A Custom of Non-Adherence to Rule of Law: A Challenge to Nigeria's Democracy

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Abstract

Rule of law which is the cornerstone of democratic governance, is persistently being violated in Nigeria, and this significantly undermines Nigeria's democratic framework. Public trust is being eroded and democratic consolidation stalled by systemic corruption, judicial inefficiencies, and executive overreach irrespective of constitutional guarantees. This paper highlights the manifestations of non-adherence to the rule of law in Nigeria, its implications for democracy, and urgent necessity for reformation.

Key Words: Rule of Law, Democracy, Governance, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Is Nigeria truly a democratic country? This question might seem out of place since Nigeria has officially adopted a democratic system of governance since 1999. But given the undemocratic practices against the principles of democracy, and rule of law, one finds it difficult to understand the type of democracy we are practicing in Nigeria.[1] A country that claims to be democratic but fails to live by the principles and values of democracy is only living in self-deception.

Irrespective of constitutional guarantees, a frequent pattern of non-adherence to the rule of law in Nigeria weakens democratic consolidation and institutional development. Adherence to the rule of law is essential for any democracy to function appropriately. It ensures that all individuals and institutions are subject to and accountable under the law. The persistent disrespect for legal norms in Nigeria by both state and non-state actors has occasioned a culture of impunity, undermining democratic principles and eroding public trust in legal institutions.

This paper analyzes the experience of democracy in Nigeria today, highlights undemocratic actions in the Nigerian practice of democracy in violation of the rule of law, and makes a proposal for adherence to the rule of law and practice of true democracy for sustainable development and the good of all Nigerians.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Rule of Law

The rule of law refers to a foundational principle in legal and political theory which holds that all individuals and institutions, government included are subject to accountable under the law. It reiterates the need for law to be publicly promulgated, enforced equally, adjudicated independently and to be consistent with international human rights norm.

"The rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards." [2]

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[1] Cf. Yascha Mounk, "The Undemocratic Dilemma" *Journal of Democracy* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, April 2018), vol. 29, no. 2. pp. 99. DIO:10.1353/jod.2018.0030.

[2] United nations Secretary-General, Report on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies (2004), UN Doc. S/2004/616.

2. 2 Democracy

Democracy entails a system of government in which people exercise political power either directly or through elected representatives. The characteristics of democracy are: free and fair elections, the rule of law, protection of fundamental rights, and the active participation of citizens in political and civic life. Larry Diamond defines democracy as, "A system of government in which the principal positions of power are filled through competitive, multiparty elections that are free and fair." [3] According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is the government of the people by the people for the people.[4]

2.3 Governance

Governance administratively entails, "The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced, the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them."[5]

There are different forms of government: oligarchy (rule by the few), polyarchy (rule by many), plutocracy (rule by the rich), partitocrazia or party-rule (rule by the political parties), aristocracy (rule by the elite), and democracy (rule of the people by the people and for the people).[6]

3. Principles and Core Features of Democracy

The core features in democratic governance echo principles that guide the functioning of democratic systems and ensure fair and transparent exercise of power in respect for the rights of the citizens. These features include: rule of law, popular sovereignty, separation of powers, protection of human rights, accountability and transparency, pluralism, participation, free and fair elections, tolerance, social justice and equality, participation, and peaceful transfer of power.

4. A Brief Survey of the History of Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria has had a democratic form of government since October 1, 1960. Democracy in Nigeria, however, has been interrupted by military rule through coups for almost half of its existence. Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960, and a federal republic in 1963.[7] The first election was conducted in 1964-1965. There was violence, electoral manipulation, and thuggery during the election, and its result was contested by those who felt the result was manipulated. This led to unrest, instability, and chaos in the polity that led to the military takeover of government in 1966 through a coup organized by some military officials. The unrest, anarchy, and rise of corruption eventually led to a civil war in 1967, which ended in 1970.[8]

From 1970 to 1979, Nigeria was under military rule until 1979 when another election was conducted which again was massively rigged resulting in chaos and instability. The President then was Shehu Shagari. Under his administration, Nigerians experienced massive corruption of politicians and lack of infractural developments during oil boom. Mohammadu Buhari

[3] Diamond, L. (1999). Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation. John Hopkins University Press.
[4]Abraham Lincoln, cited in Godfrey I. Onah, "Africa and the illusion of democracy," *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa*, Obi Oguejiofor ed. (London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 281.
[5] World bank (1992). Governance and Development. Washington DC, World Bank.
[6] Cf. Abraham Lincoln, cited in Godfrey I. Onah, "Africa and the illusion of democracy," *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa*, Obi Oguejiofor ed. (London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 281.
[7] Cf. Carlyn Anderson, *Nigeria, a Country Study*. (Washington DC: The American University, 1979), p. 211.
[8] Cf. Samuel Daly, *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime and the Nigerian Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 43.

overturned Shagari's government through a coup in 1984.[9] he gave Nigerians hope of working for a better Nigeria through the reformation of the polity. People instead were disillusioned by his government as it turned out not to be better than that of Shagari because of abuses of human rights and corruption of political officials which he was not able to eradicate. In 1985, the government of Buhari was toppled by Ibrahim Babangida.[10]

In 1993, election was conducted organized by Humphrey Nwosu under the administration of Babangida on June 12, 1993 in which Abiola emerged as winner but the election was cancelled with unspecified reasons which brought about public unrest and imprisonment of Abiola who later died in the prison. Abacha took over the government by force. When he died suddenly, General Abudulsalami Abubakar became the military head of state. In 1999, Abubakar drafted a new Constitution that was adopted on May 5, 1999. He organized election in 1999 and Olusegun Obsanjo emerged winner in the presidential election and was sworn in as the president of Nigeria on May 29, 1999.[11]

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua took over from Obasanjo on May 29, 2007, after him came to power Dr. Goodluck Jonathan from 2010 to 2015. He handed over power to Mohammadu Buhari on May 29, 2025. After two terms in office, Buhari handed over power to Bola Tinubu, who was sworn in on May 29, 2023. Nigeria was under military dictatorship from 1966 to 1999 and under civilian rule from 1979 to 1983 and 1999 to date. Unfortunately, the experience of Nigerians under the civilian government is not all that better than under military government. In both military and civilian rule, Nigerians have experienced massive corruption and abuses of human rights.[12]

5. Cases of Non-Adherence to the Rule of Law and Challenges Confronting Democracy in Nigeria

The practice of democracy in Nigeria today falls short of its true meaning as most of the basic principles of democracy mentioned above are not respected. The challenges to Nigerian democracy today are: Violations of Human Rights, Disrespect for the Rule of Law, Political Instability and Electoral challenges, Corruption and Lack of Accountability, Ethnic and Religious Divisions, Weak and Dependent Judiciary, and Economic challenges.

5. 1 Violations of Human Rights

In Nigeria today, there is a gross violation of fundamental human rights to life, liberty, freedom of speech, and religion. Under the so-called democratic dispensation in Nigeria, many innocent lives are being wasted at the hands of the Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram, kidnappers, ritualists, and security personnel. In most cases, the killers, unfortunately, are not prosecuted. Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a second-year Christian student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, was stoned to death and set ablaze by a mob of Muslim students of the same school who accused

[9] Cf. Hollis Lynch, *K. O. Mbadiwe: A Nigerian Political Bibliography, 1915-1990*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 238.

[10] Cf. Jibrin Yahaya, *An Analysis of Africa's Unconstitutional Government Transitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024), 522.

[11] Cf. Oluwalekan Adeshina, "Democratization and Post-Election Conflicts in Nigeria Since Independence: A Historical Reconsideration" *Managing Conflicts in Africa's Democratic Transitions*Akanmu Adebayo ed. (London: Lexington Books, 2012), 64.

[12] Cf. Ogaba Oche, "Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections in The Fourth Republic" *Elections and Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*, Osita Agbu ed. (Dakar: CODESIRA, 2016), 131.

her of blasphemy against Islam on May 12, 2022.[13] Only two persons were arrested for this horrific act and later set free, and till today, nothing has been done to serve justice for the innocent girl.

On the night of 20 October 2020, at about 6:50 p.m., members of the Nigerian Army opened fire on unarmed End SARS protesters at the Lekki toll gate (Admiralty Circle Plaza) in Lagos State, Nigeria. Amnesty International stated that at least 12 protesters were killed during the shooting.[14]

Countless Nigerians have met their untimely death in the interior villages, farms, and even places of worship at the hand of Fulani Herd's herdsmen or kidnappers. Nowhere is safe in Nigeria, as people can be killed or kidnapped on the road or at their residence. Several Catholic priests, pastors of other Christian denominations, and other Nigerians were kidnapped, and some were killed by unknown gunmen.[15] This is just to mention but a few of the death toll going on in Nigeria presently.

The right to freedom of speech and expression of thought is under threat in the past and present administrations. Anyone who speaks out, calling a spade a spade, is tagged as using inciting speech or hate speech, especially when it comes from people who are in a different political party or religion different from that of the ruling government. Only the government in power and their supporters are free to issue threats, talk as they like, and no one calls them to question.

Boko Haram's attack of mostly Christian churches is an attempt to scare people from attending the church of their choice and elimination of Christianity to establish Islamic religion. This act deprives people of the freedom of worship, which is a fundamental human right.[16] The past administration in Nigeria did not do enough to curb this act, and is still going on.

5. 2 Disrespect for the Rule of Law

Instances of the actions of the executive in disregard for rule of law, undermining democratic principles and human rights in Nigeria abounds. Some of the cases are as follows:1) Disobedience of Courts Orders; 2) Extrajudicial killings and massacres; 3) Suppression of protests and civil liberties; 4) Ethnic and religious persecution.

On several occasions, the executive government has ignored judicial rulings, undermining judiciary independence. For instance, the past administration of Mohammadu Buhari has flouted several orders of courts. To mention but a few, he detained the leader of Islamic movement in Nigeria, El-Zakaky for several years despite court's order for his release. He was eventually granted bail in 2017.

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[13] Cf. Anietie Ewang, "Student in Nigeria Murdered Over Blasphemy Allegation" *Human Rights Watch* (16 May, 2022), https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/16/student-nigeria-murdered-over-blasphemy-allegation Accessed

[14] Cf. Osai Ojigho, "Nigeria: Killing of #EndSARS protesters by the military must be investigated" *Amnesty International*, (21 October 2020), accessed 31/03/2025
https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/killing-of-endsars-protesters-by-the-military-must-be-investigated/ accessed 30/03/2025

[15] Cf. Favour Uroko, "An Analysis of the Attack on Christian Clergy in North-Central and Southern Nigeria" *Critical Research on Religion,* vol, 12, no. 2, (2024). , 174 https://doi.org/10.1177/20503032241254376

[16] Cf. Heiner Bielefeldt, Thiago Pinto, & Marie Petersen, "Introduction: Freedom of Religion or Belief as a Human Right," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol. *20*, no. 2 (2022), 1. https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2022.2065799

Disregarding multiple court orders for bail, the department of State Security Services (DSS) detained the former National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki and activist Omoyele Sowore. He was rearrested in courtroom in December 2019 in defiance of court order for his release.

In the case of Nnamdi Kanu, the Leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, ex-president Buhari delayed in carrying out Federal High Court order to grant him bail in 2017. The Supreme court in its judgment of 13th October 2022, ordered for the release of Kanu and also declared that his continued detention was illegal, and suppressed the charges against him citing that he was unlawfully arrested and extradited from Kenya in 2021. Till date the injunction of the court has not been obeyed neither by the ex-president Mohammadu Buhari nor by the incumbent president Bola Tinibu. Kanu is still in the dungeon of Directorate of State Security (DSS) since 2021 when Nigerian government in violation of international law illegally kidnapped him from Kenya and brought him back to Nigeria simply for his agitation for the freedom of his oppressed people.

Retaliating for the killing of 12 police officers, the military attacked the Ijaw community of Odi in Bayelsa State which resulted in the death of many civilians. Many innocent youths were killed by the police during the EndSars protest in Lagos as mentioned earlier. The Pro-Biafra protests of (2015 -2016) led to the security forces killing the pro-Biafra protesters in the South East.[17]

The security forces clamped down the End Bad Governance protesters in August 2024, harassed and arrested them arbitrarily. They exercised force against them and journalists.[18]It is a fact well noted that Nigerian government has not been able to end ethnic and religious persecution. People have been attached in the Church during worship; and there are killings in different parts of Nigeria by Fulani Herdsmen, who go scout free without been arrested or prosecuted. On June 14, about 200 people were killed by Fulani Herd's men in Benue till moment no arrest is made.

Our courts, in some cases, are compromised and are no more the last hope of the common man but rather a place of refuge for the rich and politicians to consolidate their wicked acts. Some courts being compromised cannot dispense justice impartially. The essence of the three arms of government is for the required checks and balances, but in our case in Nigeria, the executive exercises power over the judiciary and the legislative arm.[19] The reason for this can be attributed to the fact that the Chief Justice of Nigeria is appointed by the president and some members of the ruling party in the senate and house of representative are nothing but Rubber- Stamp to the president. Proof of this fact, is the recent happening of the senate passing a bill with mere voice vote in support of an unconstitutional act of the president suspending incumbent governor of Rivers State, Simi Fubara from office for six Months.

In Nigeria, against the principle of separation of power, which democracy is known for, the executive arm is wielding power over the legislative arm and the judiciary. In a case involving the government, any attempt on the part of the judges to be impartial and deliver fair and just judgment attracts heavy consequences. A typical example is the case of a judge of the supreme court who passed the judgment that Nnamdi Kanu was acquitted and discharged and should be allowed by the government to go his ways. Immediately after the judgment, he was demoted and transferred.

[17] Cf. Premumtimes.org.com
[18] Cf. premumtimes.com+amnesty.org.
[19] Cf. Anyim-Ben Francisca, Okereke Samuel, and Chijioke, Ngozi "The Doctrine of Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances in the Nigerian Executive-Legislative Relationship" Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy. Vol. 9, no. 1 (2017), 78.

5. 3 Political Instability and Electoral Challenges

Nigerians are witnessing for long during election electoral fraud, rigging, intimidation of electorate violence, lack of credibility and transparency in elections, weak electoral institutions and political parties.[20] Our election in Nigeria in real fact is a selection and not an election as the rich buy their way to the position of authority by rigging the election, thereby imposing themselves as leaders on the citizens against their wish. People were hoping that democracy will offer better chance of their participation in governance by being given freedom to exercise their franchise by freely electing those to govern but the habit of violence, steeling of ballot box, intimidation of the electorates, manipulation of election results, that prevails in most of the elections conducted in Nigeria has dashed people's trust in the good dividends of democracy.

In the 2023 election conducted in Nigeria, a fatal blow was given to democracy given the enormous manifest manipulation of the electoral process and intimidation of the electorate.[21] The manipulation started even before the election by withholding voters' cards of people from certain parts of the country. Before the election huge number of people's voter's card was discovered in the bush, and for no good reason, some people's voter's cards were not given to them, especially in Lagos. The Igbos in Lagos were threatened to vote against their conscience or face adverse consequences. Some were beaten and injured, and some quarters in Nigeria did not receive ballot papers or a particular party name will be missing in the ballot papers. The electorate in Edo, Benue, and Rivers came out to protest that the results of the presidential election did not correspond to their choices. One man in a video clip described what happened at the last election in Nigeria as the kidnapping of hope and someone else as an end of democracy.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deliberately failed, contrary to its promise to Nigerians before the election, to upload the results of the elections from the polling centers using the BIVAS. From what transpired in the last election, one can say that INEC, which means Independent National Electoral Commission, showed itself to be rather a Partial National Electoral Commission. It is obvious from what played out in the last election that INEC is anything but independent and impartial. Despite the complaints of some people being disfranchised, irregularities, and while some results were yet to arrive, INEC Chairman Mohammad Yakubu went ahead and declared the winner of the presidential election in the early morning of 1st March 2023.

Election is very important in a democratic set up as it offers the citizen the opportunity to decide who rules them. In a democratic setup where people are not allowed to vote freely persons of their choice into government, democracy is given only lip service. Suppressing the voice of the people in an election is dictatorship and a sign of despotic governance.

5. 4 Economic and Security challenges

To say that things are hard in Nigeria is an understatement. Things are not just hard but extremely hard. Nigeria is like a beautiful lady with very severe wounds all over her body. It is a country in unimaginable distress. The Nigerian nation is undergoing a moment of great challenges of a political, social, and economic nature. Our problems are many: insecurity, poverty, hunger, unemployment and underpayment problems, and security issues that are

[20] Cf. Ugwala Donald, Kalu Godson, and Elechi Aja, "Electoral Fraud as A Major Challenge to Political Development in Nigeria" *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, (December 2020), 51.

[21] Cf. Ugwala Donald, Kalu Godson, and Elechi Aja, "Electoral Fraud as A Major Challenge to Political Development in Nigeria" 52.

responsible for the mass exodus of the Nigerian youths to other countries in search of greener pastures. The number of doctors and nurses in our hospitals today has reduced due to the *Japa* syndrome.[22] Food is scarce because of insecurity that is affecting farmers all over the country. People who are engaged in agriculture risk being killed by Fulani herdsmen or by kidnappers, and the government is not doing enough for the security of farmers and other Nigerians.[23]

The value of the naira keeps on depreciating. There is an increase at an alarming rate in the prices of commodities and cost of living. Many children are out of school because their parents cannot afford school fees, which have become so high. The economic crisis has led to women doing all kinds of work for the survival of their families and, in some cases, abandoning their responsibility in the family as mothers.

Nigeria is a country richly blessed with human and natural resources, yet there is great suffering of the poor masses while few in politics enjoy the wealth of the nation and are careless concerning the suffering of others. The rise of insecurity in Nigeria has led to undermining citizens' trust in government institutions. The security agencies being compromised are not coming up with their duty of protecting the people of Nigeria. Some of them work together with the Boko Haram and unknown gunmen. That explains why they delay in coming to save people's lives when under threat.

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) instead of guiding against economic corruption for the good of the nation and punishing whoever is guilty of economic crime, shows itself as an arm to intimidate political opponents of the ruling party as it shows evident of partiality in its arrest of people involved in economic crimes. The guilty and persecuted are most of the time political enemies of the ruling party and those who refused to dance to their tune. The search touch of EFCC only searches those in another camp, and that explains the movement of politicians to the governing party where they will be covered no matter the crime they commit. In this type of situation, where is justice and equality for the citizens? All these point to the fact that what is practiced in Nigeria is far from being democracy but better be described as a despotic government or coated dictatorship.

6. Way forward for Strengthening the Rule of Law and the Practice of True democracy

6. 1 Judicial Independence and Reform

Independent and competent judiciary free from political influence and corruption is necessary for the rule of law to be uphold. Judiciary appointment processes requires to be merit-based and transparent. Presently, the judges are appointed by the president and that may influence their work of administration of justice as some may compromise their responsibility due to their loyalty to the one who appointed them when government is involved in the case.

The remuneration and working condition of judges need to be improved to reduce susceptibility to bribery. Stricter disciplinary mechanisms are to be enforced for judicial misconduct.[24] "The

[22] Cf. Onyekachi Chukwuma, "Migration Narratives in the Book of Genesis and Japa Syndrome Among Nigerian Youths", *die Skriflig*, vol. 59, no. 1, (March 2025), 4.
[23] Cf. Anthonia Baduku, "Kidnapping in Nigeria: Challenges and Mitigation strategies," *Gusau Journal of Sociology*, vol. 4, no. 3, (December 2024), 240.
[24] Cf. Nwabueze B.O. (2003), Constitutional democracy in Africa (Vol. 1). Spectrum Books.

independence of the judiciary is essential to the impartial administration of justice and is a cornerstone of democracy."[25]

6. 2. Reformation and Empowering of Oversight Institutions

Institutions such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commissions (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), are to be strengthened more for them to function effectively. On the necessity of strengthening these oversight institutions Omotola affirms that, "Institutions weakness have contributed immensely to democratic decay in Nigeria" and calls for autonomy and capacity-building of watch-dog institutions.[26]

6.3. Promotion of Election Integrity and Election of Suitable Candidates

"Electoral integrity is a precondition for democratic legitimacy and effective governance."[27] For free and fair elections, independent electoral commissions, campaign financé transparency, and secure and inclusive voting system is required. "Democracy depends on periodic, competitive elections that reflect the people's will.[28]

The capacity and independence of INEC need to be strengthen to conduct free and fair elections. Establishment and enforcement of law that guarantee internal democracy within political parties is also very important. Election manipulation and lack of internal democracy weaken the legitimacy of democratic governance.[29]

Adherence to the rule of law is possible when you have the right persons as president, members of the senate, house of assembly, governors, and as judges who respect rule of law. Only men and women of integrity with good moral standards and conscience will be able to uphold the rule of law and work for justice and fairness to prevail in the polity. Hence, the citizens at election should put aside the quest for money, nepotism, religious and ethnic affiliation or other personal interests and elect the right persons to various key positions in the country. They are to avoid voting for personal gain and rather vote according to their conscience by choosing suitable candidates who have the qualities required in a leader for good governance. Nigerians if they desire true change, should vote for president, governors, chairmen, councilors, persons of integrity, men and women with good moral standards.

A true practice of democracy requires that people should be allowed to elect the person of their choice and not be intimidated or coerced to vote against their conscience through bribery and intimidation. Those in authority for free election should respect the will of the people and should desist from tampering with election results. It is said that the office of the citizen is the highest because they determine those to rule through their vote. But if the will of the citizens is not respected at an election, that means the end of democracy. There is a need to reform the electoral institution, INEC, political parties to enhance transparency and reduce electoral violence. Electronic voting and other modern technologies should be adopted.

6.4 Enhancement of Civic Education and Political Participation

There is necessity of integrating civic education into formal curricula and informal public programs in order to foster a culture of democracy, accountability and rights awareness.

[25] UNODC, *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies*, 2010.
[26] Omotola, Journal of African Elections, 2010.
[27] P. Norris, *Why Electoral Integrity Matters.* Cambridge University, 2014.
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[29] Aiyede, Democratization, Vol. 14, Issue 3, 2007.

According to Olasupo (2016), "a politically literate citizenry is essential for democratic consolidation."[30]

Citizens understanding of their rights and responsibilities is necessary for respecting democratic principles. Hence, education on democratic values in schools, voter education campaigns and public debates is necessary. "Democratic consolidation depends on informed and engaged citizens who can demand accountability and uphold democratic norms."[31]

6.5 Upholding Human Rights and Civil Liberties

Adherence to the rule of law requires enforcement of existing laws that protect freedom of expression, association, and assembly for human rights and civil liberties to be uphold in Nigeria. Inappropriate actions of security personels of arbitrary arrest, detention and abuse of the citizenry can be checkmate through legal reform and training. In an environment where civil liberties are "routinely suppressed, democracy cannot thrive.[32]

6.6 Accountability and Anti- Corruption Measures

For the existence of a true democratic system, corruption, which has eaten deep into the fabric of our nation, Nigeria, should be dealt with, and the anti-corruption agencies (EFCC, 1CPC) must be strengthened. These agencies should implement effective accountability systems and avoid partiality in prosecuting offenders. They are to promote transparency in government transactions.

Measure like budgeting processes are to be put in place to hold those in authority accountable and checkmate embezzlement of public fund. Entrenched corruption according to Ribadu (2010) is a barrier to the rule of law and democratic governance.[33]

Public trust in democracy and rule of law can be eroded by corruption. The key strategies as anti-corruption measures include: protection of the whistleblowers, strengthening of anti-corruption agencies. "Corruption undermines institutions and public confidence making democratic governance ineffective."[34]

6.7 Media Freedom and Accountability

Media freedom is important in democratic government as independent press helps monitor power and inform the public. Hence, policy measures on protection of journalists from intimidation, diversify media ownership is very important. "A vibrant and Independent Media is indispensable to the functioning of a true democracy."[35]

7. Conclusion

The constant disregard for the rule of law in Nigeria is a great threat to the survival and growth of its democracy. The undermining of legal norms by political interests, institutional weaknesses, and a culture of impunity corrodes the foundation of democratic governance. Critical steps in reversing this dangerous trend involves upholding legal accountability, strengthen judicial independence, and fostering a political culture that esteem constitutionalism. Lasting stability and development can only be attained in Nigeria by deliberate and collective efforts in respecting the rule of law by the government, private institutions and individuals.

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[30] Olasupo, International Journal of Politics and Good Governance, Vol. VIII, Issue 7, 2.
[31] L. Diamond, *Developing Democracy Towards Consolidation,* Johns Hopking University Press, 1999.
[32] Cf. Agbaje &Adejumobi (2006), Political Science, Vol. 2.
[33] Ribadu, African Development, Vol. 35, No. 4.
[34] M. Johnston, Syndrones of Corruption: Wealth, Power, Democracy, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
[35] A. Sen, Development as Freedom, Knopf, 1999.

There is interdependency between the rule of law and true democracy. No one of them can flourish without the other. Their strengthening requires institutional integrity, civic participation, legal empowerment, and a culture of accountability. For true democracy to exist, there should be the practice of good governance that respects the rule of law, respects the dignity of human persons, protects the life and property of people, provides basic amenities, infrastructural development, respects separation of power care for the welfare and wellbeing of all citizens. Until this is done, we cannot in all sincerity claim to be practicing true democracy in Nigeria.