Recently FIFA tinkered with the idea of an electronic device to assist referees on the field. That goes to tell us the level of development and the huge financial, material and human investments that often go into the game of football. But what message does this convey to us about Nigerian politics? To me, it speaks volume about the state of our political arena, which can be likened to a big animal farm, highly underdeveloped, crude and characterized by well entrenched asymmetries in virtually all areas of life. Unlike the modern football pitch, the political arena in Nigeria is noted for the high incidence of instability, where the goal posts are constantly being shifted even in the middle of a game. Here, rules are not only broken with impunity as earlier stated, but are made to suit individuals' personal desires and ego. In Nigeria, the extent to which an individual is subjected to the dictates of the law is a function of the degree of his/her relevance to the political alliances he/she subscribes to. Being found on the side of a ruling party in Nigeria is a major shield against the prying eyes of the law and its agencies. Indeed contrary to the well known dictum of the sacredness of societal regulations, a typical Nigerian law is a respecter of persons and positions, especially where one is reputed to be die hard loyalist and sympathizer of the government of the day. No wonder, the fight against corruption, which we must all applaud, is gradually wearing a human face, with all the trappings of selective justice.



For instance, if one may ask, what makes the level of corruption in Ekiti state more potent and significant to warrant the full weight of the law than that of the Nigerian Ports Authority? Or, as I have often wondered, apart from the isolated case of Plateau state, which was more of a war of political survival and supremacy, what makes corruption in the southern part of Nigeria much more devastating to deserve the attention it has received from the EFCC than the northern part? Or are we to believe that the Alamieseghas and the Fayoses, as condemnable as their actions were, could only be found south of the Niger? I do not think so going by the indicting reports from government agencies, especially the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), against virtually all state governors. But why was the anti-graft agency unable to move against the other officers? These are pertinent questions begging for answers. I strongly believe that the EFCC must rise above this limitation by beaming its search light across the entire country. Its activities must not be coloured by geographical or political considerations which opponents of the agency easily point attention to.

The nature of every organization is a reflection of the values it upholds. The value is the soul of such organizations. For instance, in FIFA, the goal is to break all colour barriers as it strives to unify the world through the game of soccer. In achieving this, it holds sacrosanct the core value of fair play in all aspects of the

game. This perhaps to the ordinary eye accounts for the seemingly harsh penalties to offenders both on and off the field of play. Every player is seen as a soccer ambassador who must promote the culture and spirit of love, brotherhood and unity of all races. To be sure, FIFA is not a perfect organization, and no human setting is. It is bedeviled by its own internal wrangling. But in spite of this, as it pursues its goal, the overall interest of the game of soccer is paramount, as the organization has demonstrated a very strong sense of mission and tenacity of purpose, perhaps unrivaled by any other body in the world.

At the nation state level, we talk of values in terms of the ideology of that state. This is the driving force or propeller of such state. But it is in formulating an ideology that the Nigerian state has failed in the last forty six years. We mentioned cases of past leaders who came to office without a blueprint for action. Most of them emerged as political opportunists at different moments of the nation's political history. 2007 is around the corner with over 30 political parties jostling for power at different levels of government but none with any clear idea on how to turn the social, economic and political lives of the people around. Today, all we hear as manifesto is a general statement or undertaking to continue a so called reform programme or agenda of the present administration. The fear of Obasanjo has suddenly become the beginning of political wisdom. Nobody is talking of how to

revitalize the ailing educational, health, transportation, power and industrial sectors of the economy. The American presidential election is more than a year ahead. But candidates are already being taken to task on their views on medicare, campaign funds, the war in Iraq, taxation, among others. But with less than two months to a similar election in Nigeria, nobody is promising the electorate anything new for their votes apparently because they know their votes do not count in winning elections. Similarly, the electorates are not asking any question because of not only their low level of awareness of the political process, but perhaps owing to a realization that their votes do not matter in the choice of who governs. The few that are asking are posing the wrong questions, especially on the ethnic and religious affiliations of candidates rather than their pedigree and what performance index they should be measured with while in office.



## **The Spectators**

This phenomenon has engendered and encouraged a growing culture of political spectators and bystanders where they should be active participants. Almond and Verba, (1965) in their epic had long recognized the three categories of people in every political system. These are the parochial, the subject and the participant; even though they also recognized that every political culture is an admixture of these different categories of people. While we may not agree with the westernized perspective of the authors, their views nevertheless bear some significance to our understanding of Nigerian politics. In every game of football, the players are insignificant in number when compared to the number of spectators on the stands. But as many as they usually are, a lot of the spectators are usually very active participants in the game, even though on a different platform. While the players display their soccer artistry on the pitch, the spectators provide them with the right psychological and emotional environment needed to triumph. There are lessons we can draw from this. One major one is that like the soccer pitch, the political arena in Nigeria is characterized by very few players and many spectators. Of the large percentage of spectators on the political field, some are mere observers while majority are simply apathetic to the political process, completely ignorant and oblivious of issues and happenings in the political arena. Ironically, this population cut

across class, educational, gender or age divide, an area the realities of Nigerian politics seem at variance with the determinants of political participation as espoused by Almond and Verba. For instance, contrary to the belief of these authors, the educated, the affluent, the urban dwellers in Nigeria are as indifferent to the political process as the illiterate, the poor and the rural dwellers. For instance we may ask ourselves: what percentage of the so-called educated, the rich, the urban dwellers or politically conscious Nigerians are registered voters? Certainly, this must be very few especially where governments have had to adopt the stick approach before citizens perform this civic obligation. Again we may ask what percentage of these aforementioned groups are actual voters during election? What percentage of these same groups are members of political parties? What percentage attend political party rallies, canvass support for candidates in diverse ways, comment on salient political issues as occasions demand or even identify with political associations in many positive ways. Studies have shown that the results are abysmally low. And this is one major tragedy of the Nigerian political system, a system that deliberately deprives those who should be in the forefront from participating in politics. Today, the middle class, which is the engine of social, economic and political growth, is waging a serious battle of survival, following its virtual decimation by obnoxious economic policies of

successive administration. To this group, politics is a luxury they can least afford in the face of serious debilitating social and economic conditions of life begging for attention. Hence their apathetic mentality, that where you cannot join them, at least you can watch from a distance. But no serious society ever develops with such apathetic disposition of its able bodied men toward social, economic and political issues that directly impact the lives of the people.

## **The Way Forward**

The game of soccer as we have tried to demonstrate in this presentation has moved from the traditional to more sophisticated styles, with coaches and players employing the state of the art equipment to learn and perfect the trade. In the same manner, the place of political information and education cannot be over emphasized in the life of any nation. Illiteracy is a disease worldwide. But the ailment is more pathetic in those who pretend to know. Thus efforts at educating the citizenry on their rights, duties and obligations in the political process must be intensified because an ignorant populace is a threat to democratic consolidation. In this regard, the role of civil society is paramount. Religious organizations and their leaders, student bodies, mass media, labour unions and other non governmental agencies must step up their activities toward ensuring the

opening up of the political space. They must also accelerate the demand for a redistribution of powers, position and privileges in the society. As mass organizations, they constitute the vanguard for generating the much needed political awareness among the people, especially in guiding them towards making the right political decision from time to time. Zambia, at a time demonstrated the efficacy of people's power when the country's civil society groups converged and mobilized to halt a military take over of a democratically elected government in that country. A similar feat was also recorded in Haiti, among other countries. Therefore, as the soul of the nation, civil society in Nigeria must not only be critical but refuse to be part of the rottenness and contradictions in the larger society. Civil society must demand from the political class issuebased approach to politics and also canvass an end to the current diversionary emphasis on primordial factor of ethnicity to capture power. Political campaigns toward the 2007 elections must focus on issues of social, economic and political relevance to replace the ongoing dramatization of ideological bankruptcy across the political landscape by all the political parties.

**Secondly**, the judiciary must locate and rediscover its rightful place in the nation's political structure. More than ever before, the institution has done enough harm to its revered status under the current dispensation. Therefore, it must embark on a process of



self cleansing, not only by constantly being neutral but seen to be so in the dispensation of justice. The few courageous judges must sustain the independence of the institution. They must not allow the greed and inordinate ambition of a few to destroy the sanctity of the body, for in it lays the virtues of the rule of law and constitutionalism necessary for democratic sustenance. The recent refusal of the Chief Judges of Ekiti, Plateau and Anambra states to vacate their offices as ordered by the National Judicial Council is certainly an ill wind that portends great dangers for the administration of justice in the country.

**Thirdly**, political corruption is as deadly if not more harmful than economic crimes. Consequently, society must place greater emphasis on the former as it has done with the latter. The leadership question cannot be ignored if the quest for a morally just and equitable society is to be attainable. And very fundamental to this drive is the need for an orderly, credible, fair and egalitarian process of leadership succession in the country. The current law on the spending limits for political aspirants, which is in line with the spirit of Section 93 of the 2006 Electoral Act, is a right decision that must be vigorously pursued if the democratic process is not to be further perverted by political mandarins and money bags. INEC has put a ceiling of N1 million for individual donation to a candidate and N100,000 from anonymous donors. Also a maximum spending limit of N500

million has been set for presidential candidates. For governorship candidates it is N100 million; N20 million for senators; N10 million, N5 million and N500,000 for candidates into House of Representatives, State House of Assembly/ Local Government chairmanship, and councillorship positions respectively. While some like Odion (2007) may indeed doubt the reality of these benchmarks, and their fears are real and genuine, I believe they represent desperate measures to seemingly demonic affliction of the political arena that the activities of the moneybags have come to represent. To fully ensure this therefore, the powers of agencies directly or indirectly connected with elections in the country, especially, INEC, the Police and EFCC must be further strengthened to enable them discharge their duties without fear or favor.

The current negative perception of these bodies as appendages of the ruling government does not enhance their credibility as umpires in the political process. For instance, the recent release of a list of politicians indicted for corruption by the EFCC has come under the searchlight of political commentators. A great move no doubt, but the release was badly implemented. Else how does one reconcile the obvious contradictions in the list of indicted personalities vis-a vis the public declaration of the EFCC boss at different fora on corrupt officials. For example, at the University of Ibadan parley (earlier referred to) Ribadu did not

only condemn the godfather phenomenon, but specifically lampooned the pillage of the Oyo state economy by the Akala dispensation in collaboration with his godfather, Lamidi Adedibu. Yet, conspicuously missing on the list of indicted officials was Akala, who had since become the PDP flag bearer in the 2007 gubernatorial race in the state. Similarly in September 2006, Ribadu while appearing before the Nigerian Senate reeled out names of twenty state governors mostly of the ruling PDP found to be corrupt by his agency. He also gave a blow by blow account, the



dimension and magnitude of their escapades with public funds. Today a lot of these names are visibly missing in his new onslaught on the political class. This is an area the EFCC boss needs to provide Nigerians with some explanations if it must not be seen as an appendage of the government of the day. In particular, the EFCC will need to convince the electorate on its neutrality in the on going battle between the PDP and the opposition parties as the latter seem to be the major target of its latest assault. For it will be a tragedy of monumental proportion if at the end of day, the noble efforts of the EFCC at cleansing the Augean stable become instruments in the hands of the ruling party to prosecute its real or imaginary political battles.

Where the process is transparent, Nigerians will have less difficulty in accepting the outcome, and resort to extra judicial means of seeking redress would be greatly reduced. This essentially was the bane of the ill fated attempt under the Babangida transition programme aimed at checking the influence of money in politics by the endless banning and un-banning of these so called moneybags and the creation of a new class of so-called new breed politicians. As we argued then (Ajayi & Ihonvbere 1994:675), “Without altering the content and context of politics, the Babangida regime had confused Nigerians into thinking that the main problem with Nigerian democracy and politics was the use of money by politicians. Hence the allegation

that billions of naira was spent by both politicians to buy votes and

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support made little sense given the character of the regime itself, the nature of the Nigerian economy, and the context of Nigerian politics.” We had drawn attention to the colossal expenditure by the then government on the construction of party secretariats in all state capitals and local government headquarters, registration of party members, sponsorship of 5876 party delegates to conventions among other expenses aimed at establishing the then two government parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). It was our belief then that “by specifically intimidating and marginalizing popular groups from participating in the political process and by encouraging the use of money, the regime actually left the political terrain for the rich and for persons who can hardly explain the sources of their (wealth).” (ibid) .Today the rich have remained predominant in politics albeit under a different scenario, and that is why every attempt to checkmate their financial strangulation of the electoral process must be encouraged.

**Fourthly**, there is a need for a constitutional review of the present system of political reward in Nigeria. The current zero sum, winner-takes-all scenario must give way a to system of proportional representation that gives room for representation of

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all political parties in parliament based on their level of performance at any given election. The present system, as we earlier noted, creates room for the current greed and desperation that characterize the struggle for political offices in the country.

**Fifthly**, there is an urgent need for a political reengineering that would engender devolution of powers from the centre to the other levels of government, notably the states and local governments in the country. If the center is less attractive, the competition for its control is likely to become less intense, less bitter and less acrimonious. What this means is that the states and local governments must be constitutionally empowered to perform a lot of the responsibilities the presidency is currently saddled with. The present arrangement that makes a president the center of attraction cannot but succeed in creating a monster with its attendant megalomaniac tendencies out of whoever occupies the office.

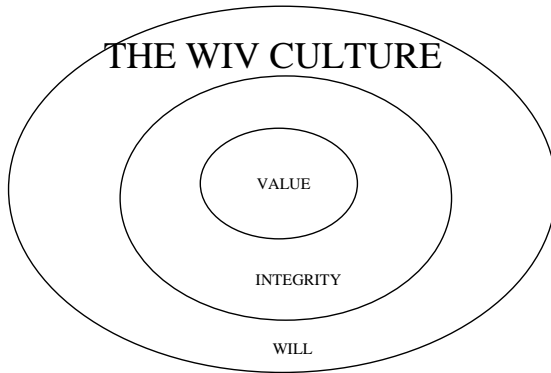
**Sixthly**, Nigeria is currently at a crossroads. Now is the time for a revolution in the thinking and attitude of the people. Fundamental to this moral rebirth is what I have called the inculcation of the **WIV culture**. This entails a tripartite combination of **Will, Integrity and Value**. The country at this critical moment in its life needs fearless men and women of passion, drive, nationalism and patriotism, just like the vintage player who is ready to sacrifice his all on the field for the

fatherland. Secondly, integrity as the soul of any enterprise must be a yardstick for determining the worth of persons on the political field. And for the society to advance, men and women imbued with the fear of God must not be in short supply. No wonder the Holy Book affirms that “when the righteous reign, the people rejoice and





when the wicked reign, the people mourn (Proverb 29:2).” Accountability and responsibility must be the watchwords of such persons Nigeria is currently looking for. Lastly, such men must be ideologically driven. There must be a compass that directs their actions. They must be men of vision, who can dream realizable dreams. Else the nation's polity becomes a rudderless ship, a ship without a captain.



We must not fail to recognize that the WIV culture cannot be truly inculcated outside a commitment towards a generational change in our body polity. A new order of political socialization cannot succeed under the present gerontocratic disorder that thrives on a patron-client relationship and an unquestionable allegiance to a semi-god whose pronouncements and feelings are laws. The

exploits of the Ezekwezilis, the El Rufais, the Okonji-Iwealas, the Akinluyis and the Ribadus in politics and the Soludos, Dangotes, Otedolas, Ibrus and Utomis in the business sector are pointers to the indisputable place of a new generation of young talented technocrats in the building of a New Nigeria. With their exemplary courage and integrity, these men and women have demonstrated that given the proper institutional backing, they can dare even in areas where the elders had failed. And I believe that Nigeria have more of their types in different sectors of life.

### **The Covenant University Platform**

For us in the Department of Policy and Strategic Studies, Covenant University, we fully identify with the Nigerian project, especially the crusade for this new crop of leadership to pilot the destiny of the country to the desired height. Consequently, we fully identify with the avowed commitment of this institution towards the establishment of the Center for Leadership Development. We believe as a Department that we are major stakeholder in the realization of this noble vision. Our courses in Administrative Leadership and Strategic Leadership among others have been designed to pioneer to greater height this laudable proramme when it eventually takes off.

Also, towards the fulfillment of our professional mandate, the Department has embarked on the publication of a volume on

**Citizen and Citizenship** with emphasis on the Nigerian state. The proposed publication is a compendium on such salient issues as the Rule of Law, Democratic institutions, Accountability and Responsibility in Government, Citizens Rights, Duties and Obligations, among others. Similarly, a compilation on **Nigerian Politics and Government** has reached an advanced stage. The book takes an inter-disciplinary approach to the multifaceted issues in the country's political system. In particular, the issue of Democratic Succession has engaged our attention of recent. To this end, we have committed time and energy to a comparative study of democratic projects across the globe. By this we hope to be able to further locate the peculiarities of the Nigerian democratic space and the conditions necessary for democratic consolidation. A research network on **Inter-Ethnic Relations in Nigeria** has also been constituted in the Department, with a view to proffering solutions to what has remained a cankerworm in our drive towards social, economic and political integration in Nigeria. Similarly, plans are underway to set up an **Election Monitoring Group** in the Department that will serve as a watchdog in the forthcoming general elections. This is part of our community impact programme, and the Otta community is our immediate focus. This, we hope, will give us a practical experience of the electoral process, expand our practitioner base,

with a view to making more informed analysis. These initiatives are being coordinated by my humble self.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, politics like every game of soccer is a conflict situation, to the extent that it involves the resolution of antagonistic interests. But the way and manner these conflicts are resolved, as we pointed out differentiates one society from another. As political animals, we have our innate characteristics distinct from others, and which must find expressions in different political constellations, formations and alliances. So finding ourselves on different political platforms or holding divergent views does not in any way detract from the beauty of the political process. But the end of political contests must be such that unite such opposing interests to the extent that while the majority has its way, minority too would have had its say. This is a fundamental issue that we as Nigerians must address in our collective efforts at bridging the ever widening gaps in the country's inter-ethnic relations, especially now that the political class often exploit and manipulate these diversities for their personal aggrandizement.

Politics, like soccer as we also highlighted is not an end in itself. Rather, it a means to achieve some definite ends. Part of these is the satisfaction of man's desires for basic needs of survival, which in practical reality translates to the needs for regular meals on

tables, gainful employment, descent and affordable housing, functional health facilities, and improved conditions of the working environment through the payment of living wages. It is on this note the recent 15 percent in the salaries of federal public servants must at least be commended. But the obvious question that has remained unanswered is, what percentage of the Nigerian workforce are federal employees? Again how many of the state governments and private organisations will be able to pay the new wage rate when some are still battling to wriggle themselves out of the impact of government monetization policy on their wage bills. In fact many organizations are yet to pay their employees the monetised salary package, and it is amazing seeing how they will adjust to the new wage structure. But the truth must be told that employers have little or no choice but to align themselves to the realities of this new wage regime if they are not to be confronted by incessant labour disruptions. In particular, the choices before organizations such as tertiary institutions are limited especially in this age of global competitive setting where geographical and occupational mobility of labour have become the trend. For example, universities that seek to retain their tested and capable hands must be willing to invest heavily not only in their physical sustenance through decent living wages, but also their continuous growth and development on the job.

Lastly, at the end of every thrilling soccer encounter, we see players in the true spirit of sportsmanship exchanging jerseys, winners consoling losers even as the former celebrate their victory, losers groaning but would still spare some moment to congratulate winners, and losers encouraging their team mates to brace up for the next challenge. That to me is the peak moment of soccer that reverberates in my mind anytime I reflect on Nigerian politics, and as I share this dream with you. And that dream is that it shall come to pass one day in Nigeria when those who lose elections will be the first to congratulate the winners. Will that dream ever come true? The answer is in the future of Nigerian politics.

### **Acknowledgement:**

All the glory goes to God from whom all powers flow. For making me what I am at this time and age is simply His great act of benevolence. I return the praise to Him. I consider this lecture a celebration of His enduring faithfulness.

I appreciate the Chancellor of the university, Dr. David Oyedepo, for the lion's heart in him to obey the call of the Master to establish this citadel of learning, and for allowing us to be part of this on-going educational revolution in Nigeria.

My thanks go to the Vice chancellor of this institution, Prof. Aize Obayan and the Registrar, Yemi Nathaniel for allowing

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In my educational career are great men and women I have come across and who have been of tremendous influence in my life. But permit me to single out both Professors Adeoye Akinsanya and Egun Arthur Davies who employed me as an Assistant Lecturer in 1989, Professor Julius Ihonvbere, my benefactor at the University of Texas who encouraged me on the skills of scholarly publications, and Professor Zacheous Apata, who supervised my Doctoral dissertation.

I thank my friends and colleagues in all the universities I have served for their support and encouragement at all time.

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I appreciate all of you for your presence. May our good God bless you.

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Parliamentary form of government (bequeathed by British colonial regime at independence, which lasted for six years (1960-1966). Under this system, the legislative power was vested in the

bicameral legislature both at federal and regional levels. While the Senate at the federal level and House of Chiefs in the Regions were appointed, the Houses of Representatives at both levels were elected. The Prime



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