

## IDENTITY POLITICS AS OBSTACLE TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Historically, identity politics in Nigeria has its origin in the British colonial system of indirect rule anchored on the policy of divide-and-rule. The system had survived the colonial rule and today poses serious challenges to the democratization process in the post-independence Nigeria. The paper is an investigation of the impact of identity politics on the country's attempt at consolidating its fledgling democracy. The study relied on secondary source of data and adopted David Easton's systems theory as its framework of analysis. The paper found that Nigerian elites employ ethnic, religious, regional and other differences to provoke conflict as a strategy for the acquisition of political influence in the process of power brokerage. In the same vein, the faction of the elites that gains political power also relies on the manipulation of the major fault-lines in the country's political history to perpetuate their control of the state power. The practice has seriously undermined the efforts of government towards achieving democratic consolidation in the country as Nigerians come to think of themselves more in terms of ethnic, religious or other primordial attachments than as Nigerians with one nation, one destiny. The paper recommended the total and complete shut-down of the identity consciousness in the Nigerian body politics and the enthronement of patriotism and nationalism in order to build a solid democratic culture.*

**Keywords:** *Identity politics, democratization, indirect-rule, consolidation, post-independence, elites.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is made up of people with diverse political, social and cultural backgrounds, which had rendered the country vulnerable to politics of sub-nationality and instability. During the colonial era no conscious effort was made to weld the various national and ethnic units into a well-integrated nation. Rather the colonial administration thrived on a policy of divide - and - rule which emphasized the identity of the various components rather than the Nigerianess of the whole (Imobighe, 2003). At independence, Nigeria inherited these ethnic and sub-national identities and interests, which became thoroughly entrenched in the country's body politics. Following independence, Nigeria was divided primarily along ethnic lines with the Hausa/Fulani in the north; Yorubas in the south-west; and Igbos in the south-east. Like most colonial states in African and elsewhere, Nigeria was an artificial creation initiated by the British colonialists who neglected to consider

religious, linguistic and ethnic differences (Meredith, 2006). The British political ideology of dividing Nigeria during the colonial period into three regions, north, west and east exacerbated the already well-developed economic, political and social competitions among Nigeria's different ethnic groups. The country was divided in such a way that the north has slightly more population than the other two regions combined.

Within each of the three regions, the dominant ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo respectively formed political parties that were largely regional and tribal in character (Coomasie, 1994: 266). These were the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the north; the Action Group (AG) in the west; and the National Conference of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) in the east. Although these parties were not exclusively homogenous in terms of their ethnic or regional make-up, the present identity politics had its foundation in the fact that each of these parties were primarily based in one region and one tribe. Human societies are generally characterized by pluralities in terms of tribe, religion, region, among others. These are qualities that can be managed effectively for strength and unity and used to enhance nation-hood in a manner that guarantees unity at all levels of society. However, interactions arising from ethno-religious pluralities in several societies including Nigeria have often been characterized by struggle for dominance which manifests in rivalry and competition over scarce resources and indigene-settler dichotomy (Odu and Bala, 2016: 206). The attendant loss of lives and property from such ethno-religious conflicts generate suspicion, fear and low trust among groups which sometimes take society closer to disintegration.

The Nigerian society is accentuated by ethnic colorations, religious bigotry and political domination of one group upon the indigenous and minority rights of the other group (Odu, etal, 2016:207). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has not been able to overcome the plethora of ethno-religious conflicts, which have greatly under-mined the Country's democratic experiment. For instance, the activities of such ethnic and religious militias in the country like the Niger-Delta militants and the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism are pointers that the country's journey to democratic consolidation can at best be described as taking one step forward and two steps back. In Nigeria, ethno-religious identity issues have always assumed significant proportions in the country's socio-political process from the colonial era through the post-independence dispensation (Jega, 2000) cited in Odu, etal (2016:208). Further quoting Jega (2000), Odu, etal (2016: 208) noted that during the colonial era, administrative requirements necessitated the invention of traditions and the nurturing and reinforcement of an "us" versus "them" mentality; Muslim versus Christian; northerner versus southerner; Hausa-Fulani versus, Yoruba versus Igbo and so on. From here, religious, regional and ethnic differences

were accorded prominence in the conception and implementation of social, educational and economic policies and projects under the British colonial administration in Nigeria.

The differential impact of colonial rule in Nigeria created the context of the regional, educational, economic and political imbalances, which consequently appeared central in the mobilization or manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and rule as well as in the competitive politics of the post-independence period. The obvious implication of this for the building of a solid democratic culture anchored on the rule of law, equality and fair play is that hardly can Nigerians forge a common front on matters of national importance. Most times, Nigerians think and act from the prisms of ethnic origin, religion, and regionalism rather than from the prism of one Nigeria. This attitude promotes identity politics over and above patriotism and nationalism, thereby slowing down the democratization process.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

There are two concepts that require clarifications to enhance a better understanding of their usage and the discussion of the subject matter. These are identity politics and democratic consolidation.

### **Identity Politics**

Identity politics has evoked various descriptions or explanations, which suggest that no one description or definition is universally accepted across time and space. It is the consciousness of belonging to, identifying with and being loyal to a social group around which political decisions or choices are made. As Ifidon (n.d) cited in Eze (2015: 46) noted, identity politics is not merely the fact of belonging to or sharing the consciousness of an identity. It is the willingness to act on its behalf, limit one's vision or scope of activity to the group. Identity politics therefore, is an in-group sentiment aimed at preserving, protecting and promoting personal or group interests at the expense of others in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

According to Gambari (n.d) cited in Eze (2015: 63), the actions of the early Nigerian nationalist leaders have resulted in regional and ethnic rather than a centralized pattern of political development. Politics of group exclusion as was practiced by the dominant political parties in the country further stirred up identity politics within the polity. The attempt to project and promote ethnic interests at the expense of others inspired the revolt instinct in those who felt disadvantaged as exemplified by the Tiv revolts. Equally, the Nigerianization policy of the military hastened the politicization of the institution as much as it ethnicized it. For instance, according to Imobighe (2003:10), the quota system which was brought to

bear on the recruitment, career progression and postings in the army eroded its esprit de corps and caused alienation and frustration among those un-favored on account of their ethnic origin. This, among other issues prompted the January 15, 1966 military coup which had culminated eventually in the Nigerian civil war (Eze, 2015:63; Imobighe, 2003:10).

Identity politics is the employment of an identity whether ethnic, religious, regional or status as a mobilizing force to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation. Identity politics had always played leading roles in the conduct of general politics in Nigeria right from the pre-colonial period to the present democratic practice in the country (Apya, 2015: 179). Identity politics refers to a person's sense of belonging to a group if it influences his political behavior (Dauda & Hassan 2009:290). It has to do with commitment to a cause, love and trust for a group, emotional tie to a group as well as obligations and responsibilities relating to membership of a group with which a person identifies. Identity politics can also be viewed as an individual's manners and expressions with respect to norms, values, roles and expectations of a group to which a person belongs. Identity acts as a platform and rallying point of group action in terms of articulating or protecting a vested interest in relation to others within a community, state or nation (Ya'u, 2000) cited in (Dauda, et al, 2009:290).

Identity politics in the context of the Nigerian state refers to the political activities of various ethnic, religious and regional groups as well as social movements for self-determination. It claims to represent and seek to advance the interests of particular groups in the Nigerian state, the members of which often share and unite around common experiences of actual or perceived social injustice relative to the wider society of which they form part. In this way, the identity of an ethnic, religious or regional group gives rise to a political basis around which the group members unite. They can use the identity as a source of collective resistance to their felt common interest. As noted by Pye (n.d) cited in Dauda, et al (2009:290), those who share an interest also share an identity, the interest of each requires the collaboration of all.

### **Democratic Consolidation**

The term democracy has been subjected to so many interpretations and adaptations in various parts of the world that over time, it has become value-ridden (Elaigwu, 2011:171). There are however, some universal characteristics or principles of democracy, which are adaptable to local situations in various parts of the world, depending on the peculiarities of each situation. Democracy in its simplest term means rule of the people. The former American President, Abraham Lincoln, defined democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. According

to professor Duverger (n.d) cited in Harris (1976:209), the simplest and perhaps most realistic definition of democracy is that it is a regime in which those who govern are chosen by those who are governed by means of free and open elections. Democracy has a number of attributes, which include free and open elections, free speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of conscience, religion and press.

Democratic consolidation on the other hand, is an embodiment of genuine democratization of the structures of governance at all levels of the society. Democracy here should not be reduced to the existence of a national constitution, political parties, periodic elections, parliaments and elected presidents and governors. Democracy in the context of being consolidated implies a situation where the government derives its legitimacy from the people, is responsive to their yearnings, and is guided by the principles of probity, accountability and fairness in the style of governance. It involves a fundamental commitment to the rule of law, freedom of expression, respect for people's rights, respect for pluralism and self-determination, among others. Democratic consolidation is impossible unless and until the mass majority of the citizenry acquire a sense of belonging, a level of social and political participation and a share of the resources of the nation such that would make them develop a stake in the continued unity and stability of their country. This is a matter of social justice, fairness and commitment towards the creation of a society where things work, a society where equity and fairness are the basic ethical rules of conduct.

As Nkom (1994:440) noted, such an enduring social order does not simply lie in cosmetic ethnic balancing measures such as federal character, zoning, geographical spread, or the creation of smaller states and local governments. Rather, people's dignity must be upheld, their fundamental human rights respected and a minimum threshold of privileges, benefits and securities guaranteed them as Nigerian citizens. This is in addition to a strong commitment on the part of the government to provide some minimum level of education, housing, health-care, income earning opportunities, among others for the sustenance of a decent standard of living. Nothing ensures loyalty and commitment to a nation better than those basic social and economic opportunities, which guaranteed one as a citizen of a country. For democracy to be consolidated there must be wide spread acceptance of the rules that guarantee political participation and political competition (Omotola, 2005:106). Diamond (1994) cited in Omotola (2005:106) conceives democratic consolidation as requiring behavioral and institutional changes that normalize democratic practice and narrows its uncertainty. In other words, democratic consolidation entails the entrenchment of democratic institutions and structures in manners that insulate them from manipulation for personal or group aggrandizements.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The term, systems is one of the most widely used concepts in social and natural sciences. Every system according to Herbert R. Wraiter and Thomas J. Bellows cited in Eliagwu and Galadima (1994:303) consists of internally organized parts with each performing a partial function in relation to others. David Easton's systems model uses as its unit of analysis the political system in which political life is viewed as a system of behavior. The system is open in varying degrees to influences or forces of the environment. The model offers a blueprint for the description and analysis of the impact of identity politics on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Whereas the forces within the Nigerian environment or the political history of the country had generated the phenomenon of identity politics, the development has in turn continued to interact rather negatively on the effort to institutionalize a sustainable democratic culture in the country.

## **The Nature of Identity Politics in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with about 450 ethnic nationalities, which were at various stages of socio-economic and political development before the advent of British colonial conquest of the sub-region (Eze, 2015:44). These groups had jealously guarded and maintained their ethnic self-identities, which over time come to acquire negative reputation as people's loyalty was more to their ethnic groups than the Nigerian state. According to Eze (2015), the formation of political parties along regional lines following nationalist agitations for independence generated fears of domination and marginalization among the major ethnic groups as well as the ethnic minorities in Nigeria. Some of the then front-line nationalists like Dr. Nnamdu Azikwe; Sir, Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto; Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; Chief Obafemi Awolowo; among others had recourse to ethnic loyalty and sentiments in order to out-wit their opponents in the bid to gain political control of the centre.

Similarly, within the regions, the ethnic minorities also expressed fears of domination and marginalization by the major ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani in the north; the Igbos in the south and the Yorubas in the West. The ensuing ethnic consciousness, which was initially no more than an expression of group identity, eventually turned out to be violent and politicized as epitomized by the Tiv riots in the Middle-Belt; the Ijaw up-rising spear-headed by Isaac Boro in the Niger-Delta and the western region crisis. The embers of ethnicity were therefore, fanned to a crescendo which fast-tracked the collapse of the First Republic and by extension,

precipitated the Nigerian civil war. Indeed, the military incursion into the Nigerian political space was occasioned by the atmosphere of political uncertainty orchestrated by the identity politics that tended to divide the country.

Many political leaders and politicians in Nigeria engaged in deliberate manipulation of ethnic and religious identities of groups to demonstrate their relevance. They exude religious bigotry and ethno-centrism with demonstrable arrogance. According to Elaigwu (2011: 208), it is important that this category of politicians maintain this semblance of churchianity and mosquianity, bereft of the core values of Christianity and Islam, because it is their life-line for survival. It is not surprising therefore, that most ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are generated or exacerbated by the political class. Also, in some parts of the country, especially in the Middle-Belt area, there has been substantial influx of migrants in the last 20 years (Elaigwu, 2011:207). In the context of competition for scarce resources and the importance of the control of the state for the distribution of these resources, new lines of cleavages develop among groups. As Elaigwu (2011:207) noted, while the indigenes organize for the control of their polity and the economy, the settlers also press for their rights of participation in the entire process. This often results in violence with the full mobilization of ethno-religious loyalty and commitments as has been experienced in Plateau State and other places. Also often, some Nigerians of certain ethnic and religious groups consider themselves as hailing from aristocratic traditional backgrounds and arrogantly exhibit ethno-centrism in relation with other groups. Most often, these people relate to other groups with an air of superiority and arrogance, extending their ethno-religious status to the domains of the socio-cultural preferences of others. This often offends the sensibilities of the concerned group(s). The people who fan these embers of identity politics are victims of manipulation by the elites. According to Bala Usman (1980:87), manipulation entails:

*Controlling the action of a person or group without that person or group knowing the goals, purpose and method of that control and without even being aware that a form of control was being exercised on them at all.*

The identity politics will indeed cease to exist once the people can see clearly the true nature of the political elites who are in the game for self-aggrandizement. For instance, as Bala Usman (1980:88) further argued, can anybody (political elites) come out and say "I am eating dinner costing ₦50,000 or more at federal palace suits Hotel, Abuja or Lagos on your behalf and those of others in our tribe or religion?" The answer, of course, is simply no. The elites must necessarily obscure their true role and function in the society by taking cover under religion as a Christian or Muslim or hide under tribe as a Hausa/Fulani; Yoruba; Idoma, Jukun, etc. They

have to posture as a “majority” or “minority”. They must engage in the game of masks or disguises in order to further entrench divisions among Nigerians, slow down their awaking and demand for true democracy and good governance.

According to Elaigwu (1994) cited in Odo (2014:78), some of the crucial issues around which identity politics often find expressions in Nigeria include the following:

- Why should one group of Nigerians tend to monopolize the leadership of Nigeria, ... we must have it this time or we should assess our relations within the federal association;
- Why is it that the major resource which gives blood to the Nigerian federation comes from my area and yet there is no evidence of the impact of this wealth on the lives of my people?... We must discuss the adequate sharing of this and other resources now or pack it up;
- What makes some parts of Nigeria attract more federal presence in terms of industrialization and the location of major federal projects to the exclusion of our area? Should federal presence not be felt all over the country, or are we federally pariah?;
- Why is it that some Nigerian groups think that they must concentrate political and economic powers in their hands? Do they realize that federal compromise involves sharing and not concentration? If we lose our political guarantee against their economic power we shall be finished; it must not happen or we shall have to reassess our position in this federal association;
- In the context of a relatively primitive capitalist system with a dominant state role in the economy in spite of privatization, the powers of the center are very important; therefore, you cannot divorce the political power from economic power; to rob us of access to political power is tantamount to undercutting our economic power; this we shall not accept;
- Those of us who had fought over the nature of the federal association are not fools; we are watching the greed of others as they share political and economic powers among themselves; we assure them that we intend to be part of the sharing processes of both political and economic powers; we shall not originate exiting from the polity this time, but we shall not allow anyone to go; those who betrayed us the last time cannot do it twice and if they try to go, we shall force them to stay. Let us sit down and discuss; and
- What makes our bigger brothers behave as if they do not need this country and that only those of us who are small need it? Are they saying they have milked the system enough and now that there is nothing to exploit they must quit? What have we gained in our areas from this federal association--nothing; yet the



smaller groups are in the majority ... we must discuss our new pattern of relationship in the federal system to take account of our grievances.

There is widespread insistent demand for democratization and greater participation in decision-making at all levels across the country. People are reacting against autocratic rule and over-centralization of power, no matter how benevolent the exercise of such power may appear to be. Those who feel excluded, marginalized or unable to participate satisfactorily in the exercise of power and in the control of resources are retreating to their ethnic, religious or communal enclaves either to challenge the system and insist on certain reforms or demand for autonomy and self-determination. Thus, the country is replete with aggressive ethnic nationalism as various groups push for the realization of their sub-national self-determination as the nation becomes more centralized and less and less federal and participatory. People are no longer willing to submerge their identities or forgo their social and cultural uniqueness for the sake of achieving unity or national integration.

### **The Impact of Identity Politics on Democratic Consolidation**

In the Nigerian public life, most official documents and forms whether for employment, admission or hospital records have been designed in a manner that encourage Nigerians to identify themselves first and foremost with their primordial linkages; either as Christian or Muslim, tribe, state of origin, local government area, etc. This feeling is expressed in the conception of political power, voting patterns, choice of candidates, party leadership, etc. The character of the Nigerian state consciously or unconsciously helps to boost identity politics and undermined the democratization process. The policy was inherited from the colonial administration, the practice of which had continued unabated even after independence. Identity politics have the potential of destroying the foundations of national unity and slows down the process of democratization. This is because ethnic and sub-national demands and aspirations often challenge national integration as well as the legitimacy of the state. Contest for political offices is often reduced to primitive struggle among ethnic groups. Tribal or religious loyalty becomes stronger than national loyalty as Nigerians think more in terms of ethnic or religious groups than as Nigerians. Identity politics has been significant in the struggles for political power and control of the Nigerian state. The promotion of identity politics, which manifests in ethnic consciousness, religious intolerance, regionalism or sectionalism put strain and stress on democratic consolidation and good governance. For instance, although Nigeria attempts to practice democracy, the rule of law and desire to be accountable, identity politics constitutes a clog in this effort and direction. This is because it has been difficult to coordinate sectional interests within the general framework of national or Nigerian interests as Nigerians seldom speak with one

voice. Thus, the negative employment of identity politics by political leaders to advance their parochial interests had and would always remain obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The inherent separatist tendencies in identity politics have continued to widen the gulf in inter-ethnic relations, exacerbate the low trust syndrome among Nigerians as well as the major fault-lines in the political history of the country.

There is an increasing fear among Nigerians today that the country's unity in diversity is fast wearing thin while ethnic, religious and sectional differences are being played up through official and unofficial actions (Oyedele, 1994:514). For instance, it was once regionalism; the fear of one big region dominating the others. Now, it is the fear of religion and ethnic domination. As a *Newswatch* editorial cited in Oyedele (1994: 514) put it:

*Every appointment by government is scrutinized to ascertain whether the appointee is a Muslim or a Christian; a northerner or a southerner; a northern Christian or a southern Muslim, etc. It is not enough that the appointees are Nigerians and are competent to hold those positions.*

The identity politics has deprived the country of the opportunity of consolidating her democratization process, let alone achieve good governance due to the dysfunctionality of the phenomenon. Identity politics has always drawn back the hand of the clock in the country's genuine efforts at democratization and national development; hence it must be opposed by all patriotic Nigerians.

### **The Way Forward**

The predominant conception of the Nigerian federal state is that it is an artificial colonial creation, which forcefully brought together over 250 hitherto distinct and autonomous nationalities (Baba-Ahmed, 1997: 509). One of the major concerns of the country since independence in 1960 has therefore, been how to create an enabling environment for these sub-nationalities to find acceptable conditions of co-existence in one nation without injuries to their distinctiveness as well as the peculiarities of their sub-national interests. The failure of the Nigerian state to secure such compromise has continued to fuel identity politics and the clamoring for the restructuring of the country's federal system. It should be noted that the building-up of a stable democratic government has been much easier in countries that do not have profound or passionate religious, racial, tribal or political differences.

For instance, as Omoleke (2009:83) noted, from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>C, the British were agreed both on the form of their government and on the dominant religion; hence they were able to avoid many bitter political disputes such as those that characterized and divided Nigeria and other African states today. Also, in America, the fact that the 13 states that originally constituted the United States had

the same political background of British rule, the same habits of thought in relation to individual rights and the rule of law, and that they were mostly protestants helped a lot to make it possible for them to agree at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>C on a constitution that has been retained to this day (Omoleke, 2009:83). This is in contrast with Nigeria and other African countries whose democratic principles are still shaky. According to William Easterly (a Professor of Economics) cited in Kupoluyi (2018:15), fragile states are plagued by two factors i.e. political identity fragmentation and weak national institutions in their development. These state of affairs coupled with poor institutions have negative effects on growth and public policy implementation. Relying on this premise, what the Nigerian state should strive for in the effort to consolidate its democracy is to build strong institutions, which would be stronger than individuals or persons.

As it is often said, Philosophers have already interpreted the world; the point is how to change it (Adibe, 2018:48). Identifying the problems of Nigeria or any other country is not the challenge. The challenge often lies in the implementation of the lofty ideas that are often found in brilliant presentations at conferences, seminars, research journals and text books. It is also to be noted that the current problems being faced by Nigeria in the effort to consolidate its democracy are not entirely, abnormal in countries transiting from the authoritarian systems. This is because in such democratizing societies as Nigeria, the freedoms guaranteed by democracy e.g. freedom of speech, allowed several bottled-up grievances or feelings under authoritarian regimes by several groups to be sprouted out almost simultaneously. This is why it is argued that in democratizing societies, the structures of conflict will often be aggravated in the short to medium terms. Even in matured democracies, it is not totally abnormal for the democratic space to temporally contract or suffer reversal. As Adibe (2018:48) noted, essentially a democratic space can contract or expand depending on the episodic balance of forces between democratic and anti-democratic elements. There is also need to encourage a culture of peaceful transition from one government to another. The experiences of most African countries have shown that a major reason for the phenomenon of "sit-tightism" by African leaders has to do with fears of how they might be treated when they have been stripped of power. We cannot forget in a hurry the sordid experiences of Sierra-lone, Liberia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory-coast, among others. On the other hand, Ghana has had three sitting governments defeated in relatively peaceful elections in its 25years of democratic experiment. Also, Nigeria had a similar peaceful transition in 2015 when the sitting President, Goodluck Jonathan, of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) conceded defeat to President Muhammad Buhari of All Progressive Congress (APC) in a peaceful change of government.

To promote national consciousness and the spirit of patriotism among Nigerians as crucial elements in building and consolidating democratic culture in the country, efforts must be made to water down on the practice of federal character of its dysfunctional elements. It should, instead, be instilled with more integrative elements. To this end, it is suggested that the laws governing citizenship, especially as they relate to state indigeneity, should be reviewed to ensure:

- That any Nigerian born in any state of the federation who stays not less than five years consecutively in that state automatically becomes an indigene of the state; and
- That any Nigerian who stays and works as well as performs his civic duties in any state of the federation continuously for a specified period which should not be more than ten years automatically becomes an indigene of that state (Imobighe, 2003: 10).

In view of this, any Nigerian who fulfills these conditions in any state of the federation should qualify and be entitled to the privileges and rights of indigenes of the state. This includes rights to education, employment, participation in local and state government, among others.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of identity politics in Nigeria cannot be solved merely through political and constitutional mechanisms alone. They are problems that can best be addressed by changes in the political culture and leadership that will unite the various ethnic groups into one Nigerian nation with one national consciousness. The confidence of the citizens on the Nigerian state must be restored as an anti-dot to the continued polarization of the major fault-lines in the country and the flowering of identity politics. The people must be made to become active participants in the process of national development in the country. Also, the leadership must have passionate dedication to the interests of the Nigerian people i.e. leaders being people-oriented. There must therefore, be a conscious and deliberate change in our political culture to re-orient both the leaders and the people towards seeing politics as the high and serious art of solving substantive problems of the society rather than as means of amassing wealth for personal or group aggrandizement. This is the only way we can enthrone the rule of law and consolidate our democracy, which will help to ensure political stability and progress of the country. Identity politics in whatever, form whether in terms of ethnicity, religious chauvinism, sectionalism, etc must give way to nationalism and equality of persons or groups, a situation where all citizens can be sure of assuming the mantle of leadership in the country or access what belongs to them as of right without being tied to any form of primordial link or identity outside the Nigerian citizenship.

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