

POST-MILITARISM: PROVENANCE OF PRAETORIAN DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIAN, 1999 – 2007

S. I. EBOHON

(Received 10, June 2009; Revision Accepted 10, August 2009)

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to capture the logic and character of Nigerian politics and governance from 1999 to 2007. The development of 'command democracy' took root during this period. On the basis of the empirical evidence adduced, the paper argued that the phenomenon of 'praetorian democracy' which became visible from 1999 to 2007 undermined the constitution and due democratic process. Executive contempt for the rule of law, gave the president the power of a military Head of State, while the federal system was run like a unitary state. The dialectical confrontation between democracy and partocracy, in which a black market system of power evolved to leverage the dominant wing of People Democracy Party leadership became the painful reminder of the inglorious military authoritarian antibodies constructed to resist democratic virus. Conscious of the crisis of power fixation that makes acquisition of state power the only guarantee of upward social mobility, shrinking the state to make it less attractive as the politics of the "belly domain" is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

May 29, 1999 is remembered and celebrated in Nigeria as Democracy Day. This is because, that day is a watershed in the reconfiguration of political leadership and governance in contemporary Nigeria. The euphoric and triumphal outburst, which greeted the end of the command state system and the beginning of civil democratic rule, overwhelmed the government to the extent of declaring May 29, every year a public holiday. This general euphoria of a democratic moment' is informed by the fact that, state character and its oscillation along the democratic continuum has remained the concern of the informed Nigerian Public since the middle of the last century.

The ousting of the Shagari government in December 1983 did not only mark the failure of a second democratic experiment, it equally heralded the challenge of re-conceptualizing and re-engineering praetorian capacity to re-invent Nigerian democracy. In the military grandeur of competence delusion, this collapse of the civil order, created another opportunity of nation-building project for the political army. A vast proportion of the opposition professional politicians, opinion leaders, statesmen, traditional

rulers, incoherent civil society organizations and members of the fast growing Nigerian supermarket of development intellectuals who benefited from praetorian order, have been engaged in debates as to the viability of Western type democracy for the Nigerian political project. This new debate, received comfort in the popular quest for a jettisoning of Western models and theories in the articulation of development programmes. Therefore, a hybrid – 'Home Grown Democracy' (Ijomah 1998), rather than international standard of best democratic practices became the popular aspiration amongst the dominant elites.

As a precursor to the construction of 'Home-Grown Democracy', the government of Abdulsalami Abubakar and the military, both of which should be non-partisan reportedly worked for the triumph of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) against the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in the 1999 Presidential Election. (cf The Guardian, 7 December 1999). Over 40 retired Army Generals were in the PDP, with many of them having supporters in active military service. It was alleged that General Obasanjo (rtd) was anointed by Military institutions to succeed General Abubakar (*Ibid*). This temptation was triggered by

S. I. Ebohon, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Benin, Benin city

the capacity of the army to create social classes and new occupational groups. Adekanye (2005) has observed that:

“As a result of the control of the machinery of power and rulership which they have enjoyed since the era of coups began in the mid-1960's the military members of society in Africa, generally, and in Nigeria particularly, acting from that privileged vantage point conferred by their occupation, have succeeded in elevating themselves above not just their peers but even other occupational and professional groups hitherto ranked higher in terms of status evaluation”.

This development was driven by the indigenization policy of the military government as well as rising oil revenue (Ebohon: 1985 and 1991). Thus, with strong temptations to militarize the next civilian democratic order, the future does not seem to promise a clean brake from the militarized past. On the other hand, it cannot be certain that even if the politicians were left alone to play their game, there would then be a clean brake with the authoritarian past (Ibid). It is within the context of the foregoing intellectual ferment and the marketing of ‘home grown democracy’ as alternative to the Western model, that we must situate the intellectual redefinition of the peculiar brand of democracy produced by the General Abubakar transition programme. At the risk of an indictment of a contradiction in terms, we have chosen to call this peculiar brand ‘Praetorian Democracy’.

Intrigued by the temptations of pact-driven, military guided transition programme, many questions that form the thrust of this paper suggest themselves. Can a military junta deconstruct militarism and create an authentic democratic order without a veneer? In an anti-military post-cold war environment, what form of democracy can militarism breed? What are the prevailing organizational and institutional sub-cultures embedded in Nigerian militarism that conduce to democratic subversion? To address these issues, this paper is discussed around the following themes. The first is the taxonomy of Nigerian praetorianism. The second is the logic of Nigerian militarism. The third section addresses the issue of democracy with authoritarian

temptations. In the final section, the democratic deconstruction alternative is explored.

Taxonomy of Praetorianism

This paper identifies three models – organizational, praetorian absolutists and praetorian democracy models of governance within the framework of a transitional society. The analytic trajectory is designed to capture and elucidate the broad issues of the manner in which civil-military interactions over three decades have engendered the emergence of a unique brand of democracy – Praetorian democracy. Broadly put, praetorianism results from ‘the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus, which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder and in this manner excludes the use of the military as the major actor responsible for the illegal action’ (Naison Naoma, 2004: 86). It has been poignantly hypothesized that military aberration in developing areas is promoted by the absence of political culture (Finer: 1963). Controverting this thesis, Huntington pointed out that military provenance in politics is caused by the decay of military professionalism (Huntington: 1957 and 1968). A socio-psychological model of military aberration that derives from a culture of military rule provides alternative framework: for socialization practices that produce military culture; (Lucian Pye. 1962). Under this framework, militarism as a guiding mind-set engenders militarism without the military. Two models of praetorianism; praetorian absolutist model and praetorian democratic model can be discerned. The absolutist model violates the rule of law by suspending the constitution while the new guards of the praetorian democratic model violates the constitution they swore to defend through the creation, instrumentation and deployment of extra-judicial and extra-legislative institutions of state. In this case, the constitution is not suspended.

(a) Praetorian Absolutist Model

The praetorian absolutist model acknowledges that the military rules in an environment that has other multiple actors and interest. Its praetorian identity derives from the fact that the military is not only dominant, military interests are also super ordinate. South African Civil-Military relation of the apartheid era is a typical continental example (P. Frankel: 1984). Similarly, military in conflict zones of Africa: Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo,

Liberia, Sierra Leone are good examples of this model. Nigerian military governments from Gen. Gowon to General Abubakar equally drew identity from this model.

The unique character of this model is that, while recognizing other interests, it violates the constitution and elevates the military to the status of major consumer of fiscal resources of states. Indeed, most often, other sectors and interests in the society are “completely in the dark about the budgeting process or the actual amount apportioned to the military”(Naison N:Op. Cit. p. 88). Such praetorian appropriation concentrates wealth, influence, prestige and power around the military and their cronies. Nigerian administration under maximum leader, Gen. Sanni Abacha, is a good reflection of this model.

The model also posits that, while the barrel of a gun is the source of its power, the necessity for interaction with other actors even if in a diminished role relative to its own is imperative for praetorian stability. In other words, other actors outside the military circle expect military participation in governance. In addition, praetorianism presupposes the absence of tension amongst the actors (Ibid). The military, the model posits, must be neither autonomous nor neutral on political issues and consequently envisions a society that expects active military participation in the business of governance. The overthrow of Shargari in 1983 and the fall of the Interim National Government of Ernest Shonekan are good historical illustrations.

(b) Praetorian Democracy Model

A new brand of democracy – praetorian democracy – which owes its origin to the conspiracy theory of governance, may have emerged in post-colonial, post-imperial Africa like elsewhere in Latin America. Former Nigerian President, Late Dr. Azikiwe’s case for democracy with military vigilance draws comfort from the practice of praetorian democracy. His prognosis for a guided democracy, in which the military plays a crucial role in governance based on Turkish model forms his antidote for military interregnum. Its ascendancy is engendered by the wide prevalence of praetorian virus while its manifestation is driven by authoritarian temptations. This new phenomenon is a hybrid of modern western democracy and Praetorianism with strong military base – physical or psychological. African Political Sociologists have rationalized this phenomenon with a nationalistic,

patriotic and developmental parlance – ‘home grown democracy’.

Praetorian democracy is essentially a post-military order navigated with civil command; driven by authoritarian culture and psychology. Unlike the organizational and praetorian absolutist models, it recognizes the need for accommodation of democratic structures even in their distorted forms. Similarly, it seeks to accommodate a larger gamut of the social forces and sectors of society without altering the command culture inherent in the praetorian absolutist order. In a sense, it recognizes the constitution and the democratic structures and institutions of state without recognizing the rule of law that flow from the constitution and those democratic structures.

The origins of praetorian democracy can be situated in the failure of African democracies, the failure of militarism and the challenge posed by the emerging liberal culture. A new conjuncture has taken root in most of post-colonial Africa as the revolution of rising expectation has been betrayed by leadership failure. The new phenomenon is therefore the practical response to a tripod challenge.

Praetorian democracy has taken roots in several post-colonial African states. In the Congo, a young army officer, Mobutu Sese Sekou violently overthrew Partrice Lumumbia in 1960 and later transformed into a life President by establishing the machinery for Praetorian democracy. Kerekou overthrew democratically elected government of Benin Republic and later transformed into a President who presided over a praetorian democratic order with room for participation by politicians. Similarly, General Eyadema of Togo violently overthrew a democratically elected President – Sylvanus Olympio and eventually transmogrified into a civilian President. Eyadema’s Togo ran a praetorian democracy with a strong military base and distorted democratic structures. At death, his first son was sworn-in as his replacement through the support of the erstwhile President’s constituency – the military. In Nigeria, the administration of retired army General and former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo – who was democratically elected as President on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party 1999 – 2007, represents the latest brand of such praetorian transformation of democracy in Africa. Obasanjo captured the advantage of a growing quest by the dominant segment of the elites for guided democracy by deploying the

moral and psychological authority of a former military leader to satisfy that tiny segment's urge for a reinvented Nigerian democracy. With his parallel, extra-judicial, authoritarian structures as EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Tribunal, he threatened the relevance of the judiciary. Similarly, he transformed the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party into something like a Supreme Military Council powerful enough to direct the National Assembly. Contesting Obasanjo's democratic credentials, an observer opined, "General Obasanjo didn't want to leave in 1979 but when General Danjuma put his feet down and went further to tender his letter of resignation, Obasanjo had no choice but to quit." (Wilmot, 2007:46)

Praetorian democracy has assumed different forms and characters in a number of post-military formations. Its character is influenced by the strength of the contending social forces relative to the politico-military challenge facing the nation building project. In other words, this new phenomenon sets the power vector in accordance with the force and organizational levels of the contending social forces – political armies, the political classes and civil society organizations. The dominant social force, will determine the character of civil-military relations in post-militarism.

Logic of Nigerian Praetorianism: The Organizational Precursor of Praetorian Democracy in Nigeria.

The practice and character of Nigerian democracy from 1999 – 2007 owes its intellectual and organizational heritage to the logic of Nigerian Praetorianism from 1966 – 1999. The Nigerian military, like the state, is a colonial creation. Its praetorian instinct has roots in its colonial provenance. As Gutteridge (1969:6) intimates, "the armies of Africa are the direct descendants of the colonial forces raised in the territories of the imperial rulers to sustain the old order". However, military professionalism was nipped through the policy of quota system. As an observer opined, the 1962 law that sanctioned a quota system in the military's recruitment process created a significant impression (Dudley, 1971: 171).

In the imperial project of military socialization designed to create esprit de corps, cohesive and unified outlook and a tradition of cross-sectional consociational elitism, the imperialist sought to create a professional national army. Events of the civil war years proved the imperial thinking and

expectation wrong. What became apparent was the desire by successive military regimes to retain power through the development of regime security agenda (of a tiny elites) rather than, through the national military institution. Where corporate military institutional interest of state conflicted with personal or regime interest, a cooperative strategy which depended on alternative power centers outside the military: Civilian bureaucracy, the business sector as well as cultural and intellectual communities became alternative attraction. Successive military regimes in Nigeria from Gowon to General Abubakar adopted this strategy.

Provenance of Personal Despotism

The secession of Biafra following the assassination of General Aguiyi Ironsi (Balogun;1973) set the stage for Nigerian Civil war (1967-1970). However, the success of Gowon in the prosecution of the war gave him profound legitimacy as head of State and Commander-in-chief. Indeed, this legitimacy was soon personified by Gowon as his name became an acronym for 'Go on with one Nigeria'. The euphoria created by war victory, combined with the rising price of oil in the world market in the face of Arab-Israeli war surged Gowon's legitimacy and heightened his charisma. The rentier accumulation occasioned by the blossoming oil economy, soon produced a tiny bureaucratic – economic militarist', tempting Gowon with extra-military constituency and power base. Disturbed by the alienation of the military institution by the Gowon administration, Muhammed on ascension canvassed the need to diffuse power concentrated in the Head of State. In a bid to preempt another state descent into personal autocracy, he envisioned the constitution of the three most senior members of the military junta into a ruling triumvirate with a rotational leadership as is typical of the Latin American military juntas. This was however a failed dream, as his successor, General Obasanjo opted for more concentration by adding defence portfolio to that of Head of State.

The failure of the intelligence services to detect and nip the coup against Muhammed led to the government's loss of faith in institutional intelligence arrangement, although the NSO (National Security Organization decree) was promulgated in respect of the challenge (Ibid. 211). General Obasanjo had serious reservations with military intelligence because of its role in the coup that brought them to power in 1975. The

same loss of faith in military intelligence was expressed by Buhari in his ouster in 1985, "I realized it was one of the master plans of the fifth columnist to embarrass and discredit my administration... I knew it was the military intelligence, not the police, not the NSO (Ibid: 224).

In the aftermath of the abortive coup of April 1990, Babangida perfected the scheme of subverting the military institution through his plethora of security network that culminated in his creation of an alternative paramilitary service – The National Guard – to undercut the military institution. The role of private military companies in the activities of the intelligence services and in the overall arrangement of regime security had become a source of concern within the military as an institution (Fayemi 2002: 225).

Such Babangida agenda took a new and wider scope under the maximum ruler – General Sanni Abacha. He formed the Libyan – and Korean-trained Special Body Guards services for his personal protection. This was complicated with the strike force and K.Squad – responsible for carrying out state sponsored assassination of perceived political enemies. In the post military era, General Obasanjo maintained romance with the officers who operated these shadowy security agencies. His appointment of Major General Abdullahi Mohammed and Major General Gusau as Chief of Staff and National Security Advisers respectively derived from their role in intelligence services and his belief in the officers.

Similarly, the character and logic of Prebenda politics which reduced the Nigerian state to a private/personal estate for accumulation by the ruling classes equally infested the military (Joseph: 1991). This private state concept as a means for advancing the personal interest of the ruling classes was not only embraced by the Nigerian political army, but equally had serious implications for the dominant character of Obasanjo politics from 1999 – 2007. The tendency towards de-stating of the State and privatization of diplomacy and politics are however, not peculiar to Nigeria (Clapham:1996 and Reno:1993).

Democracy and Authoritarian Temptations

Democracy, as a political practice and principle of governance has grown from its medieval/classical form to its new political character. In its classical form, it is linked with the small Athenian City state of ancient Greece, where every adult citizen directly participated in

decision-making, as antidote to dictatorship, monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy and feudalism (Isekhure: 1992, Osumah 2007:2).

The converse side of democracy is authoritarianism. This practice is expressed in various forms ranging from dictatorship to monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy to feudalism. The age of enlightenment coupled with the universal declaration of human rights, the growing acceptance of education, the ascendancy of liberalism and the phenomenon of globalization have gathered the steam which has reduced the popularity of authoritarianism. Yet authoritarian temptations have been unleashed in a number of democracies although certain authoritarian states have tended to adopt electoral principles in order to win a claim to democratic credentials, Contemporary Nigerian state 1999-2007 epitomizes such contradictions.

Democracy Vs Partocracy

Political Party organization is the basis for organizing governments and capturing power in modern democracies. Yet, governments in modern democracies are structured on the basis of electoral victory of parties involved in electoral competition. Dominance in electoral competition does not approximate the totality of the governing process. Therefore, government is different from the party system. The party niche in the governing system must be situated within the contest of majority rule and minority right. In this vein, partocracy must be seen as the institutionalization of the political party as a parallel institution to the governing institution. Institutionalization of the party system derives from the philosophy of authoritarian state system which practices the ideology of authoritarianism in the name of democracy through acclamatory elections on periodic basis. The idea of party supremacy finds a rationalization in this context. It is within the context of such philosophical rationalization that we are to situate the provenance of Obasanjo's conception of the PDP as the conscience of the government and the supreme driver of the governing process that was to emerge on his exit from office. This is Obasanjo's notion of supremacy of the party in a democratic setting.

The victory of General Olusegun Obasanjo (former military dictator) on the platform of PDP as President in a civilian democratic regime in 1999, is a watershed in Nigeria's democracy. With his military background, the President as a product of

Command State apparatus was unable to appreciate the need to separate the party from government and state jurisdictions. For him, party intrusion in state legislative jurisdiction is a normal political activity. As is well documented elsewhere, "the authority of the PDP national executive committee replicates that of the Supreme Military Council under the Military regime that Obasanjo was familiar with. Unable to extricate himself from the military concept of governance, he accords semi state jurisdictional powers to the PDP in assisting him to handle PDP state Governors and PDP elected legislators, just as the Supreme Military Council had over state Governors" (Natufe: 2006). Under his guided democracy, the choice of the party is a convenient device since he was President of the country and leader of the party.

The party in this respect approximated the government at the federal, state and local levels. The stature of the party in approximating the government and compromising good governance can be illustrated with the peculiar experiences of Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Oyo and Plateau states. In these states, the subordination of the government to the party was very well celebrated. Each House of Assembly, was divided into two blocs in line with state Government's interest and those of the party as supported by national level party interest. In Delta, the crises between the Obielum faction backed by Abuja and the Governor Ibori faction backed by the State Government, resulted in the impeachment of Hon. Igrude, Speaker of the State House of Assembly and an ardent loyalist of Igbori (Osumah: 2007:14). In Edo State, the crisis of confidence and in-fighting between Chief Tony Anenih and Governor Lucky Igbinedion had also degenerated into the split of the state legislature into two blocs which wanted the change of its leadership in a manner that could give veto power to extra-legislative agent; 'Veto Manager'¹ of the party at the national level. In Plateau State, the feud between deputy Senate President, an Obasanjo right hand man – Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, former Science and Technology Minister, Pallen Tallen and Fidelis Tapgun, Industries Minister on the one hand and the State Governor, Chief Joshua Chidi Darieye on the other hand resulted in the split of the state House of Assembly into two blocs. The split, materialized the eventual unconstitutional impeachment of the Governor for alleged gross misconduct by eight law makers under the leadership of Hon. Dapalung backed by Abuja

PDP (Ibid). In the Anambra saga, state structures were openly assaulted and the Governor expelled from the Party and removed from office because an Abuja PDP 'veto manager' wanted it that way. Thus, when Dr. Ngige fell out with Chris Uba, an agent of Obasanjo, he lost his job and the office of Governor. The same story goes for Oyo and Ekiti States in the new saga of governmental subordination by Abuja PDP.

It is to be noted that in all such confrontations either between state functionaries and the National PDP, or within State functionaries, the dictator democrat had the upper hand. As in Ogun State, the schism between Governor Gbenga Daniel (an Obasanjo agent) and a PDP Senator, Ibikunle Amosun resulted in the masterminding of impeachment of two of its local council Chairmen – those of Abeokuta and Imeko Local Government Councils', loyal to the Senator (Ibid).

Perhaps, one possible explanation for the phenomena of partocracy is the manipulation of opposition politics. No doubt, the political space for opposition was liberalized by the Obasanjo administration. Such gesture paved way for increase in the number of political parties from 3 in 1999 to 50 in 2007 (Ibid, p. 12). The fledging media recorded over 60 newspapers and magazines, 40 television stations and about 50 radio houses by 2005 (Ibid). While this gesture sounds democratic, it was designed to create mere veneer of democracy. The registration and proliferation of parties was designed to weaken the prospect for the emergence of organized, self-sustaining and credible opposition through the fission of financial and organizational resource (Okanlawon 2006: 38). Thus, multi-partism in Nigeria fostered single party authoritarian temptations. Yet, despite such gesture, the PDP government remained hostile to opposition parties, critics and mass media.

In its bid to stunt the development of opposition, the PDP denied opposition parties of legitimate funding. In addition, opposition parties were denied police permit to organize rallies. Similarly, some rallies were broken by the police and security operatives in defiance of police permit. Civil society organizations and labour movements were similarly denied permit by the police to protest against unfavourable government policies. Press gag was a policy of government in spite of increased space and accommodation of new media houses. The African Independent Television for instance was shut down for its critical comment on the third-

term bid of Obasanjo. The PDP government also invoked the outdated sedition law against journalists such as Gbenga Aruleba of African Independent Television and Rotimi Durojaiye of Independent newspaper for their comments on the state of the Presidential aircraft. The last blow on the press was the refusal of government to pass the Freedom of Information Bill.

To make a hegemonic single party, dominance out of the ruling PDP, the quickest option was election rigging and falsification of results. In his “elections without elections, the threat to Nigerian democracy” Perepreghahofa (2006:7) reported seven strategies of election rigging by the ruling PDP. In a forced bid to win and enjoy local constituency political relevance and popularity for the President, PDP/AD electoral Pact made AD to lose five out of its six states to PDP in its original constituency bases. Resistance from certain AD members resulted in controversial assassination of prominent Yoruba politicians.

From Democratic Federalism to Decentralising Unitarism

A central feature of authoritarian temptations in contemporary Nigerian political discourse is that, constitutionally contrived, federalism is in head-on collision with unitary command system. As prescribed by the constitution, Nigeria as a federal political system, is structured and defined in such a way that the independence of the federating units vis-à-vis the central government is guaranteed in the key areas of the national economy and politics. As poignantly rendered elsewhere, a federal system “provides a vital conceptual base for good governance as it emphasizes the two fundamental premises of federalism. First, both levels of government – the central government and the states (federating units) - are independent, but never subordinate to one another. Second, the relationship between the central government and the federating units is horizontal and not vertical... When any of these elements are vitiated, federalism is compromised and the basis of good governance under federalism is eroded” (Natufe: 2006.10).

The inauguration of the fourth Republic in May 1999 marked another watershed in the unique configuration of democratic federalism in Nigeria. The regular visits, voluntary or mandated, in the form of patro-client political reciprocity, usually made to the Presidency in Abuja or PDP Headquarters by state Governors –

particularly PDP Governors, for instructions, did not only threaten the premise of Nigerian federalism, it equally reduced it to husband and wife relationship in which the state governors are the wives in a gendered political contestation. This pattern transformed the federal government into a national government similar to that of a unitary system. (Ibid: 11). In this context, state governments abdicated their jurisdictional responsibilities to the Presidency in Abuja.

The abdication of jurisdictional responsibility by the states is forced by unitary complaint institutions as ICPC, EFCC and Code of Conduct Tribunal. The issue is not whether the federal government has the power to create these institutions but whether they can have jurisdiction to investigate fiscal management of states and sanction erring state officials. The jurisdictionality of EFCC is further suspect given that the head was a member of Presidential Kitchen Cabinet. In addition, its role in impeachment of state governors raises more questions. No impeachment proceeding against a state governor without the prodding of EFCC succeeded. Similarly, no impeachment proceeding with EFCC prodding against a state governor failed. The role of the President and PDP in the impeachment of Governor's Fayose of Ekiti, Ladoja of Oyo State, Dariye of Plateau state, Depriye of Bayelsa, Dr. Ngige and Peter Obi of Anambra State are classic examples of jurisdictional appropriation of state realm in a federal system. It was reported that the impeachment crisis in Ekiti State was not the prompting of Obasanjo and his EFCC. Ekiti house leaders were invited to Abuja for a briefing on the impeachment of Fayose but with instruction to spare his Deputy, Chief (Mrs) Abiodun Olujimi. According to the report, the President ordered the Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Bayo Ojo, to declare the impeachment as unconstitutional as the House eventually impeached the Governor and his deputy. Obasanjo and the PDP leadership subsequently “rejected the impeachment of the Deputy Governor – Chief (Mrs) Abiodun Olujimi, insisting that the State House of Assembly as a matter of urgency reverse the impeachment” (Tribune Oct. 18, 2006, Natufe Op. Cit. 92). In a national broadcast declaring a state of emergency in Ekiti state on October 19, 2006, President Obasanjo cited relevant sections of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, to demonstrate the unconstitutional action of the Ekiti State House of Assembly in effecting

the impeachment of Governor Fayose and his deputy, and to justify his constitutional powers in dismissing Ekiti State House of Assembly. He proceeded to announce the appointment of Brig. General Tunji Olurin (rtd.) as the Administrator of the state for six months. His action according to him was to resolve the counter claim of three Governors and to “preserve law and order, good governance and ensure probity in governance in Ekiti State”. (The Times of Nigeria Oct. 19, 2006).

On allegation of jumping bail in the U.K. the EFCC similarly stage managed the impeachment of Governor Darieye of Plateau state with only 8 members of the state House of Assembly as other members were in hiding to escape EFCC arrest and eventual forced impeachment consent. In Bayelsa, Governor Deprieye’s mysterious escape from the U.K. was greeted with impeachment action prompted by the EFCC. Members of the state House of Assembly were airlifted and quarantined in an unknown part of the federation for two weeks. On their arrival from Lagos, the impeachment proceedings which took place in the House Chamber were concluded less than 30 minutes.

Ladoja of Oyo state was similarly removed as Governor under a similar unconstitutional circumstance. In Anambra State, an elected Governor Dr. Ngige was similarly removed from office for falling out with his PDP “God Father” Chris Uba (Member of PDP Board of Trustee). As if the activism of such extra judicial institutions as the EFCC was not enough, the PDP government equally conceded certain extra-legislative influence to the party by way of giving so much powers to the national executive committee to pilot and guide legislative activities. In this respect, the legislature can talk but not act without the mandate of the PDP executive committee. The personality of Obasanjo as President of ‘command democracy’ and the political leaders general social and psychological loss of relationship with democratic state apparatus over time culminated in the reverence of the President as “Baba”, and as a source of legal and executive authorities. Thus, it is normal to refer state matters and legislative problems to Obasanjo for resolution. Such reverence was exhibited by former Senate President, Ken Nnamani, when he sent a petition to Obasanjo in July, 2005 chronicling Governor Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State’s (his home state) corrupt practices and democratic subversion. In this petition, he requested Obasanjo to institute a high powered body to probe the Governor’s

corrupt practices and ascertain the exact size of his asset. As senator and president of the senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he arrogated state power to the executive president of the federal republic. He ought to have known that this is the responsibility of the state House of Assembly and not that of the Presidency.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The articulation and empirical substantiation of the phenomenon of Praetorian democracy broached in this work, is not contrived to convey the notion of a military rule in the name of democracy. We have argued that post-militarism, produced a peculiar mind-set, predicated on physical, attitudinal and sociological conjuncture that derived from the political army. This development has given birth to a ‘command democracy’ instead of a popular democracy.

In a fundamental sense, the work further validates the notion that “No academic study can escape the spirit and concerns of the period in which it is written (Clapham,1996:271). This paper seeks therefore, to correct the notion of military disengagement as an alternative for democracy. In a sense, Nigerian democracy (1999 -2007) is a mere political fashion fair enough for window dressing. The point that emerges from the empirical investigation is that regular conduct of elections and the existence of constitutionally contrived democratic structures and institutions of state; like the Senate, House of Representatives, the Federal Executive, the Judiciary as well as the plethora of democratic structures and institutions ranging from the ward to local and state levels have not conveyed the democratic alternative that is the dream of the Nigerian project designers.

Confronted with the task of developing international standard of best democratic practices, the following recommendations are germane. The first option is to shrink and deconstruct the state in a way that it plays a lesser role in the economic process. This will reduce its attraction as politics of the ‘belly domain’ (Clapham:1996, Robert and Rosberg 1982 and Jean-Francois, 1993). Secondly, for the purpose of vitiating ‘command democracy’ all members of the former political armies must be barred from partisan politics. This must be enshrined in the constitution. Finally, the concept of political followership must be rediscovered, recaptured and reinvented in such a way that followership is strengthened and understood by

the people to mean responsibility to check political leaders as ultimate owners of mandate.

NOTE

1. Veto manager is a close link of Obasanjo with strong links at the national level. He is supported and aided by the President to veto if albeit informally – the decisions of the state and local governments. This practice has reduced democracy under Obasanjo to a personal project.

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