

# RE-ENGINEERING THE NIGERIAN DEMOCRACIES: ISSUES FOR REFLECTION

**DR A. SADIQ YAHYA & MR UMAR MU'AZU TADAMA**

*\*Department of Chemical Engineering Technology, Federal Polytechnic Mubi,*

*\*\*Department of Rectory, Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Nigeria.*

## **ABSTRACT**

*My choice of subject for this conference is re-engineering democracies in Nigeria: issues for reflection. In making that choice, I have borne a number of considerations in mind. The first is the strength of the passion for democracies in Nigeria. Not since the days of the agitation for democracies has a single issue united so many people in a common cause. Accordingly, I see my presentation as a modest contribution to this debate about democracies taking place in Nigeria today. The other reason for my choice is that I see democracies as holding the key to Nigeria's regeneration and to the resumption of its rightful place in the world community. However, if Nigeria is to move from the shallows of today to a future of stable democracies, then that journey must begin with some understanding of what went wrong. It must also take account of the special circumstances required for a democratic culture to develop and endure in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Military rule, Democracies, One-party system, Civil/Traditional Society, Development*

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the context of fostering democracies, political regime arrived in conditions which could hardly have been considered altogether auspicious. True, the end of military rule left a number of traditional Nigerian institutions in place but. In the majority of cases, they were little more than vestiges of the original thing. The years of military rule had denuded these institutions, traditional political institutions included, pageant. To borrow the language of a distinguished African intellectual, (Emeka, 1998) “nowhere did the institutions of traditional Nigerian politics carry the force or wear the mantle of a shadow government, standing ready to assume the functions of territorial government upon the cessation of military rule.”

It follows from this that the pre-eminent question which confronted the fathers of Nigerian nationalism after military regime was, in many cases, how to share power among the different segments of their countries. To put the matter another way, the preoccupation was to find an acceptable and lasting framework that would hold

together the various ethnicities which the hazards of military rule had brought together within very arbitrary military boundaries.(Nnadozie, 1983)

The same challenge had confronted the departing ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP); but they had many advantages which were not now available to their successors All Progressive Congress (APC). In the first place they had the resources of military empire on which they could call. But more importantly, their need for legitimacy, the need to be seen to be ruling with the active consent of the governed, was nowhere as acute. It was in these circumstances that many (PDP) governments who came shortly after the military regime to embrace the one-party state as offering the best hope of guaranteeing unity and order.

The consolidation of national unity was therefore usually to the fore in justification of one-party rule. The advocates of the one-party argued that the maintenance of military rule had entailed a policy of divide and rule which had given a long lease of life to the forces of division in society and that these divisions could only be effectively overcome by the single party system. Nnadozie (p.155) noted that a one party system is a contradiction in itself.

The one-party system was also justified on grounds of the imperatives of development. The urgent need of the post-military nation state in Africa was development; and only a united nation under the political direction of the single party could spur it to accelerated development, avoiding the dissipation in human and material resources inherent in political pluralism.

The one-party school of Nigeria politics argued that where there was one party and that party was identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracies were firmer than they could ever be where you had two or more parties, each only representing a section of the community. On this view, a two-party system could be justified only when the parties were divided over some fundamental issues; otherwise, it merely encouraged the growth of factionalism. If on the other hand, you had a two-party system where the differences between the parties were not fundamental, then you immediately reduce politics to the level of a football match. (Ayodele and Niyi, 1998)

In other words, where there were no fundamental differences between the parties, their existence only trivialized politics. This might charm a liberal observer but it did nothing for either nation-building or accelerated economic development, both which were prerequisites for a durable democracy. On the basis of this promise, the one-party state proceeded to engross what was in effect absolute power.

### **Statement of the Problems**

The leadership crisis in Nigeria is as a result of wrong value system, that places so much premium on material possession (not minding how it was acquired) and status than good name, morals and ideology, greed, crass opportunism, materialism cum primitive acquisition of wealth, inordinate ambition to get rich quick, identity crisis, multiculturalism and diverse ethnic orientation of the country, with over 450 ethnic

groupings, that has engendered internal struggle and competition for dominance and resource control at the detriment of other ethnic groups which led to instability in our socio-political system and the inevitable incursion of the military in our body polity with its attendant culture of arbitrariness and impunity, hence our inability to build, nurture and sustain strong social and democratic institutions which will guarantee the emergence of credible, competent, visionary, and exemplary leadership, we all yearn for.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Africa needs to develop leaders who will be known less for what they say and more for what they deliver; less by their title and position and more by their expertise and competence; less by what they control and more by the mindsets they develop and shape both by their personal integrity and for exceptional organizational abilities

### **The Demand for Social and Economic Development**

The need for national unity was real as was the need for social and economic development. And the fathers of Nigerian democracies were right in identifying these two objectives as the pressing needs of the hour. But the antithesis was false. It was not a question of either or; of national unity and economic development or plural democracy. It was a question of balance between the legitimate claims of national unity and orderly development on the one hand and the equally legitimate claims of freedom of expression and association on the other. Part of the tragedy of the early decades of military rule lay in the fact that this balance was not struck. I do not think that there is now any doubt that the one-party system failed in one African country after another to deliver on almost all its major promises. In the end the one-party state delivered no justice, hardly any development and in a number of cases, even contributed to the disintegration of the institutions of state. (Mwalimu, 1975) once observed that: "One of the problems which plagued African political parties for longer periods was that the parties had not been close enough to the people. A party that adheres to truth and justice must give its member freedom to correct mistakes and remove exploitation. Members who do not use that freedom for fear of being hated, unpopular

or losing their positions are harboring a great enemy of justice and truth"

The one-party state was based on assumptions, which in the end proved largely unfounded. It presumed that the nationalist party or movement, essentially a coalition forged to end military rule, could be converted into an instrument for economic development without any meaningful adaptation. It presumed that the consensus which had existed about the end of military domination extended automatically to other areas of national life. It assumed a consensus on the means when there was only consensus on the major ends-political stability and economic development. Above all, it presumed on the integrity and idealism of the leaders who in turn mistook the acquiescence of the people for active support for the one-party system and the resulting situation for national unity when in fact nothing had been done to eliminate the inherited centrifugal

forces. Lijphart, for example, accepts a hypothesis namely that: "the electoral system largely determines the party system and through it, the structure of the government. (Guy, 1993)

Today, the demand for plural democracy is as hectic in Nigeria as it is elsewhere. Building durable and vibrant democracies is the challenge which history presents to Nigeria's political leadership on the eve of the millennium; durable because they are beneficially informed by our recent experience; durable because they are founded on the pluralism of Nigerian societies; and vibrant because they represent an organic evolution, based on popular consent and therefore enjoying full legitimacy. In turn, democracy, if it is to be durable in any country, must reflect national circumstances. According to David Apter's able treatise, political parties of modernizing society play an active entrepreneurial role in the formation of new ideas, in the establishment of a network of communication for those ideas, and in the linking of the public and the leadership in such a way that power is generated, mobilized, and directed. (Maurice, 1980)

### **The Ingredients of Genuine Democracies**

It follows from this that democracies in Nigeria will take different forms from one state to another. But if it is a genuine democracies, it will have to incorporate the basic ingredients which characterize all genuine democracies. These ingredients include the right of a people to choose freely the men and women who would govern them and to cashier them; the primacy of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary; freedom of expression and association; and the continuing transparency and accountability of government. Democracy therefore becomes a mechanism of choice, a method for choosing and removing governments. (Robert, 1977)

Let me explain why I insist on the presence of these essential ingredients. At the heart of any genuine democracy lies accountability. Where there is no accountability, there is really no democracy. It is society's insurance against abuse of office on the part of those who form the government at any given time. And accountability can only be enforced if the governed have the power to make or unmake governments.

Traditional Nigerian society insisted on no less. No chief was a chief except by the will of his people. In many African societies this maxim was impressed upon the chief in process of his installation and was subsequently repeated on all appropriate occasions. This was in addition to the various mechanisms in place to ensure that the chief marched in step with the wishes of his people. This was one of the ways in which traditional African governments founded sovereignty in the people.

Democracies is essentially about choice, choice of parties, choice of policies, and choice of personalities. This freedom of choice is meaningless without free elections. Free elections in turn entail the freedom of speech and of association. Without freedom of speech, the appeal to reason which is the basis of democracy cannot be made. Without freedom of association, meaningful political parties are practically inconceivable because in the absence of freedom of association it is difficult for people

to band together into parties and formulate policies to achieve their common ends. And none of these freedoms can be secured without the rule of law and an independent judiciary. The primary function of parties, is to organize public opinion, test attitudes and transmit these to government officials and leaders so that the ruled and rulers, public and government, are in reasonable close accord." Nnadozie, (p.160)

And here I would like to draw again from traditional African society. Traditional African government was based on government by discussion. Indeed, if there is anything which characterized traditional African government, it was this habit of conducting business through discussion. What Guy Clutton-Brock said of traditional Nyasa society in Malawi was true of traditional Africa as a whole: "the elders sit under the big tree and talk until they agree." Ayodele and Niyi, (p. 107) whether the elders represented lineage or whole clans, the right of every elder to speak at the Council was unswervingly upheld. A Council session was an occasion for the utterance of much wisdom; and as has been said, the value of the freedom of expression lay for them in the possible aspect of the truth which it might reveal.

This has led to the misapprehension that traditional African society had little room for dissent. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole point of the protracted discussions in the councils of elders was to ensure that the resulting societies constantly exposed to physical danger and all manner of insecurity, especially during ' the centuries of slave raids. What was proscribed was not dissent which had an honored and guarded place but the persistent expression of divergent views after a decision had been taken, especially when such divergence could be disruptive and divisive.

Nigerian Parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive is fundamental to the whole business of parliamentary reform. Although it is the business of the government to govern, it is also its business to give a running account of its stewardship to parliament. (Finer, 1980) Government then should accept the greatest importance of National Parliaments as the centers of communication, which work as a two way process. (Standiewilz, 1976) others

have observed that: "A modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and co-operation of their elected representatives" (Gordon, 1980)

### **Reconciling Indigenous Democracies with Its Traditional Heritage**

Politics is thus, a study of changing human relationships in dynamic societies: it involves the present and the future, and these are shaped in part by an appreciation of history. Maurice, (p.185) The fledgling democracies springing up all over Nigeria will have to draw on both the wisdom of the moderns and the wisdom of our ancestors, reconciling Nigeria's traditions with its military and post-military heritage to evolve durable democratic practices. This brings me to the issue of the foundations of democracies. Since the end of the military rule, the political landscape of Nigeria has been transformed almost out of recognition. Only two short decades of years ago, there were no more than four genuinely multiparty democracies in Africa. Today, a

non-representative or an unelected government is the exception rather than the rule. It is a reflection of the scale of the change that there are few plausible or prominent Nigerian politicians who would seriously argue that the balance of political virtue is to be found on the side of the one-party system. In Nigeria, we are all democrats now. But while we may all be democrats, the challenge of building democracies remains.

And in this connection, let me return to what I have already said: that there can be no genuine or durable democracies without genuine political parties. In saying so, I know that I am putting myself in direct opposition to a surviving school of thought which holds that genuine political parties in the present conditions in Nigeria are practically impossible and that the foreseeable future ought to lie in a no-party system of government of all the talents. According to this school of thought, in the absence of social and economic conditions of the type which exist in the old democracies in Europe and North America, Nigerian political parties are invariably either tribal coalitions or religious groupings or some other partisan formation with little or nothing to do with the national interest. In other words, political parties under the prevailing conditions in Nigeria will make for national retardation.

I understand where the advocates of the no-party system are coming from and I respect the sincerity of their convictions; but I do not share the underlying fear and pessimism. A no-party state can easily degenerate into a no-party dictatorship very much in the same way as the old one-party dictatorships. Nor do I accept that only a no-party government can lead to a government of all the talents as it is always practicable to form governments of national unity even if the elections have been contested on the basis of separate party identities.

Another of my earlier comments is that a viable democracy has to evolve organically. It has to evolve through civic education and no insulation is better placed to perform the task of civic education than a political party. Inter-party rivalry within the law also contributes to the growth of freedom. This is no new insight. The founding fathers of the American Republic long recognized that only by pitting ambition against ambition could freedom be guaranteed and its frontiers widened. Modern political parties provide the channels for peaceful competition between one set of ambitions and another. Political parties then are central to democracies; and since this has now been accepted in practically all of Nigeria, let me make a few remarks about the respective positions of ruling parties and opposition parties.

### **The Positions of Ruling and Opposition Parties**

In a democratic order, the ruling party derives its mandate to rule from its success at free and fair polls. For a defined term, it has exclusive responsibility for governing the country but within limits, some defined and enshrined within the provision of the constitution, others subsisting by convention. Because electoral majorities can and do come and go, no ruling party can plausibly claim to be the sole conscience and the sole embodiment of the will of the people, let alone their only prophet. Neither is the cause of democracy served by a ruling party claiming to be coterminous with the state. If these and other excesses are to be avoided, the constraints provided by the constitution

will have to be supplemented by self-restraint on the part of the political parties. Majority parties must be allowed to rule but they must not rule in such a way as to appear to be gathering to themselves all power and influence within the state, thereby denying the rights of the opposition parties. How the opposition opposes, however, is important. (Alfred, 1993)

No opposition will confer legitimacy on the government of the day and the other institutions of state, or make for greater national stability, if it is not an opposition that is loyal to the interest of the state and those of the nation. And it cannot be a loyal opposition if its manner of opposing is utterly unprincipled or if it seeks to couple constitutionalism with a readiness to exploit unconstitutional means to gain power. If in their respective roles, ruling parties and opposition parties are to contribute to the greater good of their nation, they would need to cultivate a relationship based on mutual confidence and trust. That confidence will enable them to agree on what aspects of the national interest transcend party divides and which can therefore be legitimately withdrawn from inter-party strife and brawls.

### **The Task of a Democratic Opposition-Erosion and Construction**

Professor Alfred Stepan has observed five multiple functions or tasks of a democratic opposition namely:

- i) Resisting integration into the regime;
- ii) Guarding zones of autonomy against it,
- iii) Disputing its legitimacy;
- iv) Raising costs of authoritarian rule; and
- v) Creating a credible democratic alternative. (Finer, 1970)

The degree to which the opposition can perform these functions is a useful indicator of the severity of authoritarian control. The less the opposition is, able to carry out any of these tasks, the more effective the regime's control of the polity is shown to be. If the active but democratic opposition maintains some independent ideological, cultural, and above all institutional existence, it would remain able to carry out its other tasks. If the active opposition can remain independent, its next task (in order to survive imperatives) is to encourage the growth of passive opposition. Alfred, (p.64)

Re-democratization of an authoritarian regime must combine erosion and construction. The kinds of things that effectively eat away at an authoritarian regime (labor unrest, widespread passive resistance, stubbornly autonomous social groups), are not necessarily the same things needed to lay the procedural foundations for democracy. However, in

normal conditions, the opposition can only hope for three things:

- a) It can wring amendments out of the government-the more so where these amendments are being supported by powerful outside interests which the government wishes to conciliate;
- b) It can expose weaknesses and inconsistencies in government policy and have them cancelled.
- d) Thirdly, and most important, it can cumulatively create a mood among the electorates. Finer, (p. 175)

Relations between government and opposition parties are often characterized by rancor, acrimony and outright hostility. Ruling parties adopt a posture of “crude majoritarianism,” while opposition parties take a posture of obstructionism; politics is practiced as a high-stakes and winner-take-all game in which incumbents resort to crude and brutal tactics to contain high strung and revenge-minded opposition parties. Parliaments tend to be “negative coalitions” often cobbled together to either dislodge incumbents or to entrench them and therefore not capable of governing or initiating and enacting coherent legislation

Other gains flow from mutual confidence between the political parties in a state. A proper appreciation of their respective roles within the framework of constructive co-operation enables the national parliament to develop a collective personality of its own.- Inevitably the turn of the electoral wheel brings about changes in the membership of parliament, but is vital that throughout all these changes it retains its nature and spirit and its capacity to inspire national loyalty.

A distinguished British politician once said that all political careers end in tears. Emeka, (p.111) In Nigeria, there are sometimes additional complications. In the recent past, some Heads of Government have been said to be reluctant to relinquish office because of fear and uncertainty about their future. Perhaps the time is long overdue for all African governments to make adequate provision for the retirement of Heads of Government and other senior government personalities. Such arrangements would make for smooth transitions, national stability and the growth of democracy.

### **Civil Societies in Consolidations of Democracies**

In most of the transitions to multi-party democracies which have taken place in Nigeria in recent times, civil society organizations in the form of religious and communal associations, women's organizations, trade unions, student groups and other non-governmental organizations have played an important role. In a number of cases, it was only the strength and determination of organized civil society which ensured the democratic transition. Beyond that civil society organizations have also participated in voter education, voter registration, election monitoring and human rights work generally. The point I am making here is simply that the democratic



revival which we see in Nigeria today would hardly have been possible in many places without the active participation of the representative organizations of civil society.

Historically, Political behavior has been generated by religion, by morals, by questions arising from production and distribution of wealth. A train engine's capacity to achieve desired results -say fifty M.P.H. -would be a measure of its power. Politics, being an exercise in the attempt to change the conduct of others in one's own desired direction, is thus an exercise of power, and therefore, a conflict.

Finer, (p. 17).

Yet for all their centrality to the emergence of democracy in Nigeria, the organizations of civil society have remained largely fragile. It is part of the challenge of the emerging democracies to ensure that they remain vibrant and able to contribute to the consolidation of democracies. In the first place, this will entail helping to transform some of them from institutions of resistance to institutions suitably adapted for the consolidation of democracy. In all cases, it will involve strengthening the rule of law so that the institutions of civil society do not survive on sufferance but as of right. Above all, it will involve expanding educational opportunities and creating viable economies which can sustain an independent private sector. Let me now turn to what I would describe as the old enemies of democracy in Nigeria-the military, ethnicity, and, in some cases, religion.

### **The Military in Politics a Force of Declining Strength**

Military regimes are becoming something of a rarity in African politics, which is all to the good. I believe that as a result of the growing determination within African countries themselves not to facilitate military rule, the military in politics is a force of declining strength. But this is not to invite complacency. The events of the past two days in Zambia, Niger and Burundi should be enough to warn us against complacency in this matter. If the army is to be deterred from intervening in politics, it would be important for all the civilians, including in particular civilian politicians sworn to democracy, to make it clear that while they have their differences, there is no chink as between one party and another when it comes to the defense of democracies.

There is recourse open to civilian politicians and professionals wanting to resist the installation of military government. As we all know, every military regime in Nigeria has needed its quota of civilian collaborators to secure its inheritance. Without that civilian professional collaboration, none of the military regimes, past and present, could have held on to power for any length of time with credibility. Assured civilian collaboration only serves as a signal to the subaltern officers in the barracks to count on that collaboration when their turn comes to make their coups.

In addition, the resolution of the political and professional classes must be complemented by the resolution of the citizenry. To ensure the political divestiture of the military, the passion of the population as a whole against military rule must be strong as it is intransigent. And if the popular resolve against military rule is to be sustained, the political class, including elected governments, will have to conduct itself in a manner which inspires confidence and which above all convinces the broad masses that in defending democracies they are defending their own best interests.

However, as recent events in Burundi have shown, the official national armies are by no means the only sources of military threats to democracy. There is also a new threat to democracies in the form of war lordism. In many ways this new threat holds greater perils. It is based on no idealism, and whatever its pretensions, it has nothing to do with the national interest. It is purely and simply mercenary in motivation and exists by exploiting ethnic and other divisions in society. This type of militarism in Nigerian politics will, if it is allowed to take root, precipitate whole nations into a future of uncertainty and instability.

### **The Strains and Stresses of Ethnic Pluralism**

This brings me to the role of ethnicity as a factor in Nigerian politics. It has rightly been pointed out that ethnic politics thrives on democracies but also weakens democracies. In the early years of military regime there was certain reluctance on the part of Nigerian leaders to admit to the existence of tribal tensions within their nation states. And because the problem of ethnicity was not usually avowed in public, approaches to its resolution were rarely publicly canvassed. Today, we should not fight shy of the existence of tribalism in Nigeria and we should devise deliberate constitutional mechanisms to cope with the strains and stresses arising from ethnic pluralism. We can for instance prohibit the formation of political parties on the basis of

ethnicity or such other inherent divisive factors. And there should be national consensus on ways of regulating such prohibition. It is a matter of some controversy whether a direct correlation exists between democracy and economic development. Some academics even talk of something called developmental democracies in contradistinction to the developmental dictatorships of the immediate post-military decades. But whether such a thing as developmental democracy exists or not, I believe that democracy and development are two sides of the same coin and that the primary need in Nigeria is to achieve a viable balance of the two desirable conditions. Hence, institutionalization of the rule of law gives more emphasis to the basic rights of individuals, and improves the balance between state and society. (Janine, 1996)

An economy derives its strength from its society and only a strong and vigorous society can build and sustain a strong economy. No society can be strong where power is in any meaningful sense which is not just; no society can be strong where power is arbitrary and where there is no accountability; and certainly no society can be strong where - the mass of its people feel alienated. As an African philosopher has put it, the real problem in Africa is not merely to institute a developing economy but to pick up social bearings, revitalize humane aspects of African society and entrench them within firm principles of social justice. Nnadozie (p. 153)

Genuine democracies should lead to another boon. The conventional wisdom today is that Nigeria the giant of Africa is marginalized country which is set to be further marginalized. It attracts the smallest volume of foreign direct investment; it has the lowest productivity per head of population and is encumbered with a debt burden which it is unlikely to be able to discharge with the best will in the world. In short, the benefits of globalization have still to be seen in Nigeria. This is not to suggest that Nigeria does not have the resources it needs for its development. Nigeria is not poor; only Nigerians are poor and getting poorer. Only by fostering stable democratic systems can Nigerian as a country mobilize all its human and other resources to reverse the depressing economic trends and prepare the way for the end of the marginalization of the continent.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The events of past 1960s-1990s and in some African states even today, show the inclination resumption of one-party states. Various methods of intimidation, repression and annihilation of opposition leaders are used. Very often, the Executive Branch has worked relentlessly to undermine democracy by spurring massive vote rigging during elections with an exclusive right to continue in power. The attitudes of some leaders in Nigeria show a "divine right to rule until death do them part with their subjects." This needs a genuine re-examination by such leaders. The fact that there are capable people at any given time in a country who can take up the mantle of leadership cannot honestly be denied.

The contest for elective offices must not be seen as a death contest. If elections are seen in this light then, the national interest will, no doubt, be relegated to the

background in pursuit of destructive self-aggrandizement. The people ought to decide who their leaders should be in a free and fair election. Responsible political party leadership is essential-since political activities bring the parties into direct contact with the population, they, more than the civil service, generates its power, shapes it, and, applies it to government which one step removed, translates it into various decisions and acts.

In the quest for the enthronement of credible and Values-based leadership in Nigeria, there is need for a paradigm shift in our leadership, at local, state and federal levels and in private and public life. There should be a top-down change in leadership perception, psychology, attitude and mentality of Nigerians, particularly the younger generation, who are the so-called leaders of tomorrow. By making them to embrace leadership from a service-oriented philosophy perspective rather than see the call to lead as an opportunity to satisfy personal aggrandizement, by amassing public wealth for personal gains to the detriment of our collective interest and posterity. Change to a more engaging, compassionate, patriotic, visionary, courageous and exemplary style of leadership and the higher ideals of selfless service, sacrifice and integrity. This will lift the country out of the morass of socio-economic and political retrogression and place it on the path of prosperity and greatness among the comity of nations. This can be achieved through the introduction of leadership and civics education as a course of study in the school curriculum at both primary and secondary school levels respectively, as well as its incorporation in the general studies programme of tertiary institutions of learning so as to expose the younger generation to the basic tenets, principles and fundamentals of leadership as well as the qualities they should imbibe to be able to provide the transformative leadership our country needs. A Values-based leadership, will not only be sympathetic to the plight of ordinary Nigerians, but will also have a sense of mission and empathy, thereby promoting a culture of peace and stability which are sine qua none for socio-economic and political transformation.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A democratic Nigeria should also facilitate African democracies. And this brings me to the magical year of 1957. When Ghana became independent on 6 March 1957, Kwame Nkrumah made a speech which has since passed into legend. He said that the independence of Ghana would be devoid of meaning unless it was part of a wider process leading to the emancipation of the whole African continent. In a gesture full of defiance, he announced to the world that with the independence of Ghana a new African had risen in the world able and willing to fight his own battles. Today, the African continent in its vast immensity is finally free of colonial and military rule. But the other promise of political freedom, the achievement of unity and development, is a task that has hardly begun. I believe that only democratic governments in the various African countries, freely elected by their people and accountable to them, can effectively respond to the general yearning of Africans for freedom, unity and development. My generation led Africa to political freedom. The current generation of leaders and peoples of Africa must pick up the flickering torch of democracies, refuel it

with their enthusiasm and determination, and carry it forward." I believe that only in conditions of democracies and freedom will all this and much else be possible.

**Conclusively**, as I see it in the (continental) context, the way forward is that in order that our peoples may understand the dynamics of modern politics at the centre of which stands the upholding of democratic ideals, there will have to be massive campaigns for even basic literacy in both widely spoken languages and local languages. Our peoples will have to understand not just their rights and duties towards one another. That knowledge will inspire tolerance and respect which are a basis for the growth of democracy.

Education aside, opportunities will have to be created to ensure individual economic empowerment. Democracy does not thrive well in poverty, at least not in the context of democratizing political institutions. To enjoy a democratic culture, people must be economically strong enough so as not to be cowed easily. Parliamentarians who would not stand up for sound cause may not be doing so in fear of death, but in fear of losing both the financial and material gains accruing to the office. This becomes doubly true when such person would not have, by inadequate training, ever landed the occupied position of authority.

When people have acquired trade and skill training necessary for surviving outside of government patronage, they cannot be easily beaten into silence. Equally so, they will fight effectively to discourage the temptation of unwholesome and widespread fights capable of destroying whatever material gains. History is replete with accounts of people who would prefer to surrender to other nations so as to ensure the safety of their massive national developments. History is replete with accounts of people who would prefer to shuttle through a problem by dialoguing instead of going to war that would cause massive destruction of life and property.

To that end, civic education commissions must be encouraged on the continent. If it is fully and effectively working, these commissions can increase national enlightenment. There must be a number of fronts to facilitate the understanding that the national and indeed the continental purpose and agenda are mutually rewarding.

Yet, there is another factor. The role of our traditional African leaders-e.g. Elders and chiefs- once ignored at least in many modern African countries, must return to the foreground. Coupled with that, the concept of state councils must not be ignored. Veteran as well as knowledgeable public servants must be encouraged to play advisory and mediatory role from time to time to thwart the prospects of conflict and war.

## **REFERENCE**

Alfred, S. (1993) "The Global Resurgence of Democracy" pp. 67-68

Ayodele, A. & Niyi, A. (1998) "Democratization of African Parliaments and Political Parties" Proceedings of an International Conference organized by the Africa Leadership Forum, July 13 – 15, Gaborone, Botswana

- Emeka, A. (1998) "Democracy in Africa" The paper was originally delivered at the International Conference on Africa at 40 and was circulated to participants at the Gaborone conference, Botswana, Pp. 103-115
- Finer, S. E. (1970) "Comparative Government", Penguin, p. 182
- Gordon, S. (1980) "Politics in Western Europe" 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. P. 164
- Guy, L. (1993) "Problem with Global Resurgences of Democracy pp. 159-164
- Janine, A. (1996) "The Institutional Foundations of Growth-Africa Now, pp. 93-118
- Maurice, D. (1980) "The Study of Politics" pp. 179 – 187
- Mwalimu, N. (1975) "Freedom and Socialism", p. 136
- Nnadozie, N. N. (1983) "Political Party Realignment in Nigeria: The Lessons of the Past and the Prospects for the Future. Development of peace pp. 151 – 164
- Robert, M. (1977) "The Collapse of Democracy, Abacus," p. 38
- Standiewilz, W. J. (1976) "British Government in an Era of Reform"