

# ETHICS, MORALITY AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA: A NORMATIVE APPROACH

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## Abstract

*Opponents of political ethics criticise the whole enterprise of political ethics, while the proponents claim that ethics and morality are indispensable in political life. The practice of making moral judgement about political actors permits the scholar to understand the connection between democratic theory, practice and political ethics/morality. This work evaluates the extent to which politics in Nigeria is conducted according to laid down rules and principles recognized internationally as best known practice in democratic process. Nigeria's democratization process has been so complicated and yet so important in determining the progress of its democratic practice, and the ongoing second revolution after a long period of military interregnum. The democratic progress achieved can be measured by the conduct of the political actors and how the polity allow for free, fair and credible election.*

**Key words:** Ethics, Morality, Politics, Political Ethics, Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

A realistic analysis of the problems of human society according to Niebuhr<sup>1</sup> reveals a constant and seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the needs of society and the imperative of a sensitive conscience. This conflict in his view can be defined as the conflict between ethics and politics which is made inevitable by a double focus on the moral life. The moral life viewed from the perspective of society and of highest moral ideal is justice. Any non-rational instrument of justice cannot be used without great peril to society

Politics we must understand operates in an environment and in a particular situation which involves the search for values and ideals. Hence political activities involve disagreements and the resolution of such disagreements. Thus politics majorly draws individuals and groups into political activity. Politics can thus be assumed to be concerned with public goals and desires<sup>2</sup>. It is in this light that Lipson's<sup>3</sup> view

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<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr Reinhold "The Conflict Between Individual and Social Morality," in *Documents of Modern Political Thought*, ed. Thomas Edwin Utlely, & John Stuart Maclure, J. S. (London Cambridge; Cambridge University Press. 1976). 257.

<sup>2</sup> Gauba, *An Introduction to Political Theory*. (India: Macmillan Publishers. 2004)

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics; An Introduction to Political Science* (New Jersey: Prentice – Hall, Inc. 1976), 22

becomes trite. In his view since the core of politics consists of choice, the orderly analysis of data forms the prelude to an act of judgement. Hence in politics there is a perennial argument of pros and cons, debating the merit and demerit of alternative policies, disputing the wisdom of ultimate goals, and weighing the efficacy of possible means. Lipson(1976)<sup>4</sup> concludes by stating that:

“The political process –not only as discussed in philosophical treatises but also as actually conducted in daily life- abounds with invocations of ideals. People dedicate their governments to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, to equality, justice, peace and good order, and similar noble purposes.”

This in itself should be seen as the confluence between politics and ethics. Politics should take into cognizance the values and ethics of the environment in which it operates. This is because government policies have a society-wide impact. Most political affairs, whether domestic or international involve some level of moral judgement. As Lipson<sup>5</sup> rightly noted, theorizing about values, though a speculative activity or endeavour is not independent of reality.

It is trite to thus state that political doctrines do not hover weightless in a sealed chamber removed from political actuality. They should be an integral part of the living reality of society and its government. They form the template upon which to understand the state, individual relationship and to render them intelligible to reason. Ethics, values and morals do inject into politics a purpose and a rationale which could create a peaceful environment and a harmonious relationship in which the political actors would be forced to play the game according to the rules while developing a unique political culture.

Aristotle captures it by his claim that a good citizen is possible in a good state and a bad state makes bad citizens. In his view there cannot be a good state where wrong ethical ideals prevail<sup>6</sup>. This is where the democratic option becomes imperative. The democratic arrangement constitutes an approach in connecting the rule-ruler-ruled relationship which dominates most political science postulations. According to Oluwu<sup>7</sup> democracy is not necessarily the best but it is the one that is regarded as the least problematic in constituting modern political systems. The collapse of such systems as theocracy, monarchy etc has left democracy as the only option. Arguably, democracy has become all things to all men. Several scholars advanced

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid 22

<sup>5</sup>Ibid 23

<sup>6</sup>Vidya D.Mahajan, *Principles of Political Science*. (New Delhi. S. Chand and Company LTD. Reprint 2011), 77.

<sup>7</sup>Oluwu, D. Transition to Democratic Governance in Africa. In Oluwu, Soremekum, K and Williams, A (Eds) *Governance and Democratization in Nigeria*. Benin-city. Spectrum Books Limited. 1995/ 1999, 18

various and often contradictory meanings to the word democracy. However Dahl's<sup>8</sup> contribution is widely accepted. His concept of polyarchy has been most celebrated and perhaps successful.

Polyarchy is not only a system of government but a rigorous attempt to view democratic process as a function of several features which include; (1) freedom of speech (2) freedom of association (3) the supremacy of the will of the electorate (4) regular elections and (5) accountability.<sup>9</sup> In essence the system is defined by certain important attributes; competition for public office by individuals or political parties at periodic intervals without the use of force, inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies and a level of civil and political liberties. These three attributes should exist in a polity, sufficient to guarantee the integrity of political competition and participation. They thus form the template for evaluation the conduct of elections and the actions/activities of politicians in Nigeria's democratisation process.

Most African countries since the 1990 have experienced one form or other of democratic renaissance and probably awakening. Unfortunately, they have failed to consolidate on and deepen democracy. A fundamental drawback is the nature of their political culture or lack of it. Partisan politics suffer from certain defects which include politics without principles. Politics without ethics and morals happen to be the bane of partisan politics in Africa. This has been the reason for the numerous crises in the African continent. This work examines ethics, morality and politics in Nigeria, using the normative approach.

In political ethics there is usually an impulse toward the general even when judgements are directed toward the particular. However as the popular remark states, when political mechanism is devoid of moral consideration it is often prone to abuse, misuse of power and other negatives not associated with democratic ethos. Normative theory is concerned with the norms, standards or principles of human behaviour upon which judgement could be made. This is the thrust of the work. While examining the actions and activities of politicians in the electoral process, the work endeavours into how these actions and activities touched on the question of ethics and morality.

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<sup>8</sup> Dahl, R *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1971.

<sup>9</sup>Williams, A *The Fractionalization of Democratic Struggle in Africa: The Nigerian Example*. In Oluwu, Soremekun, K and Williams, A (Eds) *Governance and Democratization in Nigeria*. Benin-city. Spectrum Books Limited. 1995/ 1999, 66.

## 2. Ethics and Morality

Ethics and morality are often used interchangeably. In Amstutz's<sup>10</sup> opinion the two terms represent distinct elements of normative analysis. He posit that while morality refer to values and beliefs about what is right, wrong, good, bad, just and unjust, ethics can be explained in terms of examining and justifying the critical analysis of morality. Ethics can also be explained as a philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems and moral judgements<sup>11</sup>.

Amstutz<sup>12</sup> identified three distinguishing features of moral values; command of universal allegiance, demand impartiality and self-enforcing. The claim to universality means that moral norms are binding on all people. The impartiality of norms on the other hand help to ensure that morality is not simply a means to cloth and advance self-enforcing feature but to explain the voluntary actions of persons on moral issues. Explaining further Amstutz<sup>13</sup> opine that although morality is pervasive in human life, it is concerned mainly with a particular dimension of human affairs namely, individual and collective judgements involving moral values. It is however not concerned with choices and actions in the nonmoral realm.

The word morality derives from the Latin word "Mores" meaning, custom, habit, and way of life, It describes what is good, right and proper. These concepts can be associated with such notions as virtue, integrity, goodness, righteousness and justice. Morality is viewed as a social enterprise for which the individual is inducted into it and becomes more or less of a participant in it. Morality as an instrument of society as a whole is for the guidance of individuals and groups. It makes demands on individuals. Consequently, considered from the period a social system for regulation, it is like law on the one hand and convention or etiquette on the other<sup>14</sup>.

The above claim notwithstanding Frankena<sup>15</sup> is of the view that morality can be distinguished from convention by certain features that it shares with law. In the same vain though morality and law overlap, they are distinguished by certain features which it shares with convention. For instance, it is not created or changeable by deliberate legislative, executive or judicial act. In addition its sanction is not physical force or the threat of it but praise or blame, or verbal signs of favour or disfavour.

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<sup>10</sup>Mark Amstutz, *International Ethics; Concept, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*. (U. S. Rowman & littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2005), 8.

<sup>11</sup>See William K Frankena, *Ethics* (2<sup>nd</sup> solution.) (New Jersey: Prentice – Hall, Inc. 1973) 4

<sup>12</sup>Mark Amstutz, 8

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> See William K. Frankena, K. W. 1973:6

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

Morality is equally used to refer to a system of principles and judgements shared by cultural, religious and philosophical communities with common beliefs of what constitute right and wrong.<sup>16</sup> It is presumed that some actions are antithetical to man's nature and at the same time militate against his well-being. Some other actions also promote his well-being and lead to happiness and self-fulfilment. Man is therefore expected to engage in such actions considered morally right.

Morality in the sense of the above explanation encompasses a wide variety of areas related to the field of ethics. For Kant the basic ethical question is how one "ought" to conduct himself. Kant's ethical theory places emphasis on duty and justice before the idea of good.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore taken that there is a connecting relation between the moral life of the individual and that of the society. The moral insights and achievements of the individual conscience are relevant and necessary to the life of society. The highest moral ideal of the individual should be justice. Hence society must strive for justice using any means. It is thus of note that justice cannot be established if moral imagination of the individual does not seek to comprehend the needs and interests of his fellow.<sup>18</sup> It is in this light that Aristotle's claim that "a good citizen is possible in a good state and a bad state makes bad citizens" can be understood.

The prescriptive and normative theories of morality are apt in this discourse. For instance, the ethical prescriptive terms of "good" and "bad" are used to prescribe a course of action. Hence moral statements can be evaluative and prescriptive. Normative theory is concerned with norms, standards or principles of human behaviour.

Yet, an important aspect of this discourse is on cultivating traits of character or disposition based on moral principles. According to Frankena<sup>19</sup> morality throughout history has been concerned about the cultivation of certain dispositions, or treats, among which are character or such virtues as honesty, kindness and conscientiousness. Virtues in his view are dispositions or treats that are not wholly innate, but acquired at least in part by teaching and practice or perhaps by grace. They are treats of character rather than of personality intended to carry out certain kinds of actions in certain situations. He further posits that they are not just abilities or skills which one may have without using. They have to be put in use constantly.

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<sup>16</sup>Okorie Okomba, quoting Joseph Omoregbe The Ethical Implication of Separating Morality from Politics Taking A Cue from Machiavallian Political Ideas and the Nigerian Political Experience.(2006) [www.dira.portal.org/smash/get/dixe](http://www.dira.portal.org/smash/get/dixe) full text. retrieved 15/9/2014

<sup>17</sup>Ibid

<sup>18</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Conflict Between Individual and Social Morality".

<sup>19</sup>William Frankena, 62

Based on this it is suggested that morality is or should be conceived primarily with the cultivation of such dispositions or traits of character. This happens to be the line of Plato and Aristotle's thought for they both speak of virtue and the virtuous rather than what is right or obligatory. Stephen captures it by stating that morality is internal and the only mode of stating the moral law must be as a rule of character.<sup>20</sup> The next section thus considers the relationship between ethics and politics or what has been referred to as political ethics.

### 3. Political Ethics

The debate on the possible relationship between morality, ethics and politics has been a long standing one. The crux of the debate centres on the place of ethical and moral concepts such as; right, good, virtue, wrong, evil etc in politics. Girardin<sup>21</sup> mapped out and identified what he considers as the various positions of the schools of thought on ethics in politics. They are:

- (1) Scepticism: Although the sceptics do not outrightly reject the place of ethics in politics, there is a strong hesitation on their part to apply ethics in politics. It is amoral in their view.
- (2) Cynicism: Cynicism declares that ethics as a principle is not only irrelevant but damaging in politics. It is immoral.
- (3) Moralism: Moralism projects ideal ethical values as goals for any politics and considers them as normative, or at least inspiring.
- (4) Pragmatism: pragmatists consider ethics as a possible added value for politics and check case by case whether or not this is true.

These schools of thought can be collapsed into two for simple and better understanding of the position of the schools of thought. They are those against and those in support. For those against Machiavelli's views explain their position. Machiavelli noted that the ultimate goal of politics was to grab political power and retain same. Machiavelli while stating he was being practical and realistic, remarked that men were naturally bad, hence a ruler should be prudent, shrewd, practical and swift in action. A ruler needs not to be morally upright, religious, honest, compassionate or humane.<sup>22</sup> Machiavelli argued that if men were all good, this precept would not be a good one, but as they are bad and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid 63.

<sup>21</sup>Benoit Girardin, *Ethics in Politics*. (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2012) www.globethics.net

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Omeregbe, *Simplified History of Philosophy: Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, (Nigeria. Jopa Press LTD. 1991) 189.

<sup>23</sup> Vidya Mahajan, *Principles of Political Science*. (New Delhi. S. Chand and Company LTD. Reprint 2011) 78.

Aristotle and Kant's views explain the position of the proponents of political ethics. Aristotle was of the view that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right. He claimed that there cannot be a good state where wrong ethical ideals prevail. Since human beings are political animal justice should be a combination of good, right and useful. Kant stated that true politics cannot take a single step forward unless it has first done homage to morals.

Catlin, Gattel and Gandhi contributed to the debate. Catlin pointed out that from ethics a statesman can learn which course among several that is desirable. In Gattels view the proper form and function of government must be determined in the last analysis on the basis of the ethical compromise at securing the greatest good to the individual and at the same time promote the greatest common welfare<sup>24</sup>. Gandhi's in support of political ethics preached non-violence claiming that non-violence is not a cloistered virtue to be practiced by the individual for his peace and to find salvation, but a rule of conduct for society if it is to live consistently with human dignity<sup>25</sup>. The society has the right to enforce public morality, hence there is the ultimate need for norms of behavior. Standards of behavior or values constitute the norms of a system which must be generally recognized. Rourke and Boyer<sup>26</sup> observe that systems develop norms for two reasons; first, that various psychological and sociological factors prompt humans to adopt values to define what is ethical and moral. Secondly, that human, tend to favour regularized patterns of behavior because of the pragmatic need to interact and to avoid the anxiety and disruption caused by the random or unwanted behavior of others.

Chandra's<sup>27</sup> view supports the above by the claim that there are indispensable principles of equity and justice and, a universally accepted principle of instruction. Amstutz<sup>28</sup> will although argue that personal morality and political morality are not identical, he acknowledges the fact that they are related. For this reason Amstutz<sup>29</sup> opine that the autonomy of states can be quantified by moral claims of individuals, since the right of states ultimately depend on the right of persons. Consequently, the fundamental choice of statesmen is rooted in moral values. It is a fact that individual morality governs the actions of individuals hence the need to judge

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid quoting Catlin and Gattel in *Principles of Political Science*. (New Delhi. S. Chand and Company LTD. Reprint 2011) 78

<sup>25</sup>see Gratin, 2012

<sup>26</sup>John Rourke, & Mark Boyer, *International Politics on the World Stage*. (New York: McGraw Hill Publishers 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. 2003) 85.

<sup>27</sup>Prakash Chandra, *Theories of International Relations*. (New Delhi. Vikos Publishing House LTD. P. 2004) 199.

<sup>28</sup>Mark Amstutz,. 2005 10.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid

individual office holders by such moral standards as recognized by the society. Moral principles are absolutely essential in the affairs of state. According to Gilchrist<sup>30</sup> political ideals cannot be divorced from the ethical ideal. Ivor Brown<sup>31</sup> aptly sums it up;

“Politics is but ethics writ large. Ethical theory is incomplete without political theory because man is an associated creature and cannot live fully in isolation. Political theory is idle without ethical theory because its study and its result depend fundamentally on our scheme of moral value, our conception of right and wrong”

Government functions must in the last analysis be determined on the basis of the ethical compromise at securing the greatest good to the individual and promote the greatest common welfare. Due to the complexity of public affairs and the competing moral values that are involved in specific political issue area government decisions may not lend themselves to single moral verdict. Yet this cannot constitute a problem in relating ethics, morality with politics. This is the platform or template upon which this work examines politics in Nigeria with particular focus on the use of the impeachment tool in its political process.

Proponents of political ethics have argued that examining the decision and character of individual politician can help identify the structural constraints on their action, and point the way toward reform.<sup>32</sup> In general, political ethics though recognizes structure, it emphasis the concept of human agency that operate and tries to change the structure. This explains the importance of human being within the field of politics and governance. Politics in Nigeria affords us the opportunity to evaluate political ethics and morality in politics.

#### 4. Politics in Nigeria

The Nigerian state is made up of peoples with diverse ethno-linguistic background, assuming a broad even insipiently pan-Nigerian form, long before the creation of political Nigeria in 1914. The Ibadan school of history argued that colonial rule itself was an episode in the long historical march of the Nigerian peoples towards the formation of a political system. The new political system was faced with certain challenges.

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<sup>30</sup>Vidya Mahajan, quoting Gilchrist

<sup>31</sup>Vidya Mahajan 78

<sup>32</sup>International encyclopaedia of Ethics: Political Ethics  
Scholarcharrard.edu/files/dft/files/political.ethics.revised\_10-11.pdf



Balogun<sup>33</sup> commenting on the challenges facing the Nigerian state remarked that in an underdeveloped society with stunted economic growth and with relatively few opportunities for rewarding investment in the industrial sector, government patronage inevitably becomes a major source of benefit in trade and in other commercial activities. Consequently, with the departure of the British the Nigerian leadership group settled down to share the "national cake". Even at that though the leadership group may share same language or possess certain common traits, it did not result in common political action<sup>34</sup>.

Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960 inaugurated a new era when Nigerians began to assume the responsibility of governing themselves. The first experience in democratic rule was short lived as the republic was cut short by a military coup in January 1966. As has been rightly observed post-independence political history of Nigeria is largely that of military intervention in politics. There were coups and counter coups. The military ruled the country for twenty seven years, hence it contributed much to shape the political, economic and social formation of post-independent Nigeria.<sup>35</sup> Military rule is authoritarian. Consequently, the non-democratic character of the military renders suspect the efforts of military regimes at democratising societies in which they held sway. Hence, Nigeria's latest democratic experience since the military handed over power in 1999 can be said to exhibit features inherent in a military regime<sup>36</sup>.

In view of these fundamental realities the contest for power according to Balogun<sup>37</sup> was primarily a contest for economic survival as a group to which the struggle developed into naked confrontation in which the rival groups were less willing to respect the outward forms of restraint and conventional chivalry associated with democratic tenets on which Nigerian political structure had been modelled<sup>38</sup>. In the struggle to seize larger shares of the national cake, each contending group displayed virtually no limit to the method it was prepared to employ to gain power<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>Ola Balogun, *The Tropic Years – Nigeria in Crisis*. (Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation. 1973) 14.

<sup>34</sup>See Obaro Ikime, "In search of Nigerians: Changing Problems of Inter-group Relations in An Evolving Nation State". Presidential Inaugural lecture delivered at the 30<sup>th</sup> congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Nigeria, Nnsukka, 1<sup>st</sup> may 1985: 31.

<sup>35</sup>Osaghae. Eghosa, *Nigeria Since Independence: the Crippled Giant*. Ibadan: John Avchers publishers. 2002.

<sup>36</sup>Adesina. Sambo. *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria Possibilities ana Limitations*. In Omo Omoruyi, Dirst. Berg. Schlosset and Ada, Okuosa. (Eds) *Democracy in Africa: Nigeria perspectives* Volue one. Hima Hima LTD: Benin City, Nigeria.

<sup>37</sup>see Ola Balogun, O.1973

<sup>38</sup> Ibid 14

<sup>39</sup> Ibid 21

The concept of morality and ethics had no roots in the minds of the Nigerian politician. Parties in power were prepared to use the police and the courts to inflict punitive sanctions on their opponents and the suspecting opposing electorate. Elections were rigged, opponents were assassinated, thugs were employed and the ruling party acted with impunity. These were the picture of politics in Nigeria right from the first republic. All of these acted as a potential explosive situation which gave politics a negative image for which the military ventured into politics. This account for the various crises in Nigeria's democratization process since independence.

Analysing the cause for the hobbesian nature of politics in Nigeria, the absence and lack of morality and ethics in politics can be identified. Military President Ibrahim Babangida observed that what went wrong in the past was not lack of ideas but the absence of guiding principles and practice on which genuine political parties could operate<sup>40</sup>. The struggle for the control of the centre and the regions/states dominated politics in Nigeria. The elections and post-election periods revealed the fragility of the Nigerian State. All the organs and structure of government exhibited weakness. Hence, the entire political system and those who operated it in Falola's<sup>41</sup> view had become discredited. This happens to be so because of the high rate of corruption, indiscipline and impunity within the system.

In comparism with the western world, empirical evidence indicate that policies and priorities may change, if one government takes the place of another but appointments, and existing interest, covering most aspect of the nations activities remain unaltered and for those individuals and bodies, it is important not just who wins the political battle, but that the rules of the game which preserves all their areas of influence, their position and practices, are observed.

The Fourth Republic in Nigeria witnessed a turbulent relationship between the executive and the legislature in the new democratic dispensation after the period of military dictatorship. President Obasanjo's fourth Republic witnessed the interference of the presidency in the affairs of the legislature. The presidency was instrumental in the removal/impeachment of four senate presidents within a period of five years. The Nigerian Vanguard<sup>42</sup> aptly captured the situation when it wrote that Evans Enwerem the first president of the senate did not spend as much as one year in office before he was removed. His successor, Chuba Okadigbo was only

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<sup>40</sup> Emmanuel Ezeani, "Electoral Malpractice in Nigeria," in *Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, eds Godwin Onu. & Abubakar Monoh, A. (Lagos, Nigeria political Science Association. 1994) 82

<sup>41</sup> Toyin Falola, Abdullahi Mahadi, Martin Uhomoibhi, and Ukachukwu eds. *History of Nigeria: Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century*. Nigeria: Longman. 1991: 107.

<sup>42</sup> The Nigerian Vanguard April 5, 2006

weeks on the seat before the impeachment drums started beating. Anyim who succeeded Okadigbo did not fare better, staying only weeks before a combination of the bruised loyalist of Okadigbo and the presidency supporters in the senate moved against him.

The presidency was virtually above the law in Nigeria. The Nigerian Vanguard in its editorial titled, "living above the law" drew attention to the comment of the Chief justice of Nigeria Justice Mohamend Lawal Uwais in respect to breaches of the rule of law and the constitution by the Obasanjo presidency. The Chief Justice was exasperated over the disobedience of court orders by the Federal Government and state governments. Justice Mohammad Uwais speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2005 all Nigerian Judges Conference in Abuja lamented the gross abuse of court orders by the presidency. He saw it as an affront to the constitution and clear evidence of bad governance. He thus observed that an act that was rampant under the past military regimes had reared its ugly head.

Some of the constitutional breaches amongst others were;

(a) the refusal of the president to release the Lagos council funds as directed by the nation's highest court, the Supreme Court in its judgement of December 10, 2004.

(b) The ruling party the P.D.P. ignored court order and went ahead to hold a none-elective congress.

(c) The Independent National Electoral Commission ignored court order stopping it from holding a referendum in the recall of the Plateau State House of Assembly.

(d) The Independent National Electoral Commission also disobeyed court order of 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2006 that it has no right to disqualify candidates under the provision of the 1999 constitution.<sup>43</sup>

The impeachment process of State Governors, Deputy Governors, and Speakers of the State Houses of Assembly make for an interesting reading in executive lawlessness. An impeachment according to Dare<sup>44</sup> (2014) should be the ultimate political sanction a country that has the tradition of the rule of law should apply. It is the punishment of last resort for high officials of state who betray the public trust or fail egregiously to live up to its stipulations. Dare<sup>45</sup> thus note that in Nigeria where politics is vengefulness and vendetta by another name impeachment is for reasons that cannot stand legal scrutiny. He concludes by observing that Nigerian politicians have perverted impeachment and given it a bad name. For instance, under Presidents Jonathans watch the Enugu state deputy governor Sunday Onyebuchi

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<sup>43</sup>See Laz Etemike, "Globalization and Democratization in Nigeria". (A Ph.D Thesis, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, unpublished 2009)

<sup>44</sup>Olatunje Dare, "Chicken Impeachment: Matters Arising" *The Nation Newspaper*. Nigeria September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014

<sup>45</sup>See ibid

was impeached by the Enugu state House of Assembly for rearing chickens in his official residence.

Other impeachments during the period under discussion were the Taraba deputy governor, whom the courts later reinstated describing the impeachment process as faulty and vengeful, the governor of Adamawa Governor Nyako and the Speaker of Ekiti State House of Assembly where seven legislators out of a house of 25 members impeached the Speaker with the assistance of the police force. Imo state deputy governor did not escape the impeachment harmer of the state legislature for a trump up charge of corruption for which the court later exonerated him. During President Obasanjo's period the polity witnessed greater numbers of impeachments of State Governors, for being "disloyal" to the presidency; they include Bayelsa, Ekiti, Oyo, Anambra, and Plateau states.<sup>46</sup>

It was clearly obvious that the process of impeachments were being short circuited. The impeachment processes usually played itself out in this form; the Economic and Financial Crime Commission(EFCC) instigated by the presidency or the state governor accuses the target to be impeached of one thing or the other. The minority members within the state house of assembly sets a 'kangaroo panel' made up of loyal party members to investigate. It takes the panel two days or less to conduct the investigation and send its report to the House. The House with no debate pronounces the impeachment. During the process the police offered protection to the minority members' shouting out the majority members from the House.<sup>47</sup>

The EFCC and the police both federal agencies sustained by the tax payers money simply acted as agents of state terrorism. Both facilitated, instigated and emboldened the State of Assembly minority law makers to willingly and wilfully trample upon the constitution with share impunity.

## **5. Evaluating Ethics and Morality in Nigerian Politics.**

In deontic judgement or moral obligation rules, principles, ideas and virtues can be expressed in more general judgement form. It can be referred to as normative ethics or theory. Normative ethics is therefore about norms, standards or principles of human behaviour. Judgements of normative nature are regarded as moral obligation (deontic) or moral value (aretic) judgements. Frankena<sup>48</sup> regard normative judgements as "evaluative" judgements or "value" judgements. Most political office holders pay little or no attention to the moral implication of their

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<sup>46</sup>Laz Etemike,

<sup>47</sup>Ibid

<sup>48</sup>William Frankena, 1973.

actions. Hence there is the danger of turning the act of politics and governance into Machiavellianism. According to Okomba<sup>49</sup> Machiavellianism encourages over exaltation of power above every other consideration, despotism, corruption and abuse of power. It emphasis ends with means inconsequential. Kant admonish that every human action should be such that is not only acceptable to us but also to others who are affected by such action.

The historical and empirical study of politic in Nigeria is instructive in evaluating ethical and moral actions of politicians using the normative approach. The nature and character of politics in Nigeria is defined in the liberal pretension of an elite buccaneer ruling class. It displays a blatant abuse and misuse of power by the ruling class. The enormous powers granted the president and the ruling class by the system prompt its description as 'Presidential Monarchism' It thus explains the connection between democratic theory and political ethics. Hence political ethics in a democracy examines the actions and policies within certain fundamental questions: What circumstances should democratic politics make? Such circumstances should include the need to make collective decisions that are binding on all citizens and the diversity of moral and political view in modern societies.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, as captured in the previous section there are ample evidence to show that politics in Nigeria lack ethics and morals. The abuse and misuse of power has shown that politicians assume power to be the ultimate goal of politics. This work therefore amongst others use the following template in carrying out its normative evaluation; rule of law, corruption, disobey of court injunctions, constitutional breaches, rule of impunity, violence, electoral fraud, political assassination, and the use of police force against opponents and citizens. While few remarks and observations would be made as regard previous civilian regimes or republics as it is generally referred to in Nigeria, emphasis will be more on Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

President Obasanjo's leadership witnessed the successful emasculation of the legislature. The presidency was able to manipulate the impeachment of five Senate presidents within a period of six years and four Chairmen of his party the P.D.P. for what it presumed to be "disloyal."

As regard electoral fraud the report of the European Union Election observation Mission (EUEOM) of 2003 election in Nigeria is a representation of all previous elections except for the annulled June 12, 1993 ELECTION.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Okorie Okomba,

<sup>50</sup>International encyclopaedia of Ethics: Political Ethics  
Scholarcharrard.edu/files/dft/files/political.ethics.revised\_10-11.pdf

<sup>51</sup>See *Vanguard* Newspaper, Nigeria, May 26, 2003.

"EUEOM observers witnessed and obtained evidence of widespread Election fraud in certain states, many instances of ballot box stuffing, Changing of results and other serious irregularities were observed in Cross River, Delta, Enugu, Kaduna, Imo, and Rivers. The elections in these states lack credibility and appropriate measures must be taken by relevant authorities."

Gauba<sup>52</sup> summed it up by explaining opposition reaction, that the mandate of the people was stolen in a manner reminiscent of one-stone-age politics, here the size of the foot of the master determined the length of the foot. He noted that in 2003 the political class did not even have any respect for the sensibilities of the Nigerian people to rig intelligently. Side by side with the electoral fraud was the disturbing issue of political killings and assassinations. Some of the high profile personalities murdered are listed below;

**Table 1. High profile personalities murdered**

Name	Potfolio	Date assassinated
Chief Bola Ige	Minister of Justice	December, 23, 2001
Ahmed Pategi	Kwara State P.D.P Chairman	August 15, 2002
Alhaji Isyaku	National Vie-Chairman, UNPP, Opp Party	September, 2002
Dele Arojo	Gubernatorial Candidate PDP, Lagos state	Nov 25, 2002
Ogu Ibobo	Local Government Chairman, ANPP, Opp Part	
December,2002		
Harry Marshal	PDP, Stalwart. Defected	March 5, 2003
Chief Kala Dikibo	PDP Chairman, South-South	February, 2004
Funsho Williams	Governorship Aspirant Lagos State	2006
Uzadinma Okpara	Governorship Aspirant, Abia State	2006

Source<sup>53</sup>

Ogundiya & Baba<sup>54</sup> commenting on politically motivated assassinations observed that political motivated killings have continued to hunt Nigeria's democratic project. In this and other related crisis, it is estimated that over 10,000 Nigerians have lost their lives; hundreds of thousands have been displaced, while properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Both authors thus describe Nigeria's political climate as hostile and unstable. They argued that though conflict is the essence of social and political life and that while democracy allows for competition

<sup>52</sup>O P Gauba, *An Introduction to Political Theory*. (India: Macmillan Publishers. 2005).

<sup>53</sup>Laz Etemike

<sup>54</sup>Ilufoye S Ogundiya, & T K Baba,"Electoral Violence and the Prospect of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria" in *Election and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, eds Gowin Onu, And Abubakar Momoh (Eds) (Lagos; Nigeria Political Science Association (NPSA) 2005) 375

among the various ideological interests, democracy becomes an illusion when conflict becomes endemic, persistent and insolvent.

The observation of politics in Nigeria by Iredia<sup>55</sup> is apt on this issue. In his opinion politics which in other climes operates as a game, is war in Nigeria in which the end justifies whatever weapon employed. There is thus nothing wrong with electoral violence in the form of snatching of ballot boxes or the misuse of law enforcement operatives to clinch electoral victory. Opponents can be silenced by any means because there is nothing the politician cannot do. The use of law enforcement agencies such as the police against opponents explains the Machiavellian nature of politics in Nigeria.

On the aspect of corruption, transparency international perception index captured it thus, out of 175 countries, Nigeria was ranked in 2011- 143, 2012- 139, 2013-144 and 2014-136<sup>56</sup>. Animasaun<sup>57</sup> writing in the same column, noted that Nigeria operate a system that is open to bribery and corruption, because its institutions are built on corruption. She concluded by observing that efforts to stop corruption fads when leaders and high level officials abuse power and appropriate public funds for personal gains. The fallout is that they undermine justice and economic development and destroy public trust in government and leaders.

The Nigerian polity has continued to witness the reign of impunity. Not only were court orders disobeyed but the various governments were involved in constitutional breaches. For instance, Soyinka<sup>58</sup> (2014) While commenting on President Jonathan's administration on impunity likened it to the biblical Nebuchadnezzar, citing instances of the presidents impunity. Amongst which are the barring of opposition governors by policemen from entering Ekiti State to campaign for Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti state election of June 2014. Another was the barring of the speaker of the Federal House of Representative and other Honourable members from entering the legislative complex, presumable because of orders from above as a result of his defection to the opposition party.

An apt picture of the nature and character of politics in Nigeria is the event in the Lagos State governorship Peoples Democratic Party (P.D.P) primaries for the 2015 elections, as reported by a newspaper. It was reported that an aspirant wore a bullet proof vest to the venue of the primaries. In his answer to a reporter's question as to why he had to wear a bullet proof vest. He remarked that he was protecting himself from stray bullet. This explains the nature of politics in Nigeria.

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<sup>55</sup>Tony Iredia, "Now that Our Senate is Shivering, Whither Nigeria?" In Vanguard Newspaper, Nigeria. December 7, 2014

<sup>56</sup>see Denrele Animasaun, Vanguard Newspaper Nigeria, December 7, 2014

<sup>57</sup>see Denrele Animasaun, Vanguard, December 7, 2014

<sup>58</sup>Wole Soyinke's comment in the *Vanguard* Newspaper December, 2014.

The Vanguard Newspaper<sup>59</sup> December, 23, 2014 in its editorial captioned: "Jonathan's N21billion naira donation: Impunity taken too far" queried the nature and outcome of the fund raising dinner organized by the ruling party the PDP, to boost the President's campaign war chest for the 2015 election. The process which did not comply with the extant laws could also not pass the integrity test.

First, Nigerian laws are unambiguous on campaign expenses and funding. It stipulates 1billion naira as the maximum election expenses to be incurred by a presidential candidate. The fund raising which had sectoral donors, state governors, government parastatals/agencies, business people and their anonymous friends donated a whopping sum of 21.27billion. This was a brazen display of impunity raising questions of transparency and morality. On moral grounds, the paper opined that leveraging on power to raise campaign funds is corrosively anti-democratic. Such toxic donations of doubtful origin would further poison the electoral process and shore up the system of patronage.

Kant's moral theory is centred on his principle of deontology. He posits that any human action that places wealth and power at par with human being is an immoral one.<sup>60</sup> Hence, Kant places much importance on duty and justice in human actions. He thus advocates that every human action should be evaluated in line with his three categorical imperatives:

- (a) To act on the maxims which we can will to be universal laws of nature
- (b) To always treat humanity in a person as an end and never as a means merely and
- (c) To act as if we were members of an ideal kingdom of ends in which we are both subject and sovereign at the same time.

Aristotle had in his "Nicomadian ethics" emphasised on the importance of virtue to our understanding of the nature of morality. For him, reason and understanding should be the bases upon which we should act. It is imperative to note that political ethics as a free subject writers can work with mid-level concept and principles such as those that political agents take into consideration in making decisions and policies.<sup>61</sup>

Consequently, even though it has been argued that in evaluating politics we may not as a necessity apply foundational moral theories, that notwithstanding, the concepts adopted by political agents in making decisions and policies cannot be

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<sup>59</sup>Vanguard Newspaper, Nigeria December, 23, 2014)

<sup>60</sup>See Okorie Okomba, O.O.2006

<sup>61</sup>see International Encyclopaedia of Ethics



devoid of foundational moral principles, which should be the bedrock upon which those concepts are built.

This is the normative angle from which politics in Nigeria can be judged. Politics in Nigeria underscores contempt for the masses. It imposes legitimacy on the ruling party and its political elites who in the presumed equal legal status of subjects, carry out the duty of governance with impunity. Lacking moral and ethical stands politicians assume the state as their turf and fief. They continue to keep it so by manipulation, intimidation, violence, reward and punishment.

In the opinion of Adejumbi<sup>62</sup> callousness characterised the politics of Nigeria's political process. Adejumbi<sup>63</sup> quoting Adekanye,(1984) rightly observed that post-military civilian regimes in Nigeria are usually very frail and susceptible to the praetorian instincts of the military. The political leaders socialized in the military tradition mostly behave like military administrators, repressing the people, squandering public resources and rigging elections. All of these according to Adekanye are well dramatized in the Nigerian experience. Hence, Nigeria's democracy has been described as "garrison democracy" or "guided democracy". The paper thus concludes that Nigeria was faced with a crisis of value and a total collapse in political morality.

## 6. Conclusion

Nigeria is made up of myriads of groups some of which speak variant of the same language and possessed certain common traits. Ikime<sup>64</sup> observed that the identity or similarity of language and culture did not result in common political action. The colonial period witnesses the attempt by these socio-political units to forge larger units and establish certain identity. The colonial period was an episode in the long historical march of the Nigerian peoples towards the formation of a political system. The new government after independence in Nigeria had to face the challenges and problem from the colonial period all of which impacted on future elections and the democratisation process of the civilian regimes. Balogun<sup>65</sup> commenting on the challenges remarked that in an underdeveloped society with stunted economic growth and with relatively few opportunities for rewarding investment in the industrial sector, government patronage inevitably becomes a major source of benefit ( in trade and in other commercial activities). In view of these fundamental realities the contest for power was primarily a contest for economic survival.

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<sup>62</sup>Said Adejumbi, S. "Elections in Africa: A Fading Shadow of Democracy" *International Political Science Review*. Vol 21 No 1( January 2000): 59-73

<sup>63</sup>Ibid quoting Adekanye(1984) 2000

<sup>64</sup>Obaro Ikime, 1985: 31.

<sup>65</sup>see Ola Balogun, O.1973

The military incursion into politics introduced yet another challenges in Nigeria's democratisation. The military had been in power for twenty seven years out of fifty years of independent Nigeria. It is therefore no wonder that Nigeria's democratisation process shows lack of ethics and morality. The political actors and the policies they make fall short of internally recognized rules and principles of democracy.

The narrative presented by Thabo Mbeki during his lecture at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs<sup>66</sup> captures the picture of politics and democracy in Nigeria. Quoting from the work, "Imagining Insiders" Mbeki narrated the story of a fight between Truth (big and strong) and Falsehood( skinny and weak). Both were enemies and in an ensuing fight falsehood with a hidden cutlass cut-off Truth's head. This jolted and enrages Truth who began to scramble around for his head. He then stumbled on Falsehood and with his awesome strength he yanked off the head of falsehood which he took to be his. This he placed on his own neck. From that day what we have was this grotesque and confusing mis-march: the BODY of Truth and the HEAD of Falsehood. This is the picture of politics and democracy in Nigeria; The body of democracy and the head of un-democratic forces.

Nigeria could do better if ethics and morality is given a place in the decisions, policies and actions of the ruling elites. Adopting Kant's admonition is instructive, human actions should be in conformity with the universal standard, acceptable to us and to others who are affected by the action.

It is recommended that there should be a change in a system and structure that encourages impunity and a Hobbesian type of politics. Consequently, Nigeria should consider the devolution of power, that would reduce the magnitude of power at the federal level and that would at the same instance recognize the various nationalities in building the new system. Empowering the lower levels of government would reduce the inordinate struggle for the control of the centre. At which point Nigeria would have domiciled and domesticated democracy. This structural change will encourage adherence to traditional and cultural values and ethics which is evidently absent in politics in Nigeria.

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<sup>66</sup>NIIA, Lecture series, 81, Lagos, Nigeria

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