

**RE-INVENTING NIGERIA’S POLITICAL CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY:**

**WHETHER A THIRD FORCE?**

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**ABSTRACT**

The beauty of an ideal constitutional democracy lies in the degree of freedom exercised by the citizens and adherence to the rule of law. Nigeria’s democracy can best be described as a pseudo-democracy that defies every known ideal democratic values and ethos. The attitude of the political class robs off on every aspect of the national life. The current culture manifests in the leadership recruitment process. In the light of the foregoing, political commentators and ‘real democrats’ are calling for reforms that create the right values and make the right democratic culture sustainable. Thus, the thrust of an ideal democratic values and principles based leadership will require a third force that will serve as a watchdog, a reformer and agent of political transformation. The contention in this paper therefore is the idea that changing the Nigeria’s political culture will require a transformational group that can reinvent Nigeria’s political values from its seemingly bastardized state.

**Keywords:** political culture, democracy, political class, third force, rule of law, sustainable development, political environment

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's socio-political environment presents a picture of lawlessness and domination. This is because from our traditional system to the long period of military interregnum into politics, those in authority exercise control over their subjects. Rules and laws made for the smooth running of the society seem to be for the poor and marginalized groups. Ruling elites who share the same ideology are not subjected to the sanctions the law recommends except in rare cases. Thus, a culture emanates which make the ruling elites, their children and associates to be considered the 'special breed'. Agents of law enforcement can overturn the law in favour of a member of the ruling class. One can thus infer from observation that the notion of might is right which is a feature of the Hobbesian state is here.

Oboh (2018,p.17) paints the scenario more vividly when he asserts that;

*the principles and values of democracy are daily being undermined by the leaders in the emerging democratic countries (sic)interference for their own opinions on how society should be governed. This perhaps is consequent upon the covert resentment the leaders have for democracy. Otherwise, the solution to the crises in Africa and the Arab world is not with the United Nations as much as in the ability of the leaders of the regions to obey the rules creating the basis for the peace and development of society. The essence of democracy is to enforce the rule of law without any concession to the contrary.*

The above scenario defers considerably from what an ideal democratic society should be. An ideal democratic culture should foster respect for the rule of law, promote the dignity of human persons and the supremacy of the rule of law.

Although, there is no perfect society, nevertheless, there are inherent features that make for civility, order and good governance in an ideal democratic system. An ideal democratic state has rules which govern every segment of the society; every citizen is subject to the law, there are laid down procedure for enforcing the rules. Citizens have essential rights and responsibilities, freedom to participate in the socio-political life of the state without let or hindrance and obedience to the institutions of the state that exercise control over the political system. Thus, everyone is subject to the law. In a democratic system with the right values, leadership recruitment relates to the development needs of the people. There is a constant interaction on what should be the priority projects of the state and government, this debate takes centre stage in campaigns for elective positions. Thus, the freedom to freely debate issues and the right of the citizens to make informed choice from the competing alternative gives birth to a culture that becomes sustainable and of value. When projects and programmes emanating from an elected leader's manifesto serve the need of the people, deliberate efforts are often made to make them sustainable. This is lacking in society with poor democratic culture and values. Advance democracy, makes freedom of choice of the electorates an inalienable right which has become ingrained in the political culture of the society. The relationship between democracy and development therefore lies in the frequent quest of elected representative to make laws and approve national budgets in line with the development goals captured during the campaigns. This relationship gives birth to a norm that functional system have come to regard as normal and are deliberately sustained to make the society worthwhile.

Political culture is an essential feature of a democratic society. The political culture of an ideal democratic society is respect for the rule of law by those in authorities and the citizenry. This is why Ikpe (2010, p. 321) conceives political culture as "how the people regard their political system and politics, including their conception of purposes of the state and its legitimacy".

Where the political culture respects the law; violence, thuggery, extra-judicial killings hardly get mentioned in the body polity. Suffice to say that a society with poor political culture debases the law enforcement mechanism of the society. There are ample evidence to suggest that Nigeria political culture does not respect state institutions where the interest of the ruling elite is at variance with the law. Unfortunately, there are supporters who though know what is right but will turn the law on its head to defend the illegality. In other words, the political culture will give birth to behavior and attitude that support the current order in order to entrench the interest of the ruler. Members of the third force who have the courage to challenge such illegality are often labelled enemies of the state. State resources and institutions are often deployed to crush their opposition. This has been the political culture in Nigeria. The resultant effect is that Nigeria political system oscillates back and front without clear progress. This is because the political culture and the resultant belief is that state capture by the ruling class need to be entrenched. One way of perpetuating their hold is to subvert the institutions of the state and the law to realise their goal-dominance. It thus becomes a circle. In the light of the foregoing, this work examines Nigeria political culture against the backdrop of an ideal political culture and suggest the role of the third force in redefining the political culture.

Two theoretical propositions were adopted for the study; the authoritarian theory and the libertarian theory. The authoritarian theory sees members of the society as under the state and as instruments of the state's fundamental right to maintain laws and order and further the state's course. According to Bittner (1989, p. 346 —347) "The press in such a society is viewed as an instrument for disseminating the state's position to the populace, informing the populace about what is right and wrong based on the state's interpretation of issues, and providing officials policy statements of the ruling elite after determining its objectives, uses the press as a means of obtaining these objectives. The press becomes a means to an end rather than an instrument of criticism of either means or ends".

Ojobor (2002, p. 7) citing McQuail (1987), provides insights into the basic assumptions of the theory as:

1. The media should do nothing that would undermine established authority or disturb order.
2. The media should always be subordinate to established authority.
3. The media should avoid offence to majority or dominant moral and political values.
4. Censorship can be justified to enforce these principles.
5. Unacceptable attacks on authority; deviations from official policy or offences against moral codes should be criminal offences.
6. Journalists or other media professionals have no independence within their organization.

Although, Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbor Schramm wrote about these theories in the 1950s, it is still relevant in most developing nations such as Nigeria, where the press still suffer from authoritarian oppression. The various cases of extra-judicial clampdown on the press suggest that the assumptions are still very much with us. Government extensive media ownership masquerading in the name of 'media development' reinforces the notion that the press is a means to an end. The various media laws, such as the official secret act, seditions offences act, amongst others and the forceful closure of media houses justify the relevance of the theory to modern day Nigeria.

However, a number of criticisms have been raised against the theory. Anaeto, Onabarijo and Osifeso (2008, p. 53) note the criticism of Jack McLead thus. "Siebert theories do not attempt to stipulate how social systems operate, but rather with specifications of how they should or could work according to some pre-existing criteria". They also draw on E. M. Griffin comments that Siebert should have considered to what extent the theory is applicable to all conditions at all times with several

political changes. Siebert's theories do not have much relevance.

When one considers the patterns of media ownership in Nigeria and the sensational/ethnic colouration to the coverage and reportage of events, a sense of control is needed for sanity. However, cases of abuse of the media professional codes or where there are perceived hatred in the reportage of events, the judiciary should be the arbiter rather than the forceful approach before the recourse to the Judiciary following public outcry or the media exercise of their right to fair hearing.

Libertarian theory which became a norm in the 18th and 19th centuries of Europe and North America, assumes that an individual should be free to publish what he or she likes, hold and express opinions freely and freedom of assembly with others having or sharing similar opinions or views. This theory which was propounded in 1963 by the trio of Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm drew inspiration for the theory from the writings of John Milton, who advocated for a free market place of ideas and the avowed notion that people have the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, and good and bad as a result, they are capable to make decisions. Hence, he opined that people should have "unlimited access to the ideas and thoughts of other men". Another is John Erskine who contends that people seeking to enlighten others, and not intending to mislead, should be able to address the universal reason of a whole nation on what is believed to be true.

Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008, p. 65) citing Daramola (2003) highlights the following assumptions about the theory as:

1. Publications should be free from prior censorship.
2. There should be no compulsion for anything.
3. Publication of error is protected equally with that of truth in matters of opinion and belief.
4. No restriction should be placed on the collection of information for publication provided it is done by legal means.
5. There should be no restriction on export or import or sending of messages across national frontiers.

Journalists should be allowed to claim a reasonable degree of autonomy in their places of work.

This theory is relevant to this paper in some ways, first chapter II, section 22 provides for the responsibility of the media to society. Specifically, the section states that, "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people". Where else could competing ideas and watching role be more tolerable? In a political environment that allows for free expression? In other words, the different shades of opinions, questioning and scrutiny regarding the quest for political change or ideals is permitted in this sense by the constitution. The press in a democratic system would create better-informed citizenry who can select ideas that are of relevance to them. It stands against the hegemony of the ruling class, since there may be views expressed that are contrary to the dominant class.

One notable limitation of this theory with particular reference to Nigeria is that an unregulated press can throw the nation into orgies of violence. For instance, in 1962, Wole Soyinka recorded some seditious message in a private studio and caused it, at gunpoint to be broadcast in the heart of the western regional election crises of that year. Similarly, in April 2003, political loyalist of Chief Great Ogboru ceased a private radio station in Adeje near Warri and announced him the A.D. candidate as the winner of the Governorship election rather than Chief Onanefe Ibori the PDP candidate who INEC declared as winner. A liberal media system will support ideals that challenge the status quo thereby bringing about the needed reformation.

**Nigeria political culture.**

In this section, various perspectives of the political culture will be examined. First the media dimension, secondly the political arena and thirdly, the social sphere.

### **Media perspective**

Nigeria ethno-religious divide has thrown up a political culture that supports the action of its rulers by a larger majority of the members of his or her ethnic group or religious organization whether such actions are right or wrong. These support groups do not condemn inefficiency, underperformance, lack of respect for state institutions, or the profligacy in the system, rather, rallies, awards, courtesy visits and regional and religious endorsements are often organized to support the actions of the President or Governor. This has created a culture of ‘us’ against ‘them’. A very worrisome dimension is the seizure, inducement of the media institutions, especially state media to act as ‘spin doctors’ for the ruler. Although the system is termed democratic, the vestige of authoritarianism resonates in the daily actions of the state executives and their collaborators. This is because the media have an interlocking relationship with the holders of power and the political system in general.

However, the mass media, which are the hubs around which political communication revolves, cannot carry out their roles except as defined by the media system. This is why Bittner (1989, p. 346) drawing inspiration from Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their classic books ‘four theories of the press’ note that “the political structure of a country can influence not only the regulatory and operational framework of the electronic media, but it can also affect the news media both print and electronic”. Adeseye and Ibagere (1999, p. III) also assert that “it is the government then that determines the kind of media system that operates in any particular society through the enactment of laws as well as formulation of policies guiding the operation of the mass media”.

The media system in Nigeria is controlled by government through Decree No. 38 of 1992, that established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) that regulate the policy on broadcasting and Decree No. 58 of 1992 that established the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) that regulates print media organisations. Experience has shown that NPC is less critical than the NBC. Although prior to their creation a department in the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture regulates media practice. The media system in Nigeria evolved essentially from an authoritarian system. It was designed to service the interest of the colonialist. Though it has assumed mixed pattern — a little of libertarianism and social responsibility, it has remained largely authoritarian. This is because successive governments see the press as instruments for propagating their ideals and interpreting political development based on the views of the ruling elite. From Nigeria pre—colonial times to the present democratic government, the influence of the media system in political communication has been very obvious with the type of actions taken by government over certain broadcast and write-ups. Why the stronghold? First, the media have been labeled in democratic systems as ‘fourth estate’ of the realm, that it ranked after the Executive; Legislature and the Judiciary. Second, it is an essential instrument for the struggle for power. As Udeajah (2004, p. 6) notes “whether democratic or military government, this struggle for state power depends essentially in the broadcast media for communicating effectively in society in all circumstances, it is broadcasting that makes political activities known to the people; it even makes convert political activities become overt”. Third, the various forms in which political communication takes; political campaign, news and political advertising all have a sort of impact on the body polity.

It is the realization of the media power that the system is designed, structured and controlled in such a way that the ruling class would continue to maintain their hegemony in political communication. Karl Marx’s famous statement in “The ‘German

ideology' quoted in Olotokun (2002) states that:

*The idea of the ruling class is in every epoch the ruling ideas. The class which is the ruling material force in society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class, which has the means of material **production** at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of material **production**, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who have the means of mental **production** are subject to it.*

For instance, Chapter IV, section 39 subsection 1 and 2 of the 1999 constitution states "that every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference".

Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information ideas and opinions: Provided that as person, other than the Government of the Federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the president on the fulfillment of conditions laid down by an Act of the National Assembly, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever.

Subsection 2 provision clearly suggests that the President can decide to give license to only members of the political class loyal to him, thereby leaving out professionals interested in media business to be shot out. It is also important to state here that prior to deregulation of the broadcast industry the federal government was always suspicious of opposition states, such that at a point, states were restricted to the ultra-high frequency band while the federal government broadcast from the very high frequency band.

Although, the print industry has less level of control and intrusion, the intolerance for opposing news in state owned newspapers and broadcast houses reinforce the influence of the media system. Where private newspapers set agenda on topical issues or carry out **investigation** on government activities in cases relating to corruption, political news, injustice, etc. extra-Judicial means are employed to cower the editors. The question is, if democracy provides for the plurality of ideas, why is there a high level of clampdown against supposed 'enemies' of the ruling government'? Where cases of allegations are made against government officials. Why do they often resort to self-help instead of taking such matters to court for adjudication'? Adeseye and Ibagere (199, p. III) supposedly provide the answers "The structure of the media is predicated on the ownership while their functionary is determined by the media system in the society". This means that the leverage the media enjoy in expression is largely dictated by the disposition of the government in power. It also means that the various laws, degrees and acts enacted and promulgated are strategies aimed at subjecting the press to the media system.

The media system inherited by Nigeria at independence was authoritarian in nature. Although, the four regions in the first republic had their broadcasting and newspaper outfits. They were essentially to strengthen the political ideologies of their leaders and gain political power. The fundamental structures of the broadcast media at the time were government owned. The few newspapers of the time were both private and government owned. But all driven to promote the interest of their political parties and ethnic colouration.

According to Okoro and Okolie (2004, p. 95) the era witnessed a shift from party journalism to ethnic journalism. They specifically note that:

*Party politics engineered and enthroned a journalistic genre that could be called party journalism, that is, a brand of journalism that is Woven with the thread of a given political party in such a way as to advance the cause of such a party to the disadvantage or detriment of other parties. Although political parties like the National Council of Nigerian and the Cameroon (NCNC), the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG) may have used the media to secure party interests, it is on record that such consideration was purely peripheral as the main target was to champion ethnic or tribal interest.*

The strong influence of the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) on the political land scale sent jitters to the Federal government led by the Northern People Congress (NPC). The immediate step taken by the then Tafawa Balewa led government was the setting up of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation to vitiate the political and propagandist power of the WNTV owned by the Action Group led Western region. Since the media system permitted regional ownership of a medium, the mass media serve the purpose well, each regional government controlled it organs solely to its advantage creating no room for opposition group even within the regional crisis .Onyeoziri (1989, p. 35) acknowledges this view when he quoted Ogunade thus "when politicians appealed to ethnic sentiments to strengthen their political positions, they used the mass media to further such ends. And so, as the nation launched from one crisis to another, the Nigerian mass media... politicized one ethnic dimensions of the crises". Udejah (2004, p. 56) further adds that "both the political actors and the media operators had internalized many of the stereotypes peculiar to the zones of operation under the circumstances, therefore, the broadcast media organizations rather than offering solutions to Nigeria's problems apparently constituted themselves into impediments of some sort".

The intolerance for opposition views, which have become a permanent feature of the Nigerian mass media, has been from the first republic. According to Maduka (1989, p. 111) "The governments that founded the different stations interfered in their running. There were, pressures from some politicians to have only programmes that favoured them on television". Thus, the policies of exclusiveness dominated the media. The undue control leaves no room for dissecting viewpoints which could bring change to the polity, programmes and policies of government.

The obvious manifestation of authoritarian system in the first republic by way of control can be found in the copious examples expressed by Nwuneli (1985, pp. 245-246) firstly, he notes the case of one parliamentarian, Mr. Afanideh whom he quoted as saying "I think it is the intention of all members that whatever we say here should be communicated to our people. We are not representing ourselves. We represent constituencies... it is the duty of the information service of the ministry of information to broadcast our own views... Secondly, he cites another case of a politician who once said "that he has incontrovertible evidence to show that there is a deliberate and calculated attempt by radio Nigeria to suppress the activities of the NPC members in the parliament" another example he cited was the attempts sometimes to dictate who gets what position in the federal radio corporation. According to him "the politician said "I am humbly appealing to the minister to see if he can obtain the services of such people (Abba Zoro) within the federation".

Another incidence of authoritarian suppression of discerning voices was the refusal of the then Western government led by

Akintola to allow Awolowo's supporters the use of WNTV following his arrest over an alleged plot to overthrow the federal government. At this time, the crisis in the west had assumed a dangerous proportion, in order to counter government propaganda in the said arrest, Action Group leaders with the aid of the Eastern regional government led by Chief Michael Okpara installed an illegal station at Chief Obafemi Awoowo's house. The federal agents and their collaborators in the west searched earnestly for it for six months but could not find it. Maduka (1989, p. 122) sums up the height of such; irresponsibility and unprofessional control of the media thus:

*The news usually read like straight party release, especially in its attacks on the opposition, for the government was in the habit of instructing the station to carry these releases without editing. Staff members were harassed and visibly demoralized. They carried out high-ranking ministers broadcasts which contained palpable falsehoods and veiled threats to forthcoming elections; journalists were forced later on to broadcast false election results. The majority of WNTV workers were, therefore, very relieved on January 15, 1966 when the military took over government.*

Outside these cases, the media were used to fight against public interest as seen in the biased reportage of the national strike of 1964. The underlining thought in these examples. Find substance in the link between the mass media and the class structures of the society as enumerated by Adeseye and Ibagere (1999, p. 100) "that the media could be seen as an extension of the ideological apparatus of the society, as exemplified by the ruling class Secondly, the mass media could be conceived as instruments for the suppression of ideological conflicts inherent in a free and competitive society".

The media system of the second republic did not change substantially from that of the first republic except that some laws enacted and certain policies formulated to enhance the practice of Journalism as deemed right by the political elite. For instance, NTA and FRCN enabling decrees took the control of the broadcasting stations from the states. The decrees also restricted state broadcasting stations from the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band for TV, medium wave for radio while the federal government operated from the Very High Frequency (VHF) band and the short wave band for Television and radio respectively. Government control of the media in the period sufficed in the views of Adefoye (1983) cited in Udejah (2004, p. 137) that majority (88.7%) of the news staff of NTA channel 10, Lagos believed that the station management influenced news reporting in favour of the federal government. during the 1983 general election. Udejah added, "it was observed that editorials and news commentaries were written and vetted by the federal government, state governments and political party agent before they were accepted for publication in the broadcast media. Another case in point was the rationing of newsprint importation to the country in order to curb the excesses of opposition press and broadcast houses. The federal government under Alhaji Shehu Shagari went to the extent of what perhaps may be regarded as the intentional jamming of Lagos State Television signal by the more Superior Transmitter of NTA2 Channel 5 signal.

Ekwelie (1986) cited in Udejah (2004, p. 139) narrated how Vera Ifudu an NTA reporter was sacked and the redeployment of the General Manager of NTA, Victor Maduka on the directives of President Shehu Shagari. According to him, "Ifudu was dismissed simply because she refused to surrender the original tape of a controversial interview with Olusola Saraki, the then Senate Leader". In the event leading to her sack, the country had discovered that \$2,800,000,000 was missing in its foreign account. Olusola Saraki, the then Senate leader suggested that he had located the missing money. It was on this account of his

that NTA deployed Vera Ifudu to interview the Senate Leader on the veracity of the claim. The said interview resulted into a controversy in which Vera Ifudu was ordered to surrender the original tape. She refused and was dismissed from the NTA on April 28, 1980. However, she went to the Industrial Arbitration Panel, which awarded her the sum of N23,000 for wrongful dismissal from NTA.

The frustration and falsehood inherent in government interference with media content climaxed on July 29, 1983. When Chima Edozie, 49. The newscaster on NTA, Enugu major news at seven, half way into the news he angrily voiced out “ I am fed up with this falsehood, I hereby resign” he collected the script and stood before the control room could cut his voice and image, he had done the damage. The biased and tilted reportage of events in favour of NPN took center stage at the meeting of the governors from other parties held in March 1981. Okoro and Okolie (2004, p. 96) citing the West Africa of 6th April, 1981, note:

*The governors considered what might have been the motive of the NPN federal government in wanting to monopolize the control of radio, television and newspapers. They recalled that in 1965, when elections were held into the Western House of Assembly, the NNDP government of the day announced false results and compelled all the mass media to carry the false results. This led to a violent reaction by the people and to the collapse of the first republic. The governors noted that the authors of that incident are now in the leadership of NPN. There is doubt that if they gain control of all the mass media, they will repeat their trick of 1965 in 1983, by announcing false results, declaring themselves, winners fraudulently and then proceeding to form the next government. The governors decided that the public must be alerted to the dangers inherent in the steps being taken by the federal government to monopolize the mass media so that public opinion may be mobilized to stop the NPN from plunging this great nation into another period of darkness.*

Obidike (1990, p. 144) sums up the general state of affairs with reference to political communication and authoritarian influence, when he observed that state actors, turned the results of voting by the people around on television and radio, and on the pages of newspapers. It was a case of winners turned losers because they did not have access to the media.

The aborted third republic witnessed the height of press repression, particularly with the events leading to and after the June 12, 1993 Presidential election. The press freedom committee of the Nigeria Union of Journalists captured the travails of the year thus:

*Accusing the press of excessive use of language and being too unrestrained in the analysis of public issues the federal government set about arresting and detaining journalists and publishers, confiscating publications, proscription of media establishments and general harassment and intimidation of the press and its practitioners were rampant.*

During the period five decrees were promulgated to curb the ‘perceived’ excesses of the press. They were Decree 23 of 1993 that proscribed. The Reporter, Decree 29, known as the Treason and Treasonable offence Decree, Decree No. 35 which confers

powers on the president to confiscate or ban any publication which contravenes national security. Another was decree 43 which set tough measures regarding newspaper registration and Decree 48 which proscribed 17 publications owned by 5 newspaper groups and a state owned radio station. They are Concord group of newspapers. The Punch, The Sketch and The Observer. The Ogun State broadcasting corporation was closed down but re-opened some days later.

Olutokun (2002, pp. 88-89) observe that Tell and The News Magazine editors were arrested by security men. The editor of The River state owned newspaper; Nigerian Tide was sent on compulsory leave over a front page story entitled presidential election controversy: NEC ordered to release Election Result. In the same vein, The General Manager of Akwa-Ibom State government owned newspaper, The Pioneer, Mr. Okon William Akpan and Mr. Ebeneze Udoyee were sent on compulsory leave on June 21 over an editorial comment entitled “Test Sincerity”. Outside these cases there were many other closure and arrest of media practitioners due to government perceived tone of the media on important public issues.

In the contemporary democratic era, much was expected especially at the return of the country to democratic order in 1999. The expectations were based on the fact that the press had witnessed too much of closures, freedom violations and harassment in the period of the military interregnum into the Nigeria political voyage. Diri (2008, p. 124) quotes Prof. Ralph Akinfeleye keynote address at a National Broadcasting Commission Workshop entitled “freedom and responsibility in news coverage under democracy” to support the expectation thus:

*The Nigerian Press has asked for unadulterated press freedom and clear-at freedom of information Act so as to play their constitutional role of monitoring governance. The government press already has the freedom of expression and ownership of the press as contained in the constitution. But the general public has continued to tell the press to do more in maintaining and making the government accountable.*

The first attempt at realizing this goal was the introduction of the freedom of information bill into the National Assembly in 2000. The bill was initially passed but the president returned it on the ground that certain grey areas needed to be amended. Since then up till now, it has been a case of accusation and counter accusation. Although the freedom of information act is in force, there is much to talk about its impact so far, apart from the case against *park and pay*, SERAP Versus the Federal Government on how Abacha loot has been expected, various governments continue to hinder access to information.

The most glaring display of authoritarian influence in media practice, particularly with issues relating to political communication was the commando-like invasion of Insider, Magazines office by men of the state security service on September 4, 2004. Over a cover lead story entitled “Aso Rock Ohanaze face-off: condemn Biafra now! No Ohanaze. In the said invasion, the security outfit destroyed computer systems, confiscated about 15,000 copies of the September 13 edition of the magazine. The action was widely condemned.

In August 2008. The Leadership newspaper based in Abuja was sealed — off and five of the paper’s editors arrested by the State Security Service over the paper’s cover lead story entitled “The president failing health”. They were released after a formal case of sedition was slammed against them. In the event leading to the story, the President had just returned into the country after some weeks in a German hospital over a heart related disease, which was inter diagnosed as acute pericarditis. The president said the story was presented in such a way as to make him look unfit in the eyes of the public. The death of the president justified the newspaper’s position.

On the 16 of September 2008, *Channels Television* in Lagos was closed down by a combine team of the State Security Service and the Lagos Zonal office of the National Broadcasting Commission over a news item the station broadcast in which the station alleged that the president would resign after reshuffling the cabinet. Although the station acknowledged the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as the source of the story and withdrew the stated item 15 minute later. The NBC and the state security service contend that it was capable of breaching national security. (See Punch, 17 September 2008).

Adaba FM a private radio station in Ilara Mokin close to Akure was shot down on April 26, 2009 for airing a political jingle of the Action Congress with the theme “rig and roast”. The jingle was a part of the preparation for 2009 Ekiti re-run election. The station went to court to challenge NBC decision and won the case, before the station was reopened on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Never has there be high cases of journalist assassination than the current dispensation. For instance, Chief Godwin Agbroko, Chairman of *ThisDay* newspaper editorial board was killed on December 22, 2006 on his way from office (see [www.234next.com](http://www.234next.com)). Though some expressed the view that it was politically motivated, other opined it could be armed robbery. The police is yet to uncover his killers. In the same vein, the Deputy Political Editor of the Guardian newspaper was killed in his residence on September 20, 2009 before his own children ([www.nowbackmag.com](http://www.nowbackmag.com)). The assailants are yet to be apprehended the motive behind the killing still fishy. On February 14, 2010, A Political reporter with Africa Independent Television, Efenji Efenji was killed in a valentine’s day party in Karu area of Abuja while some said it was politically motivated, others say, it was a cult attack.

At the tail end of former INEC boss, Prof. Maurice Iwu in May 2010 **death** threat text messages were sent to Gbenga Aruleba, presenter of Focus Nigeria on AIT, the correspondents of the Punch newspaper, ThisDay and The Nation newspapers over their comments that the said chairman has not conducted any credible election to deserve another tenure. They reported the case to the authorities, the case is still been investigated.

In November 2009, the same Gbenga Aruleba was removed from presenting a highly celebrated political programme ‘focus Nigeria’ over pressures on the **then chairperson** of Daar Communication, High Chief Raymond Dokpesi by then National Security Adviser to the President, Major General Sarkhi Yaki on the ground that he was too critical of the government and the ruling party. He was removed and allegedly sent for a course in London. However, following the removal of the Security Adviser by the then Acting President Goodluck Jonathan; **who later became the** substantive before he was reinstated as presenter of the programme.

Another case was the brutal handling of a female reporter by aids of Governor Nasir El’Rufai in May 2018 over what they perceived to be negative **reportage** of the government. The Directorate of State Security arrested Darah Ebi in 2016, locked him up in their detention cell for two years without charge on the ground that he was privy to a plot by the Niger Delta militants to bomb oil facilities. In Edo State, the Governor of the state Godwin Obaseki had ordered the resting of two current affairs programmes on the ground that the programmes were been used to attack his government. On June 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, NBC shot down AIT on the basis that the stations political programmes and news coverage was biased against the government and the social media platform of its daily magazine programme Kaakaki was uncensored and lacked professionalism. It took public outcry and the interventiton of some media gurus to broker peace between the NBC and the station.

The import of all these is that the government expects the media to conform to the views and ideals of the government at the centre. Where the practitioners act adversarial to the ruling government, recourse to the court is not taken as measure, rather,

extra-judicial means are often employed. The resultant effect is that media contents tend towards praise singing, sycophancy and sensationalism.

### **Political arena**

The basis of Nigeria's current political culture stems from the politics of prebendalism and entrenched interest of retired military generals. A situation in which political godfathers sponsor their godsons into political positions with the expectations that they can corner state resources to their advantage when they get power. These godfathers are well connected, they have; money and political thugs and do not respect simple rules and procedures.

Government hate civil protest except that of January 1, 2012 that united all **oppositiin** elites against the Jonathan Government on the increase in the pump price of petrol. Members of **the** civil society organizations who voice their opinions against the actions of the government by way of protest are often teargas and arrested on trump up charges. For instance, "our mumu don do" movement protest against the re-arrest of Deji Adeyanju in February, 2019 over a matter that a court in Kano absolved him of in 2006 is a case in point. Members of the group had protested the re-arrest at the unity fountain but were teargas by the police. The Shiite protest against the continued detention of their leader and his wife-sheik Ibraheeme Elzazaki, although the court had granted him bail, but the government considered him a security threat.

The ruling government at the centre can act against sub-national government either because of their criticism or actions the centre interpreted to be against the state. For instance, then President Olusegun Obasanjo had ceased the Lagos State government allocation to Local Governments in 2004 because the then Governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu had created 26 additional Local Council Development Areas to the existing 20 local government area. Instead of **the** Federal Government approaching the courts to challenge the state government, the president ordered the seizure of the council funds thereby denying the people of the state and the local government workers the right to their wages and development. Even when the supreme court ruled in favour of the state, the President did not obey the court order.

Cases abound about the political shenanigan called elections and impeachment between 2004 and 2008 in Nigeria. For instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission had taken custody of six members of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly with a mandate to impeach the Governor, Diprieye Alameisegha in 2005. Thus, the six impeached the Governor even though they lacked the two third needed to impeach the Governor. The same scenario, played out in Oyo State in the battle between Governor Rasheed Ladoja and his godfather, Lamidu Adedibu who with the aid of state apparatus impeached the Governor of the state until the court restored him. The Daily Champion of December 18, 2006 in its editorial cited in Popoola (2015,p.186)captured the issue leading to the crisis and the ruling of the **courts** on the said impeachment

*When 18 out of the 32 members of the Oyo State House of Assembly came together and in a bizairre manner contrived the "impeachment" of Governor Rashidi Ladoja, all true democrats in the country and beyond knew anything about due process knew that the clear case of illegality could not stand when tested in the law courts. A few were afraid that the judiciary may buckle under the self-styled strongman of Ibadan politics, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. In the Face of the deployment of brutal force against the hapless Governor Ladoja, many thought the governor would run and not look back, many thought he would surrender his mandate without a fight.... Those who sponsored or participated in the illegal impeachment should have learnt their lessons and must bury the hatchet and co-operate fully with Ladoja so that the state can move forward and so that every threat to the Nation;s nascent democracy can be nipped in the bud.*

The same can be said of Joshua Dariye and his impeachment by the State House of Assembly. Chris Ngige, then Governor of Anambra was kidnapped on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003 by agents of the state following the disagreement he had with his godfather Chris Uba. Again, agents of the Federal Government played a prominent role in this issue. No arrest was made, neither was any charged to court. It was the height of impunity. Daily champion, July 12, 2003 captured the events more lucid;

*The abduction last Thursday of Governor Chris Ngige of Anambra State by a detachment of the police from Zone 9, Umuahia, is to say the least, not only reprehensible but a dirty slap on our nascent democracy. According to reports, four truck loads of mobile policemen led by the Assistant Inspector –General of Police, Zone 9, Mr. Raphael Ige arrived Government House, Awka on Thursday morning, sealed it off and proceeded to disarm the security details to the Governor. Mr Ige who said he was acting on orders from above personally disarmed and discharged the personal security to the Governor, collected all files, phones and other items found on the governor and placed him on house arrest for several hours. The Governor was later driven out to unknown destination and while this lasted, a motion was debated and passed by the State Assembly on the purported resignation of Ngige for what was termed personal reasons and pressure from his family and relations...(cited in Popoola 2015, p.215-216).*

Thus, politicians cognizant of this have always recruited political thugs to subvert the political process. Since many of them have access to state resources, they encourage their political opponents to go to court, knowing fully well the difficulty in **getting** victory against the ruling class in court.

The last two governorship elections in Ekiti State, that of 2014 and 2018 clearly showed the power of might in conducting simple election to choose the Governor of the state. The militarization of election has become a strategy used by the ruling government to thwart the will of the people. The military and police as state institutions now take partisan positions to support a predetermined course. The import of these development is that politics in Nigeria is conflict driven, violence prone and account for high level of assassination. The 2019 general elections in River State, re-echoes the militarization of the process in which many lives were lost, INEC officials kidnapped and adhoc staff of the Commission killed by security agencies.

The militarization of elections reinforces the already held apathy towards the ballot. Many register voters do not turn out to vote because they believe that their votes will not count and that INEC in collaboration with state and non-state actors will subvert the will of the people. This is evident from the elections conducted in Nigeria from 1999 till date where less than 50 percent of registered voters turn out for elections.

In the public service, state executives neglect state tenders board in the award of contracts but are quick to defend their actions in the media. The sentence of the former Governor of Taraba State was anchored on the fact that he siphoned state resources without due approval. It is rare to hear members of the state House of Assembly defer with their Governors on budgetary provisions or question how previous budgets were expended. The Nigeria political environment is gradually tilting towards a system where the Chief Executive is seen as lord, his words become law. Immediate past Senate President in a bold attempt to reverse this ugly trend was subjected to all forms of harassments, accusations and litigations. Even when he lost his election there has been deliberate effort by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission to rearrest him over the same case he earlier won against the commission using another label.

In many states of the federation, many young men are recruited as thugs to perpetuate violence against fellow citizens who dare to criticize, stand against the policies of the state government. These young men have state protection and have access to resources which enable them act without recourse to the law. They do not obey simple traffic rules but can be sent to harass violators. Their cronies can openly violate the law but will not be prosecuted. The question is what type of democratic values are we bequeathing on the younger generation? My answer is the value of violence and dishonesty.

### **Social Arena**

Apart from the political system, the same culture has been transferred to the social-economic cum cultural settings. In many organizations the Chief Executive Officer is above the board, whereas, he or she is expected to respect the board in his or her daily decisions. The corruption trial and plea bargain of Cecilia Ibru, former managing Director of Oceanic Bank emanated from insider loans without proper procedure. That of Atuche of Bank PHB is another point. Mr Bunmi Oni former Managing Director of Cadbury Nigeria manipulated the account of the company for years in connivance with the external auditor just to cover the corruption in the company until the matter blown open in early 2000.

Children and associate of chief executives either of a state or a corporation have an entitlement mentality. They think they can use state resources freely because their principals' immunity cover them. In many public tertiary institutions, the heads live above the rules. Yet panel can be set up to try cases of misdemeanor by staff who do not belong to the caucus. I wonder sometimes, the type of institutions we are building? School heads cannot raise observation concerning letters that delayed for months. Projects are not executed to specification but the contractor in connivance with the Director of works can issue certificate of completion without blinking an eye lid. You here some of them say 'wait for your turn', 'this is your time, make adequate use of it'. Thus, impunity becomes the order in the system by those who belong to the ruling group. They label academics who speak against their activities as enemies of the system. Such individuals can never be appointed heads of department, Directors or serve in school committees. The resultant effect is that standards are lowered in order to accommodate the interest of the members of the group.

In our religious and traditional institutions, the silhouette of authoritarianism holds sway. The Emir of Nupe forcefully married a Christian female Corp member who visited the balance in 2016 without the parents' consent. He was quick to issue a press statement that the lady was not willing to go back to her parents because her parents and Christians and they will kill her. One wonders, has the process of marrying a girl change in Nigeria? In spite of the many protest letters written by her father on the need to release her daughter, the matter remains the way it is. Whereas, Yunusa, a young Hausa Man from Kano, who adopted and impregnated and took Ese Oruru to Kano from Yenogoa in Bayelsa State was released to the security agencies. What is the difference between the two scenarios?

Citizens have become helpless, because security agencies can happily kill protesters. These fear has kept many in check and the ruling class continue to have a free reign. A very pathetic trend is the movement of celebrated columns who have always hold the ace in the watchdog business into the murky water of politics. Very sound social crusaders, civil right lawyers and activists have become spokesmen to the politician. The needed voices to keep the political class in check are being silenced on the altar of political appointments. Thus, the sovereignty bestowed on the citizens in a democracy has become outclassed by the sloganeering of 'you need to belong to the system to change the system'. The poor and the marginalized group keep praying to God for a change. Unfortunate, they fail to appreciate their own role in a democracy.

The implications of these trends on sustainable development lies in the fact that a country with wrong democratic culture and values will have weak institutions, poor leadership and governance and unstable political climate. Thus, there is a need to pursue the ideals of democratic freedom, rule of law and build the right democratic values that will encourage the citizens with the right ideas to occupy the leadership space and drive the country through the part of development. Thus, the younger generations call be inculcated with the right values to make the future generation have a system they can participate in and build a society that respect all that makes a functional democratic environment worth emulating.

### **Towards A Redefinition of Nigeria's Political Culture: The Role Of The Third Force**

Against the backdrop of the sad tale of Nigeria's political culture, there is a need to retool the culture in order to promote the values that sustains and develop the society. It is obvious that political change cannot take place in a culture of impunity without a well-organized structure that will galvanize the process. This is where a third force becomes necessary. "A third force is a faction or party occupying an immediate position between two others representing opposite extremes" (Collins dictionary.com). According to Zikode (2006) the term was first coined by Nelson Mandela in 1990. It refers to organized, covert, death squads which were backed by members of the security force, and became synonymous with clandestine state sponsored violence. However, it has come to mean attempt by concerned citizens and the media to change the negative political culture with its attendant beliefs and behavior to a more reformed political system that respect constitutionalism, rule of law, political parties built on ideological leanings with capable leaders interested in shaping the system for the good of society. It means that the emergence of a third force will bring about the formation of a political party or movement that is not manned by godfathers and money bags but by individuals with a record of service to the society. Thus, a third force will provide alternative for individuals with sincere interest to serve but lack the financial capacity to compete in the dominant political parties. This force will throw up candidates who are running for political offices on the basis of the ideology and manifesto of the party rather than individualized ideology and manifesto that is in current order.

A third force will agitate for transparent elections that make the process more open and transparent. The force can offer useful suggestions on creating a better electoral process that is digitally driven and less combative. Deliberate attempt will be made by the force to lobby for the enactment of enabling laws that will foster a true democratic spirit.

Against the backdrop of the monetization of our political system, a third force should be in the vanguard of championing a revolution against hyper-monetization of the political system. They can offer alternative on reward models that are found elsewhere which when adopted can encourage service driven politics rather than money driven politics.

The third force should build coalitions that will rise against abuse of court processes, police brutality and military adventures into political processes. They can pursue cases against officers in court to serve as deterrent to others. Judges who collect bribes to pervert justice should be named and shamed. This will restore the dignity of the judiciary. A further step can be taken to stem cases where concurrent courts issue the same order or counter by advocating for the digitalization of the courts. This will reduce cases of desperate politicians obtaining court orders from different parts of the country in matters that ought to be appealed.

A third force must begin value re-orientation of the younger generations. Media organizations should create programmes that support such orientation in order to raise a new set of Nigerian politicians that are not polluted with the madness called politics today.

Protest is constitutionally guaranteed rights of citizens. A third force should be in the vanguard against policies and programmes that promote laziness, reward idleness or divide the country or government ineptitude. When the third force pursue such consciousness, it will keep the government on its toes and work for the good of the citizens.

These views align with Verba (1970) cited by Ikpe (2010,p.352) on the value of political culture

*Political culture forms an important link between the events of politics and the behavior of individuals in reaction to those events; for, although the political behavior of individuals and groups if of course affected by acts of government officials, wars, election campaigns, and the like, it is even more affected by the meanings that are assigned those events by observers. This is to say no more than that people respond to what they perceive of politics and how they interpret what they see. From the cultural point of view, for instance, we would look at political history not so much as a series of events that may be interpreted quite differently by different people and whose effects depend upon this interpretation. The term “meaning” and “interpretation”, to what exists in the mind of the individual or to what happens in the outside world, but to the interaction between the two. And in this interaction it would be wrong to assume that either the previously held beliefs or the external events necessarily are dominant. An event will be interpreted in terms of previously held beliefs; but preconceptions can only go so far in affecting interpretation.*

In other words, an ideal political culture will help in shaping values and attitude that build the political system. The attitude of public officials will conform will the standards society expect of such public figures. Institutions of the state and agents of law enforcement will then realize that they are in service for public trust not the parochial interest of some select few.

### **Conclusion**

No society can advance beyond its state if it build on a wrong political culture. This paper reinforces the idea that Nigeria press from independence has been under a siege as a result of the constitutional provisions and enabling laws that set limits to the extent to which the media can operate. Again, the structure and control of the media have made government to laud it over practitioners, particularly, when the press takes a position that is contrary to government position on issues or when the government wants it Position known on issues whether right or wrong. The result has always been the suppressive actions of government on media houses, arrest of practitioners and even closure of media houses.

In conclusion, the Nigeria press is strongly influenced by the media system. Cases of abuse are project of government desperation and undue hold on media practitioners. Therefore, from Nigeria political independence till date, the latitude of freedom enjoyed by the press and the extent of tolerance of opposition views within the media depend largely on the disposition of the president, governor and their collaborators in permitting such.

The paper has re-examined the factors that continue to shape Nigeria’s political culture and the import on our values and development. It concludes that ideal democratic values can thrive if men of like minds will stand up against the pseudo-democratic culture with its attendant political behavior. The researcher believes that a third force acting as ombudsman can gradually start the process of rebuilding the right ideals in our body polity to make the Nigeria’s democratic space worthwhile and sustainable

In the light of the foregoing, the following measures are suggested to arrest the drift towards the militarization of our democratic culture.

1. The monetary perks associated with elected public offices should be reviewed because the economy cannot sustain this expensive nature of the system. Thus, a reduction will discourage the money bags and inspire those with the spirit of public service.
2. Powers of state Chief Executives should be subjected to public debate to check areas of excesses. The attitude of some chief executives in obeying simple provisions of the law suggest a fundamental flaws in **the Nigeria** political culture. The constitution needs to be amended to provide sanctions for violators.
3. Civil society organizations should continue to raise areas of poor governance and call for open governance. Their advocacy should lead them into setting days aside to speak to the masses on identified areas of poor values in order to galvanized the citizens for action. In this way, the culture of silence will pave **way** for an informed citizenry that is ready for action. This will birth a new culture that will sustain the country's path to not only development but sustainable development.
4. Media regulating agencies should realize that public criticism of the government and exposure of certain unwholesome practices are all in the interest of a better society. Therefore, regulators should be concern more with actions that hamper development not actions that question the unjust system. In this way, government tolerance for contending views will make for a free society were the best ideas thrive in the society.
5. Frequent seminars on political reporting should be organized for political reporters and editors on the need to promote democratic ideals.
6. The freedom of information passed should be allowed to thrive so that the public can have access to information in order to promote open governance
7. A Third force should emerge from men and women who the political class have shortchanged because they lacked the financial resources or fail to compromise their standards on what an ideal political system should be. The third force should set mechanism for the transfer of values in public institutions through the recruitment of volunteers and constant training. With time, their efforts will produce spiral effect that will galvanize change and birth a new and sustainable democratic culture.

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